

It's All From Above
By Rabbi Pinchos Lipschutz

Here, we finally are in the month of Nissan. Pesach, the Yom Tov when we celebrate our freedom, is upon us. The weather has warmed, the days have lengthened, and we are only one week away from sitting down at the Seder to recite the Haggadah and be mekayeim the many mitzvos of that evening.

In 1948, as Israel was fighting its war of independence, people were worried about what the next day would bring. Rav Refoel Kook traveled to the Chazon Ish.

“People are asking me about what is going on now and how they are to understand the terrible situation they are in. Rebbe, I don’t know what to answer them.”

The Chazon Ish told him to tell the people that, “Everyone can see that from Shomayim we are being led somewhere, but we are not able to figure out what we are going through now will lead to. We cannot fathom the ways of Hashem.”

Pesach is the chag hageulah, but it is also the chag ha’emunah, the Yom Tov that reinforces our faith in Hakadosh Boruch Hu. It is because of the faith of the Jewish people while they were in Mitzrayim and at the Yam Suf that they were redeemed.

Throughout their period of slavery, they did not understand why they had to endure such pain and difficulty, but when they were redeemed, they understood that because of the torturous subjugation, they were freed almost two hundred years earlier than when Hashem had initially said they would be let go.

When they witnessed the makkos and many miracles at the Yam Suf, they understood that everything that happened to them was directed by Hashem, “vaya’aminu baHashem uveMoshe avdo,” and it caused them to reinforce their belief in Hashem and Moshe.

In our time, we see the people of Eretz Yisroel suffering. The country is already six months into a disastrous war that they entered after suffering a terrible tragedy. The economy is reeling. People are far from their homes, refugees in their own land, and even those who are in their homes barely have enough money for basic necessities. The nations of the world have turned on them, accusing them of terrible crimes. Their only crime is being forced to fight for their existence.

Perfidious allies have all turned against the country founded by people who thought that if they had their own country, anti-Semitism would end and the world would come to respect the Jewish people. Well, it was not meant to be. The nation that earned the world’s enmity at Har Sinai when the Torah was given is still hated and despised. Sometimes they pose as brothers,

caregivers, friends and allies, but always that historic, eternal animosity is right beneath the surface, waiting to be exposed.

When the Jewish people become split and divided, when they veer from the path of Hashem, throwing away Torah and mitzvos, Eisov and Yishmoel return to form and torment them.

In Eretz Yisroel, brother has turned against brother and the forces of evil and the left conspire to bring down the government so that they can continue implementing their immoral agenda. The religious community has become the scapegoat once again, as the Supreme Court colludes with the out-of-control attorney general to starve yeshivos and yungeleit while attempting to force the draft of the 60,000 young men who have forsaken all and chosen a life of Torah study.

In this country, while thankfully there is no physical war going on, there are many issues that confound us. There is a war on morality that is being led by the Democrat Party and its voters against basic Judeo-Christian values upon which this country was built. We don't discuss these ongoing encroachments on moral living, but that doesn't mean that they are not taking place and succeeding in effecting rapid change.

That same party, under the leadership of President Biden and Senator Schumer, has led a treacherous turn against the State of Israel, an American ally since its founding. Never have a president and his underlings so publicly threatened the Jewish nation, especially as it fights an existential war.

The same president, under whose leadership many civilians were killed and abandoned in Afghanistan, publicly castigated Israel for a mistaken bombing, similar to what often happens in war. By slamming Israel and threatening it, not only does he weaken the one decent, moral, democratic ally in the entire region, but he also emboldens the forces of evil and terror that seek its demise.

The president and his party embraced the anti-Israel position not because of some change in foreign policy, but because Binyomin Netanyahu refuses to entertain their two-state solution, gifting the Palestinians with a country for their fictitious claims and terror campaign. They have therefore targeted him and his government for regime change.

All of this is because Biden and the Democrats think that in order to win the upcoming election, they must kowtow to the Arab residents of two important states, Michigan and Minnesota. To appease a few hundred thousand Arabs, they throw Israel and the Jews to the dogs, hoping that decent people all across the country won't realize how corrupt the president and his allies have become.

Anti-Semitism is rising steeply here, as is crime, while the economy sinks. Interest rates remain high in a bid to lower the crushing inflation that Biden has caused. Housing is a crushing expense, putting buying a home, or even renting a larger apartment, out of reach for many

families. Food and clothing have also become a stretch for many families as prices continue to rise.

People wonder why all of this is happening and everyone has a different explanation. As believing Jews, we need to know that Hashem is directing what is happening. What we know is that in an eis tzarah, we are meant to call out to Hashem for salvation and engage in teshuvah.

We remember that those who have emunah are able to maintain a sense of calm and serenity. Because we know that nothing happens without Hashem directing it to happen, we don't necessarily fear the events of the day, for we know that everything Hashem does is for our benefit. Some things we understand now and some later, but we are content with the knowledge that this is all part of a Divine plan that will play out for our good.

The month of Nissan and the Yom Tov of Pesach remind us that when there is a deluge of negativity and painful news, we respond with faith, not fear; with tefillah, not despair; and with the knowledge that geulah is in the air.

Three times a day, in Modim, we thank Hashem for the daily miracles, some of which we recognize and some of which we don't, but we know they are there. Be on the lookout for them, write them down, and appreciate the good that we have. Doing so helps us deal with our difficulties and know that we are never alone.

Seventy-five years ago, when murder and destruction spread across Europe, a small group of yeshivos were brought through Divine intervention to Shanghai, where they spent the awful years in relative peace. In that hot, faraway city they had never previously heard of, they flourished, as their suffering brought forth much growth in Torah, eventually gifting our people with a generation of gedolim, roshei yeshiva, rabbonim and maggidei shiur.

When the war ended, the full brunt of their situation finally hit them. Free to travel, they realized that few among them had parents or families waiting to reunite with them. There was nowhere to go back to. Everyone had been killed. Everything had been destroyed.

As a steady stream of talmidim headed to Eretz Yisroel and America, several were stuck behind, waiting for visas. For the first time, they were overtaken by despair. The Gerrer Rebbe, the Imrei Emes, penned a letter to a group of stranded Polish bochurim. He wrote, "The main thing now is to know that everything comes from Hashem and no bad emanates from Him. Everything is for the good... As the seforim teach, 'Vayehi erev vayehi voker yom echod,' both the darkness and kindness are from one source and for one goal: to illuminate the world for us later on.

"We believe that just as the Tochacha, the prophecies foretelling difficult times, were fulfilled, so will the hopeful and comforting prophecies come to be. The hester ponim is a test, an illusion, and in the end, everything will turn out very good."

The Gerrer Rebbe quoted the Rambam's Iggeres Teiman, where he encouraged the beleaguered Jews of Yemen during a difficult time.

“The Rambam writes that a cord of Torah and mitzvos connects heaven and earth. To the degree that a person grasps it, he will be strengthened...”

The rebbe sought to sustain the refugees with the eternal message that g'nus leads to shevach, winter leads to spring, and darkness leads to light. This message is as old as the first day of creation, when night and day were formed, as the posuk states, “Vayehi erev vayehi voker yom echod.”

The Sefas Emes explains that Nissan is considered the first of the Hebrew months because it was during this month that Hashem unveiled the hanhogah that became revealed and visible in this world during Yetzias Mitzrayim.

Until then, it was a hanhogah of hester, but during the month of Nissan, Hashem burst forth openly into the lower worlds, revealing His presence and strength in Mitzrayim b'yad chazokah uvizroa netuya.

Each year, during Nissan, that energy once again fills the world, providing a chance to reveal Hashem in the lower spheres, filling this world with His presence. Pesach, the Yom Tov of emunah, gives us the opportunity, the chance to fill our hearts – and those of our children – with this awareness of freedom and protection.

As the month of Nissan begins, it reminds us that Hakadosh Boruch Hu is here, just as He was in Mitzrayim, pulling the strings, setting up the world for the redemption.

When the Imrei Emes passed away in 1948, his oldest surviving son, Rav Yisroel, became rebbe. It was a very difficult time. The people had not yet recovered from the losses they had each suffered in the Holocaust. Israel was at war for its survival and there were regular attacks in settled areas and cities.

When he spoke the first Shabbos, he quoted his grandfather, the Chiddushei Harim, who shared a fantastic concept to explain why the halachos of eved Ivri only apply when there is Yovel. When Yovel came to an end with the churban, so did the phenomenon of a Jewish slave.

He explained that this is so that the Jews should know that every period of difficulty, every challenge, does not last forever. Every tzorah has a time when it ends and when the good times return. When Yovel, which frees the slaves, is no longer active, there are no longer Jewish slaves, because there is no way to end their challenging, painful period.

We must know that what we and our brethren in Eretz Yisroel and across the world are experiencing today will not last forever. The tough time will end, hopefully soon, and the good times will return. Have no fear. Don't despair.

Rav Yisroel Eliyohu Weintraub noted that difficult times are always followed by good times. After the darkness that descended upon the world when the Asarah Harugei Malchus were killed, Rabi Shimon Bar Yochai lit up the world with the revelation of the Torah's secrets as he wrote the Sefer HaZohar. Following the awful period of Tach V'Tat, when many thousands of Jews were killed and pillaged, we were blessed with the Vilna Gaon, the Baal Shem Tov and the Ramchal. After the darkness and sadness that was brought by the Holocaust, he said, came the great light of the unprecedented burgeoning Torah communities.

The Sefer Hachassidim explains this phenomenon. He says that Hashem wants to do good with man, but the Soton interferes and says that man doesn't deserve it. The Soton questions why Hashem is being so kind to undeserving people. He says that it is for this reason that Hashem brings periods of great pain and nisyonos to silence the evil Soton.

And today, just as in Mitzrayim, for us to merit Hashem's light and goodness, we must first endure darkness and pain. Let us strengthen ourselves in Torah and good deeds, so that we will quickly merit the great light and growth that are on the way.

As we approach Pesach, let us strengthen ourselves in emunah and bitachon so that on this Yom Tov of emunah, we will merit to have our faith rewarded with everything we wish for with the coming of Moshiach. Amein.