

BS"D Parashat Noach 5785

The Drafting of Haredim

On the face of it, the issue of drafting hardcore Haredim is complex and controversial. When in reality it's a one "main-shock" issue that began 130 years ago with the beginning of political Zionism, that has over the years produced secondary after-shocks.

"Bereishiet" (to begin with), I must clarify that "Haredim" do not stem from a one-cloth fabric. There are many haredim who willingly and proudly serve in Tzahal, including selected units such as the paratroopers, commandos, Golani, Givati, etc. There are Haredim who are buried in military cemeteries and others who will bear the scars of their loyalty and sacrifices as long as they live.

Then there are the anti-military Chassidic and "Lithuanian" rabbinic leaders who put forward their narrative to sever all connection with Tzahal based on three reasons:

1- Torah study is the life insurance policy of the Medina. A full-time occupation where the individuals involved are dedicated solely to this spiritual umbilical cord connected on one side to the upper strata of sanctity and the other to the ongoing struggles of Am Yisrael's survival. According to this narrative, the contribution of a full-time Torah learner to the goal of victory is not less than that of a fighter pilot of a F-35 when dropping a 2-ton bomb on Hezbollah headquarters in Beirut.

2- The draft exemption is necessary to preserve the Haredi way of life, and that it benefits Israeli society as a whole by providing a source of religious scholarship and tradition.

3- The religious level of a Hareidi young man will be compromised when interacting with non-observant soldiers, especially women soldiers.

As stated above, however the veracity of these claims, they are not the core reason for escaping the draft which is hidden away in a never to be disclosed ideological safe.

As with all serious matters in life we can find the roots of this controversy within the wells of wisdom of Chazal, as stated in the Gemara:

The Gemara (Pesachim 56a) describes the last hours of Ya'akov's physical existence in this world, when he gathered his 12 sons to reveal to them what lies in store for the Jewish nation at the "end of days". However, at the precise moment when their hearts and minds were at their peak attentiveness, HaShem withdrew His Shechina (Divine spirit) from Ya'akov and the revelations became obscured.

Ya'akov voiced his fear to his sons that HaShem's withdrawal of the holy spirit might be due to one or more of his sons being a heretic. For just as his grandfather Avraham had begot the sinful Yishmael and his own father Yitzchak begot the evil Esav, he too might be cursed with a wayward son. Upon hearing this the brothers turned to their father and in unison recited:

יְהוָה יְהוָה אֶחָד

"Hearken Yisrael (our father), the Lord is our God, the Lord is One"

Ya'akov then replied:

יְהוָה אֶחָד

“Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom forever”

Question: How could the single statement “Shema Yisrael” diffuse Ya’akov’s deep seated suspicion of heresy? Why did Ya’akov not consider the possibility that the “heretical son or sons” (if there was one or more) was lying?

I suggest:

The brothers waited impatiently to hear of the future geula. When Ya’akov realized that HaShem did not want the details to be disclosed, he turned to his sons with suspicion that they might be the cause. At that moment, HaShem placed His holy Shechina on the brothers and they announced the Shema in unison.

Ya’akov was stunned, because this statement was the essence of the prophecy that he had intended to reveal to his sons. Instead, it was taken from him and given to them.

The prophecy states that just as the “Shema” consists of three phrases:

- 1) Shema Yisrael – Hearken Yisrael*
- 2) HaShem Elokeinu – the Lord is our God*
- 3) HaShem Echad – the Lord is One*

So too will the redemption of the Jewish people evolve in three stages:

1) In the **initial phrase** of “Shema Yisrael”, the name of Am Yisrael is mentioned but HaShem’s name is omitted.

This refers to the first stage of redemption with the in-

gathering of Bnei Yisrael from the far corners of the globe to Eretz Yisrael. They will return for a variety of reasons but not necessarily religious ones. Most will come to escape anti-Semitism, or totalitarian regimes, or to build a state based on secular socialist Zionism. That is why the name of HaShem is excluded in the initial phrase of the Shema and the initial phase of redemption.

2) **Phase two** "HaShem Elokeinu" includes two names of HaShem: the ineffable (unutterable) YH... representing HaShem's quality of compassion, and the name "Elokeinu" representing HaShem's quality of harsh justice.

This second stage of redemption will be characterized by a bitter conflict between Torah leaders as to how to view the Medina. Religious-Zionist rabbanim will see the Medina as the expression of HaShem's quality of compassion for His people Yisrael. The Medina is HaShem's declaration that the Shoah was the last major test in the 2000-year period of anger and galut (exile), and the beginning of a new period of our renaissance leading to the fulfillment of all our prophets' visions.

Millions of Jews have already returned, our sovereignty over Yerushalayim and the Temple Mount and the extraordinary military victories are undeniable signs that the geula is at hand.

In contrast, other Torah scholars will claim that the period of "Elokeinu" – harsh judgment – is still in effect, with the Medina just a stage in the natural development of political societies or a temporary retreat from anti-Semitism. The Medina has no connection to the future redemption of our people still in galut.

3) **Phase three** "HaShem Echad", is when HaShem's quality of compassion will reign alone, and all rabbinic leaders will unite in the reality that the Medina is HaShem's avenue for the advent of Mashiach and our final redemption.

Yaakov, upon hearing the revelations voiced by his sons, added a fourth stage: "Baruch shem kevod malchuto le'olam va'ed" – blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom forever – signaling the universal acceptance of HaShem's total mastery as Creator and Preserver of all things.

Today, with a near majority of the world's halachic Jews in the Land, we are in the midst of the second stage of HaShem Elokeinu where most of the Haredi rabbinic leadership do not hear the footsteps of the Mashiach in Medinat Yisrael.

The third stage of total unity will come about when we witness the miraculous demise of our enemies, as stated at the end of the first chapter of Tractate Berachot, that we will witness miracles far surpassing those of the exodus from Egypt.

We are not far from a religious awakening among the people of Eretz Yisrael, unparalleled since the time of Ezra Ha'Sofer. HaShem will "shine His countenance" upon all those who are here to receive it.

May HaShem grant our gallant soldiers victory over the forces of evil, for the final redemption of our people will come about in the merit of the mesirut nefesh (self-sacrifice) of His loyal children residing in Eretz Yisrael.

This negation of the belief that the semi-secular Medina can be a part of the redemption process is the underlying reason for the Haredi leaders' efforts to reject the drafting of their young people. They are willing to sacrifice for a Medina based on Torah, but not for a secular political state.

But the leaders will not admit this openly, so they substitute other reasons to reject army service:

1- Torah study is the life insurance policy of the Medina.

2- The preservation of the Haredi way of life benefits Israeli society.

3- The religious level of a Haredi young man will be compromised.

The three stages of redemption were revealed to Ya'akov and his sons thousands of years ago.

The pivotal question regarding the essence of Medinat Yisrael as the basic stage of the Jewish nation's redemption is the dividing factor between those who say Hallel with a bracha on Yom Ha'atzmaut and who leave their wives and children, parents and comfort in order to face the cut-throats of Hamas and Hezbollah, and those who do not.

HaShem doesn't need great numbers of troops to bring about a miraculous victory. But we who make up the chosen people of HaShem are now being put to the test to see who will take part in the grand master plan of the restoration of the glory of HaShem and His nation in Eretz Yisrael.

In closing: With the absence of a Sanhedrin or empirical evidence to decide the question is Medinat Yisrael an essential part of the final redemption of the Jewish nation centered around the Bet Hamikdash with all that it implies, or just one more chapter in our long and circuitous history? The decision rests with every individual.

There are those who feel intrinsically that our generation living in Eretz Yisrael has been designated by HaShem to open the initial chapter of our historic-religious redemption versus other good Jews who negate the idea; and of course, the ubiquitous silent majority who sit on the fence unable to decide.

In the light of what I have seen and experienced in the sixty-two years since making aliya, I have no doubt that we are on the fast track to the final goals set for us by HaShem. We are the foundation stone upon which future generations will build. We are a major part of the fulfillment of HaShem's promises to

our forefathers.

And if it should come about that in the world of absolute truth, I will be told that I was mistaken, I will admit to the sin of loving too much; whereas the other side if told that they were in error would have to admit that they loved too little.

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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