

This Land is My Land

A Breslov Perspective on the Holy Land

Essay #46—Parshat VaEira 5762

January White Sail

Hurry! Hurry! Hurry and join the January white sail, while the going is good.

Dateline, Red Sea, January 5, 2002—The Israeli navy intercepts a ship with over 50 tons of weapons and ammunition, shipped from Iran and bound for the Palestinian Authority. Not surprisingly, the Americans, Iranians and Yasir Arafat vehemently denied such a treacherous betrayal of the integrity of the Iranian and Palestinians. After all, they are all members of President Bush's coalition against terror! How dare the Israelis accuse them of such vile deeds?!

Thank God, I have recently returned from a trip overseas and was placed under the influenza of the flu, becoming bed-ridden for 12 days. I have a lot to be thankful for, seeing that the "influenza" I am under is that of an air-carried disease, rather than being exposed to the "influenza" of the media, the world governments and the so-called leaders of the "free-world" who try to "influenza" everyone in the world that terrorism is on its way out. It's now early January, and that great American institution, the "January White(wash) Sale" is taking place. You have the opportunity to have your most vile deeds reconditioned by American whitewashing, allowing your terrorism to be treated respectfully. Is it any wonder that American air travel can be threatened by "shoe-bombing" Moslems?

In this week's Torah reading Pharaoh is finally confronted concerning his evil deeds, and warned to either shape up or be shipped out. Pharaoh, naturally, denies any wrongdoing, and begins to get hit from all sides with the first seven of the Ten Plagues. Yet, interestingly, he never relents. Like Yasir of today, Pharaoh of yesteryear broke every promise he made. He suffered because of it, but nonetheless never relented from the evil he was engaged in. He caused untold suffering to his own people, but refused to relent.

Amazing when you think of it—but not really. Like a rose, a villain is a villain is a villain. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, can a leopard change his spots" (*Jeremiah 13:23*)? So too, evil personified does not change, no matter what face he shows the world. So we're stuck with Yasir and his cohorts, evil personified, because the January Whitewash Sails are in effect and no matter how much he stands to lose, he will not relent.

In a sense, it's a blessing to us, for we know that our enemies have begun to feel the bite of blood and the other plagues. Finally, finally, the truth is beginning to seep out about the Arabs' terminal feelings towards us, that after all the bloodshed, death and destruction they've wreaked, they're about to reap the "rewards" of their dastardly deeds. On the other hand, there is terrible trepidation that it's not all over yet, that we've been patient for a long time awaiting the Redemption and that we've not yet reached the very

end, when all will turn out just right.

We find that Moshe warned Pharaoh of any impending harm. For three weeks he would come to Pharaoh and advise him to repent and correct his evil deeds, before the plague struck. This is because it's typical of the Jew to display his innate compassion and give his enemies advance warning of impending doom. Sadly, it's also typical of our enemies to strike like snakes without any warning, even without any reason, just for the sake of being evil. So we lose patience awaiting the redemption.

"And God appeared to Moshe...say to the children of Israel, I will bring you out from the suffering of Egypt, and I will save you from their bondage, I will redeem you with an outstretched hand...I will take you to Me as a people...And I will bring you to the Land that I swore to give to Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov...But they did not listen to Moshe, for anguish of spirit, for the cruel bondage" (*Exodus* 6:2-9).

Can we imagine what suffering the Jews endured in Egypt? You were promised that though you would suffer in bondage, a redeemer would come to take you out. That redeemer, Moshe, appears. He speaks to the Jews, he encourages them, he begins negotiations with Pharaoh, all leading to their eventual salvation. So, we're on the threshold of salvation. Yet, "they did not listen to Moshe..." They were so devoid of hope, so bereft of faith, that even at the moment of salvation they were too numb to respond positively.

Rebbe Nachman teaches that the more one lacks faith, the greater his burden and suffering. He cites this verse, "They did not listen to Moshe for anguish of spirit and for the cruel bondage." Because the Jews were suffering from the cruel bondage, they also endured "anguish of spirit"—they lost patience and thus hope for their salvation (*Likutey Moharan* II, Lesson #86).

The same applies to us, today. We're at the threshold of salvation, of redemption, of Mashiach's coming and our return to the Holy Land. We were promised. So, believe it. We better believe it. Doing so means we have faith. With faith, we can look forward to that salvation. We attain, and can maintain, the necessary patience to tide us over, despite all those ships which our enemies attempt to sail over us. And if we do, then we will merit seeing ourselves, once again, as God's Chosen People, we will see God fulfill His promise to bring us to the Land and live in it with true peace and security, Amen.

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- [Home](#)
- [This Land is My Land Table of Contents](#)
- [Essay #45](#)
- [Essay #47](#)