

BS"D Parashat Vayera 5786

Our Rabbi, Teach Us

דוד בן יוסף

I have a long-standing question that “longs” for an answer.

The bet din has at its disposal several means of punishment towards a transgressor, ranging from the most severe death penalty down to social ostracization. The punishment second to the death penalty in severity is Karet comprising three levels: premature demise of the unrepentant sinner, the sinner and his children die, and the severing of his soul in the next world from the mainstream of Jewish souls.

The first Mishna in Tractate Karet enumerates 36 transgressions punishable by Karet out of the 365 “lavim” (a don’t commandment), i.e., specific sexual relationships, violating Shabbat, etc. Including only two “do” mitzvot (affirmative mitzvot) out of 248 which a sinner intentionally refrained from performing – brit milah (circumcision) and refrained from participating in the offering of a korban Pesach (Pascal Lamb) when the Bet Hamikdash was standing.

Question: What is so significant about these two affirmative mitzvot of brit milah and the Pesach sacrifice that places them in the Karet category?

I submit: The Midrash records that when HaShem rejected Moshe’s request (presented 515 times) to enter Eretz Yisrael even after his death, Moshe asked, “why are Yosef’s remains being brought into the holy land (Moshe himself brought the remains to the edge of the land), whereas mine are prohibited from entering?”

HaShem replied, "He who acknowledges his Jewish nationality may enter" (Joseph declared to the chief cupbearer in prison, "For I was indeed kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews"), but one who denies his Jewish nationality may not enter. Meaning, after Moshe fled Egypt and aided the daughters of Yitro at the well in Midian, they returned to their father and said, "An Egyptian man rescued us from the shepherds, and he also drew water for us and watered the flock."

Question: Both Moshe and Yosef told the simple truth – Yosef lived many years in Eretz Yisrael while Moshe lived his life in Egypt?

It seems that the Midrash is teaching us that no matter where a Jew is born or lives, his Mother Land is Eretz Yisrael, and he must identify as such. Because a Jew no matter what he thinks or declares is a lifelong part of Am Yisrael – the Jewish nation, and the native land of every Jew is Eretz Yisrael.

Inseparable Units of Body & Soul

HaShem's chosen people comprise two nonidentical twins (comparable to one's body and inherent neshama) but nevertheless twins.

Avraham and King David represent these inseparable units of body and soul as set down by Chazal when determining the final text of our thrice said daily prayer of Amida (Shmoneh Esrei).

Avraham in the closing of the first blessing in Shmoneh Esrei:

ברוך אתה יהוה 'ה אבינו ברוך

Blessed are you, O Lord, the protector of Abraham.

And **King David**, who appears twice in the 13th and 14th blessings: the rebuilding of Yerushalayim and the restoration of the Davidic dynasty.

Avraham set the stage for the formulation of the **eternal bond** between the souls of Am Yisrael and HaShem. **King David** established the **nationhood** of Am Yisrael by uniting the separate tribes under one monarch with its capital in Yerushalayim, and a victorious army that brought the borders of Eretz Yisrael to the whole expanse of the Euphrates River from today's Turkey through Syria and Iraq down to the Arabian Gulf to the east, and to the Nile river to the south-west; an area that can contain hundreds of millions of Jews, when the time arrives.

Now if anyone should doubt that the land is the twin essential ingredient of Judaism together with the Torah, I refer him to the Gemara (Ketubot 112b):

，而後才開始對「中國」進行「中國化」的改造。在「中國化」的過程中，「中國」被重新定義，而「中國化」也成為一種新的意識形態。這種意識形態的出現，是為了適應當時的社會環境，並為國家的統一和發展提供理論支持。在這種意識形態的指導下，中國社會發生了深刻的變化，中國人也開始重新認識自己的國家和民族。

The Rabbis taught: One should always reside in Eretz Yisrael even in a city where the majority of the inhabitants are idolaters (gentiles) and not reside outside the Land of Israel even in a city where the majority of the inhabitants are Jews.

For one who resides in the Land of Israel is regarded as having HaShem by him, and anyone who resides outside the Land is regarded as not having HaShem by him, as it is stated (Leviticus 25:38):

To give you the Land of Canaan, to be your God.

And Eretz Yisrael is, according to Kabbala, positioned directly under the “kiesei hakavod” – the throne of glory in the Shamayim.

Two Positive Mitzvot

Now returning to the issue of the two affirmative mitzvot – brit milah and the Pesach sacrifice. Desecrating the Shabbat or eating non-kosher food does not necessarily imply that the sinner has severed his bond with the Jewish nation; he maintains his status of son of this nation, albeit a wayward one.

In contrast, the violation of each of these two mitzvot – brit milah and the Pesach sacrifice – is a stark declaration that the perpetrator has concluded that the Torah of Israel and the land of Israel are devoid of any spiritual meaning for him and holds no particular interest in remaining part of this holy nation.

Pesach commemorates the metamorphosis of the family of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya’akov into the nation of Yisrael with a land structured base, a culture and way of life uniquely different than any other in the world. It was the time when we became free of the Egyptian whip lash and prepared to face the future under the protective clouds of HaShem in our G-d given land. And the act of brit milah engraves into our bodies a living testimony that we are forever a part of this holy union. To negate any of these mitzvot is tantamount to declaring separation from the mainstream of the Jewish people in this world and in the next.

Conclusion

Now where is all this going?

Of late, we have heard several leading Chareidi gedolim say, that if the choice is to serve in the Jewish army of the State of Israel, then it is preferable to leave the holy land for greener pastures in the galut.

Our rabbi, teach us – אמת אמת

Where did I go wrong? – Teach me!

Is it indeed **da'at Torah** to leave the holy land sanctified by HaShem for keeping the Torah, and at a time when the nation is at war with those who would not hesitate a moment to murder every Jew in the world?

If one is on his way to being an **advanced Torah scholar** there is logic and reason that his learning should not be disturbed by military service; but for each man like this there are tens and more who are not. Should they leave the holy land rather than contribute to the security of 8 million Jews here? Is this **da'at Torah**?

To leave the holy land, the twin partner with Torah in formulating Judaism, is a sin; to serve and protect the Jews in Eretz Yisrael is a mitzvah!

Or did I miss something in my Torah education?

Our rabbi, teach us – אמת אמת

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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