



Elul Contemplations 5765

By Rabbi Ariel Bar Tzadok

Copyright © 2005 by Ariel Bar Tzadok. All rights reserved.

“When the Holy One, blessed be He ordains a Heavenly edict according to the deeds of mankind, He desires not to change it, He sends forth His Power through the Attribute [of Judgment] to pay [mankind] their just rewards according to their deeds.... No man, not even a prophet has permission to request mercy to nullify the edict in any size, shape or form, as the verse says, “and you, do not pray for this people” (Jer. 7:16).”

Sefer HaYihud, Perush HaShavuot

As Kohelet (3:1) says, “there is a time and a purpose for all things under Heaven.” There is a time to repent, and then there is a time when it is too late to repent. There is a time when we can receive forgiveness for what we have done, and then there is a time when this grace period also passes. Such are the ways of HaShem. Divine Patience is always tempered by Divine Justice. There is a limit to all things under the sun.

We look out at our world and how mighty is our nation and culture. We cannot dream that all that we know and love will some day come to an abrupt halt. Yet, every culture in history that has risen to its heights, has fallen from said heights into the depths of oblivion and is soon forgotten. Our present world culture will not escape the course of history faced by every other world civilization before us.

Do not blame G-d and proclaim that He is punishing the world. Indeed, G-d is only the ultimate force behind the Universal Balance of Justice. Indeed, it is our behavior at the individual and collective level that decides our fates, as individuals and as nations.

What happened on 9/11 in New York and most recently with Katrina in New Orleans are both disasters with catastrophic loss of life. One was initiated by the hand of man and the other was a natural event, sometimes called the hand of G-d. Whatever one wishes to believe about both these events is irrelevant, they nonetheless both share one common element, both events are warnings from Heaven of even greater judgment to fall upon this land and people for the great sins and perversions our society has produced and perpetuated upon the world.

The laws of nature are ordained by Heaven. The forces of nature are but Heaven’s servants. Indeed, the Bible is clear that even the insanity of individuals to kill and destroy is often used by Heaven as its agents. One way or another, Heaven does not lack the means of expressing its displeasure over our behavior. Heaven has almost infinite

resources to use to correct us individually and collectively, to set us on a proper moral human path. Whether we choose to walk this path, or not is, of course, our choice. And what we choose, of course, chooses for us the consequences that we will ultimately face.

Human tragedy brought on by natural or political forces are very much a part of life and a major cause of death. Where an event will strike and who will be affected thereby are not haphazard, happening randomly. As much as the secular will howl, disasters are brought about, permitted and ordained by the Hand of the Living G-d. Everything and anything that comes our way is a warning from Above that must be viewed with the utmost seriousness. Those who wish to deny this are like the magicians of ancient Egypt in Pharaoh's court, advising him that the Ten Plagues were not the work of G-d. Just as Egypt was in for further trouble and ultimate destruction, so too are those who today wish to deny the Will of G-d in similar fashion.

Let the scoffers howl, as they will. Let them condemn and mock the religious for the warnings. Angry people as they are, immoral people that they be, they will face the judgment of the Living G-d, whose presence and activity they wish to deny.

I wish no one any malice; I pray that no one will ever be harmed. Yet, I also know that a time of judgment is quickly coming upon us and that only those who prepare themselves wisely will stand a chance of coming through it. Mind you, emergency preparation for disasters must include spiritual, mental and emotional preparations alongside the physical. For even one with the largest hoard of food, supplies and weapons will crack and fall if one's heart is not stable and one's mind clear.

We are now just days away from Rosh HaShana, the Day of Judgment for the entire world. This day should be a holiday commemorated by everyone Jew and Gentile alike. All are affected by what happens of this day, all should prepare on this day to give an accounting before one's Maker. At night, as every soul will sleep, it will ascend before the Heavenly Court and there be told what will be its fate for the coming year. Indeed, those who died on 9/11 or by Katrina had their fates decided and settled long before these events occurred.

And what of teshuva, repentance, you might ask? After an edict is issued, can one repent and avoid its punishment? I cannot speak for Heaven. I do not have the authority to overturn Heavenly edicts. All I can say is that our Sages teach us that one should never lose faith in the power of prayer, repentance and forgiveness. Indeed, although an edict may be proclaimed in Heaven against a certain area or population, the righteous individual may still escape, if and when that individual does the proper things necessary to solicit Divine intervention and protection. Many did make it out on 9/11, many others survived Katrina. Not all survivors were religious or righteous, by known standards, yet Heaven decided that it was not yet their time to meet their Maker. As it was then, so will it be in tomorrow's events, whatever and wherever they may be.

We cannot avoid disasters. We must not be so blasphemous to deny the hand of G-d in all these matters. We must turn to G-d in serious and thoughtful contemplation and best choose how to correct our behavior and our lives to properly reflect the Biblical

requirements of moral character, brotherly love and sincere and honest devotion and commitment to Heaven.

There are statements in the Kabbalah which speak about the coming year 5766 (2006) and being one of serious disturbances. I am not at liberty to elaborate. I just want that people should take these times very seriously and use the blessed time we now have to properly prepare to stand before our Creator this Rosh HaShana.

Look in the mirror, ask G-d in prayer, what it is you need to do to make yourself better, and to solicit His Divine blessings for yourself, your family and loved ones. G-d will speak to your heart, through study of His Word, by the performance of mitzvot and in many other ways. Seek out what it is G-d wants of you. Do it now while you still have the opportunity. Miss this chance, and face Him you will on Rosh HaShana. What your soul will say then, and what G-d will say then to your soul will be what it will be. Choose wisely your course of action.