

PARSHAS KORACH

תשפ"ה

We are living in times where the world is changing in a dramatic way.

There are certain tekufos of history where the world is stable and consistent. And there are other tekufos where there is lasting and dramatic change.

The sefer Nefesh HaChaim is clear that everything in the universe centers around Klal Yisroel.

The Rambam in the hakdomo to Pirush Hamishnayos says the ma'amar Chazal of "אין להקב"ה בעולמו אלא ד' אמות של הלכה בלבד" is absolutely literal. Everything and anything that goes on in this world is for the sake of Klal Yisroel – specifically those learning Torah and are dedicated to avodas Hashem. He gives an example of a wealthy man who builds a beautiful mansion and plants trees to make a relaxing garden. Hashem lets this happen – the wealth, the mansion, the garden – all because of a tzaddik who is traveling nearby and needs a place to rest and refresh himself. Hashem placed the fate of the entire world at our feet – we determine the events of the world through our mitzvos and aveiros.

In 1492, the expulsion of the Jews from Spain was a devastating tragedy. On the Tisha B'av of that year, their decree was carried out. Many Jews left, but many Jews stayed and converted. Why? They were very wealthy and they knew they couldn't take their money with them. They became Maranos. Some were later discovered practicing Yiddishkeit in secret and were burned at the stake by the Inquisition.

There are different ways of looking at this event, because at the same time, an Italian Jew named Christopher Columbus set sail from Spain across the Atlantic Ocean and discovered the American continents. He started the path in history that would eventually lead to the creation of a very special country. It would become a safe-haven for millions of Jews fleeing pogroms and persecution of Eastern Europe a few centuries later.

Hashem always uses tragedy and destruction as a means of planting the seeds of rebuilding and rebirth.

There was a four year old boy who was among the expelled Jews of Spain. He came by boat to Turkey and later to Eretz Yisroel. He changed the world of Torah with his seforim. His name was Yosef Karo. He and other refugees ended up in Tzfas and formed the basis for the future yishuv of Eretz Yisroel. Over time, this yishuv has become the most vibrant Torah center of the Jewish world on a scope that history has rarely seen. Hashem uses disaster as a means for rebuilding.

There is an important gemara in Avodo Zoro which describes the future judgment of all the nations of the world in the world-to-come. They all line up asking to be rewarded. Hashem asks Rome – what did you do when you had power? They respond that they built up commercial centers and cultural centers of civilization in order to facilitate Klal Yisroel learning Torah. Hashem answers back: you are fools! You did it all for your selfish pleasure. It wasn't your money that built civilization and commerce – it was Mine.

He asks the Persian Empire what they did. They answered that they improved transportation and conquered many great cities in order to facilitate Klal Yisroel learning Torah. Hashem again says – you fools! Everything you did was to build up your own wealth and power. I make all the wars.

The gemara is saying that in the future, when everyone will be able to examine human history with total clarity, they will see in retrospect

how Hashem ran everything for the sake of Klal Yisroel learning Torah. All the vast territories and resources and accomplishments of these world empires were all orchestrated by Hashem for one single purpose – to advance the limud haTorah of Klal Yisroel. The wealth wasn't theirs, and the victories in battle weren't theirs.

Every war is decided in shomayim while the armies are fighting on earth. Everyone is given wealth and resources as an opportunity to do something with it. Hashem wants it to be used to further the limud Torah of Klal Yisroel. People may decide to use it for all kinds of selfish and perverse reasons, but ultimately it belongs to Hashem. Ultimately, He will see to it that it all eventually serves His purposes for limud Torah.

The posuk says 'לֹב מַלְכִּים וְשָׂרִים בְּיַד ה' (Lev. 24:10). It means Hashem never lets the leaders of the nations shape world events with their own selfish, egotistical and sometimes crazy impulses. He puts people in these positions of leadership to direct them for His purposes. Nothing is random.

For some reason in 1492 Hashem allowed King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella to decide to get rid of all these Jews in Spain, and also finance an Italian Jew's entire voyage to discover the New World. At the same time these monarchs were causing a serious historic tragedy to the Jewish people, they were laying the foundation for a future salvation of Klal Yisroel in America. Hashem was planting the seeds of rebirth of Torah with the arrival of Rav Yosef Karo in Tzfas. The writing of the Shulchan Aruch and the formation of the basis of the Yishuv in Eretz Yisroel would change the direction of limud haTorah for the rest of Jewish history.

There has been a war and we need to understand that Hashem is always running things, despite what the leaders of these nations are claiming.

For the first time in history, the leader of Russia has a good relationship with Israel and the Jewish people. Putin's positive relationship with Jews started when he was a little boy who was neighbors with a Chabad family. They treated him with kindness and generosity when his parents neglected him, and it made a deep impression on him. Nobody at the time had a clue that this personal experience of little Vladimir laid the foundation for events that would change the course of history.

Little Donald Trump was a son of a real estate developer and builder who lived in a Jewish neighborhood in New York. Donald was a wild little kid and his father kept telling him he should be more like these nicely behaved Jewish boys in the neighborhood who don't make any trouble.

He is a religious man and he raised his son to be a believer in God. His friends were all Jewish and he had great relationships throughout his career with Jewish people. It made a deep impression on him.

Hashem runs history. While the churban was happening in Spain, no-one would imagine that four hundred years later, the Jews would make a mass migration from Russia to America to escape an even bigger tragedy.

We have just been through something that will certainly change history. No one knows for sure what will happen, but it is clear that Hashem is restructuring the world today – in ways that we can't understand – for the goal of furthering limud haTorah.

Trump has his plans for the future of the region, and the world is changing. The ultimate goal for all this change is for Hashem to achieve His goals for limud Torah.

A lot of seemingly independent, unrelated things have been happening:

The invasion from Gaza, the soaring international rise of anti-Semitism, the Jews in the West feeling rejected by the Left and threatened, the dismantling of Hamas, the degrading of Hezbollah's capabilities, and the elimination of Iran's nuclear program.

The plans by the Mossad to infiltrate Hezbollah fighters with explosive beepers and walkie-talkies had been developed years before. Suddenly they had to act because it was about to be discovered, and it proved to be a major blow to the entire Hezbollah war operation.

Hashem takes all these things and puts it together for the sake of Klal Yisroel.

Israel was very confident going into this war with Iran because they were very successful in shooting down all the missiles last year. There was a 99% interception rate – and no casualties or injuries. But this time there was only 90% interception rate and the casualty list is much greater. Still, everyone recognizes that there were big nissim. For the amount of destruction that these Iranian missiles can produce, only a very small number of Jews were killed. There was miracle after miracle with every direct hit.

It was a clear time of danger, and we need extra zechuyos, because people get wounded and people get killed. But we have an extra burden to increase our zechuyos. Hashem is looking at all the various people who are claiming to defend the Jewish people from danger – Netanyahu, Trump, the IDF, etc. And Hashem has to see that we are stepping up with our limud Torah and are making a special effort to be the critical factor in defending Klal Yisroel and the whole Yishuv of Eretz Yisroel.

The Mishna in Avos says: Even though you learn a lot of Torah, don't take credit for it. This is why you were created. Hashem structured the entire civilization the way it is to further the limud Torah of Klal Yisroel.

Hashem is making things happen in a very dramatic and unpredictable way. All the predictions so far have been upended. Hashem is playing

with people's minds. Trump is a businessman and wants to make business deals with the fanatical Islamic Mullahs in Iran! He can't think out of his little box. No-one knows what the future will bring. Hashem is restructuring the world.

When Moshiach comes and people will be asking Hashem for reward for saving Klal Yisroel, Hashem will be responding in the exact same way he responded to the Romans and the Persians. You did it all for your own selfish reasons, while I was making everything happen for limud haTorah.

In medieval France there was very little Torah, and Rashi went from France to Germany to learn Torah. When he came back, he made France the center of limud Torah. The Ramban and Rabbeinu Yonah came from Spain to learn in the yeshivos of France, until the burning of the Talmud in Paris. Rabbeinu Yonah attributed this tragedy to the bizayon of the kovod haTorah of the Rambam by French rabbonim. This ended the centrality of Torah in France and it moved to Germany.

Spain was a major center of Torah which produced so many great Rishonim. But, as the Chossid Yaavetz wrote, Spanish culture infiltrated the Jewish elite, and limud Torah started to be looked down upon. Philosophy was greatly admired. They learned Torah as youngsters and dedicated their greatest mental efforts to philosophy. Because of this, the Chossid Yaavetz said, the Jews were expelled from Spain. The bizayon haTorah had to be avenged.

We are living in a very uncertain period of history. If there will be any harm to U.S. soldiers in Iraq by a single missile from Iran, there will be total upheaval throughout the Middle East.

We are in Hashem's hands and we have to understand the endgame. It is all because of Hashem's agenda to further limud haTorah. Many people will try to take credit for all this, but Hashem will tell them they all had selfish intentions. This puts a tremendous responsibility on the olam haTorah. We are a major part of the national defense to protect Jews from harm, and we need to realize that all of this is happening on account of us – to develop Torah learning to the next level.

We have to take this period of our lives seriously – as an opportunity to show Hashem that we can handle this awesome responsibility.