

Chayai Sarah 5772

BS"D Parashat Chayai Sarah 5772

Tractate Megila 29,a

 *Rabbi Elazar HaKapar said: In future times the synagogues and houses of Torah study in Bavel (a euphemism for all the galut exile) will be resettled in Eretz Yisrael*

Rashi in our parasha (24:17) quotes the Midrash Raba (60:6) that Eliezer, who was sent by Avraham to find a wife for Yitzchak, noticed that while the women of the city lowered their pails into the well in order to draw up water, the waters rose up to Rivka when she approached.

This extraordinary phenomenon must have made the definitive impression on Eliezer that HaShem had chosen this young woman to be the future wife of Yitzchak. If so, why did Eliezer need to further test her good character by seeing if she would extend her help to perfect strangers?

To understand this, we have to return to last week's parasha where Avraham pleads to HaShem to spare Sedom and her four sister cities if they contain 50 tzadikim (righteous people). How odd! Avraham was certainly aware of these people's reputations and the impossibility of these cities containing even one righteous person, yet alone fifty!

King David wrote in Tehilim (Psalms 145:17)

 *HaShem is righteous in all His ways and faithful in all that He does.*

The phrase "HaShem is righteous in all His ways" implies that one can be considered righteous, even if only in some or one

area of life. We find this regarding Noach who was a righteous man, but less righteous than Avraham. So righteousness is not an absolute, but rather varies from tzadik to tzadik.

Avraham did not realize the extent of the evil in Sedom and the other cities, and thought that there must certainly be individuals whom HaShem would consider righteous in at least one area of human experience. But Avraham quickly learned that there are sick societies in which not even one person could be considered righteous in any area of life.

To return to Eliezer and Rivka. Eliezer saw the wondrous miracle of the water ascending to young Rivka – certainly a sign from Hashem that she was a righteous woman. However, Eliezer thought that HaShem considered Rivka to be a righteous woman only in relation to her society and in view of some spiritual aspect of her life, but that would not suffice for the great tzadik Yitzchak. The woman worthy of being Yitzchak's wife would also have to be righteous in many ways regarding her attitude and actions towards her fellow man. Hence the test – how would she act when faced with the formidable effort of providing water for many strangers and their animals? Would she provide water only for Eliezer, in his position as the leader of the caravan, or would her kindness extend also to the other men in the caravan, or would she go the extra mile to provide water even for the camels?

All the above is an introduction for the real subject of this week's message, which for me is painful and distressing.

It is the abject failure of the great majority of religious leaders in the United States to stand up to the challenges and privileges that HaShem has given our generation, when the gates of the Holy Land are wide open and the call of Rachel to her sons and daughters is heard to return home.

Not only do these rabbis not encourage the return to Eretz Yisrael, but in the best case they show indifference towards

the Jewish State. Many even bad mouth the Jews in Eretz Yisrael who sacrifice daily to maintain our presence here. How utterly distressing it is that most yeshivas and chareidee synagogues refuse to even recite a "mi she'bairach" prayer for the valiant soldiers of Tzahal, who will be the soldiers of the Mashiach when the time comes.

To say that these rabbis are not God-fearing would be untruthful, for many are sincerely religious, and some are even recognized Torah scholars. So wherein lies the failure to recognize the irreversible changes that the Jewish nation is undergoing because of Medinat Yisrael? Whether one wishes to or not, the fact is that the heart of Jewish life is now centered in Medinat Yisrael. The Medina, in all its aspects, has created a most exciting environment for everyone who loves and learns Torah. New and critical issues facing the Halacha due to technological advances, changes in the way medicine is practiced, the military and our relations to the gentiles in our midst – to mention just a few – are more overwhelming than the many issues that the men of the Great Assembly faced under the leadership of Ezra the Scribe when they returned to Eretz Yisrael to rebuild the second Temple.

It should have been axiomatic that this environment would serve as the perfect setting for rabbis and heads of yeshivot in the galut to return home to be part of the Halachic dialogue at this watershed time in our history. So what is happening in the yeshiva world in the galut and even in some chareidee circles in Eretz Yisrael?

The problem, I believe, lies with the educational philosophy in the yeshivot there and in some yeshiva circles here.

It is the overriding spirit of self-perfection, where one's spiritual efforts are directed inwards with little or no regard to the spiritual needs of one's surroundings.

If one's financial needs necessitate "going out", then a young

man might fill the position of a pulpit rabbi or day-school teacher. A more ambitious person might even venture to open a kollel in his local area, while some might stray as far as Dallas, Texas to bring the voice of Torah there. But it is always secondary to the "I" and "Me".

The classic Musar books emphasize the necessity to draw closer to HaShem through self perfection: no lashon hara, extreme modesty in speech and dress, limiting relationships with people and closing one's mind to the wisdom of the world around us lest it impose heretical ideas upon us.

Although the Rambam and the Torah writings of many of the great rabbis of that time are studied daily in the yeshivos, they would undoubtedly feel constricted and confined in the semi-claustrophobic atmosphere where the mind is not permitted to soar into the wonders of Hashem's big wide world or to recognize one's responsibility to the Jewish nation as such.

The situation can be compared to what Eliezer faced when he saw Rivka as the waters ascended to meet her. He saw that she was a righteous young woman. However, he wondered whether she was limited in her righteousness only towards HaShem or was perfect also in those areas of life which demanded interaction with her fellow human beings and towards all of God's creations. Her actions would have to prove if she was worthy to be Yitzchak's wife.

The Torah being studied in the religious Zionist yeshivot is drawn from the spirit of Rivka, who cared for her total surroundings. It was her giant neshama for which she was chosen to be one of the four mothers of Am Yisrael – looking outwards towards her fellow man and all of God's creations. It was drawing closer to HaShem not through self-centered perfection but by seeing the spiritual and material needs of those around her.

A student in a religious Zionist yeshiva here is attuned to

the inescapable fact that his individual destiny is intertwined with the destiny of the nation at large.

At best, the intellectual and emotional result of a higher yeshiva education in the galut can bring one to feel that he is part of a community of Torah observers; but he can never feel that he is part of the greater Jewish nation, because he is not part of living a Torah life on a national level – as we feel in Eretz Yisrael.

The recognition and dedication to the Jewish people as a distinctive national and religious entity constitutes the unbridgeable gap between the righteous, inimitable King David and the arch evil Yeravam ben Navat. King David redirected the allegiances of the people from their parochial tribal affiliation to that of a central authority, with Yerushalayim as its national capital and the Temple as its stairway to heaven. While on the other end of the religious national spectrum was Yeravam ben Navat who caused the secession of the northern tribes and their ultimate disappearance into exile, until this very day. HaShem merited David with a descendant who will be our Mashiach, while Yeravam lost his place in the world-to-come.

However, despite the veracity of what I consider the difference between the religious Zionist yeshivot and the galut yeshivot, it no longer makes a big difference today.

We are at the brink of a great social upheaval which will empty the galut of yeshivot and Jews, as the Gemara (Megila 29a) says that in the future the yeshivot and shuls in the galut will be transferred to Eretz Yisrael. It appears that the future is now upon us.

One need not be an astute student of history to see what is unfolding in the Western world. As the economy of the US and Europe spirals downward, it will be accompanied by violent anti-Semitism which will be a reenactment of the biblical

episode when the Egyptians literally threw the Jews out of their country.

The burning of several cars belonging to Jews in the Flatbush area of Brooklyn and the murder of a Jewish woman there this week do not in themselves signal the beginning of the end. However, the burgeoning feelings of the 99% *have nots* who believe the 1% of those who *have* are made up of 99% Jews, are foreboding factors in what could happen.

My suggestion to the Jews living in the US is to open an account in an Israeli bank, change your dollars into shekalim and transfer the money to Israel. If you can, purchase an apartment even sight unseen, but at least your money is here.

All bad things have an end. The galut is the worst punishment ever inflicted on the Jewish nation. May it soon come to an end so that we will come together as one people in Eretz Yisrael as promised to us by Hashem's holy messengers – the prophets.

Shabbat Shalom

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