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Parshiyot BeHar – Be'Chukotai **May 8, 2021 – 26 Iyar 5781**

It has now been one week since the tragedy at Meron. Many have addressed the tragedy in sermons, articles, speeches, and prayer. I addressed the tragedy last Shabbos in Shul during my sermon. As I've now had a week to reflect, I must look at the tragedy through the eyes of a mourner.

When a mourner faces death a key to moving forward is the recitation of the Mourner's Kaddish. The Mourner's Kaddish is not a prayer for the dead in and of itself. The Mourner's Kaddish is a prayer for the living. It is the reaffirmation of one's faith in G-d as we try to understand "why" such tragedy happens.

There are many around the world who are on a mission to place blame. Blame is not what is needed now. Faith and logic in prevention is the order of the day. This approach is a foundation of the Jewish people.

Hope is what we, Bnei Yisrael, see when other see despair. It explains that even through tragedy we move forward. Parshah Be Chukotai warns us what can happen if we turn away from mitzvot. We can end up becoming a fractured people lacking hope and losing faith.

And yet, amidst tragedy there is hope. Even in despair there is potential for renewal. "VaYikra 26:31 says, "I will lay your cities in ruin and your sanctuaries desolate, and I will not smell your satisfying aromas". Our sages draw out from this text that the sanctuaries endure even when they are desolate.

We gather in holy places, sometimes unsafely, but we feel the holiness and it permeates the soul. While we may face all kinds of threats from within and without, we as a people are indestructible.

The tragic death of 45 souls at Meron will be remembered and mourned. Their memories will be a blessing for us to move forward and reaffirm our faith in G-d's divine providence.

Shabbat Shalom!

Rabbi Nathan W. Langer

