

Eikev 5781

BS"D Parashat Eikev 5781
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Un-Jewish? Un-Rabbinic?

In last week's message, I wrote of the pending "yom hadin" – HaShem's inevitable day of judgement against all our historic and contemporary enemies, first and foremost the Christian nations of Europe and including others like Iran and their Islamic co-religionists. This evoked negative reactions of shock from several corners, claiming that my vengeful tone is un-Jewish and certainly inappropriate for a rabbi.

Un-Jewish Indeed?! Un-rabbinic? Indeed!

What is the difference between a "right" as in the first 10 amendments to the Constitution which make up the Bill of Rights, and a "privilege"?

A privilege is something granted as a special favor by the will of the grantor, which the recipient cannot demand. A "right" is a status upon which one may demand its fulfillment. An American citizen has the right to demand his freedom of religion, speech, press, assembly, and petition. But one cannot demand privileges reserved for the elite.

That we are alive is not a "right" that permits us to demand from the Creator; but rather a magnificent privilege granted by Him to be a real entity which is commanded to recognize and accept His mastery and Monarchy and to service Him by abiding to his will.

Our parasha begins (Devarim 7,12):

’וְאֶת-הַבְּرִיתָהָה-זֶה תִּשְׁמַע וְאֶת-הַמִּצְוֹתָה-זֶה תִּשְׁמַע
וְאֶת-הַנְּאָזְנָה-זֶה תִּשְׁמַע וְאֶת-הַבְּרִיתָהָה-זֶה תִּשְׁמַע

If you abide by these laws and will be diligent in following them, then the Lord your God will fulfill his covenant of love with you, as he swore to your ancestors.

Verse 8,19:

וְאֶת-הַבְּרִיתָהָה-זֶה תִּשְׁמַע וְאֶת-הַמִּצְוֹתָה-זֶה תִּשְׁמַע ’וְאֶת-הַבְּרִיתָהָה-זֶה
וְאֶת-הַמִּצְוֹתָה-זֶה תִּשְׁמַע וְאֶת-הַבְּרִיתָהָה-זֶה תִּשְׁמַע וְאֶת-הַמִּצְוֹתָה-זֶה

If you forget (ignore) the Lord your God and follow other gods and worship and bow down to them, I testify against you today that you will surely be lost.

Two basic principles arise from these verses:

1. One does not have an inherent “right” (entitlement) to live. Life is a privilege granted to man by the Creator, and when one oversteps that privilege his life could be compromised.
2. There are inevitable consequences to our behavior, for good and for bad.

Let's return to my “un-Jewish” and “un-rabbinic” expectations that HaShem, the God of justice, mercy and truth will punish all who have lifted a finger or voiced condemnation toward – the Jewish nation.

What did our father Avraham do to the four kings who kidnapped his nephew Lot?

What about Shimon and Levi in the city of Shechem?

Moshe Rabbeinu took revenge on the Egyptian taskmaster for beating a Jew and was commanded by HaShem to destroy the nation of Midyan for leading 24,000 Jews to sin.

Yehoshua decimated the seven Canaanite nations.

Shoftim (Judges like Gidon, Shimshon, Devora, and Yael the wife of Chaver Hakaini) were not lily white.

King David ordered the killing of two thirds of the males of Moav, after their king murdered David's parents and six brothers.

And the list is very long.

Avenging Evil is a Holy Mitzva

To avenge evil is a holy mitzva. From where do we know this?

The Gemara (Brachot 33a) lists three things whose senior status of importance was emphasized in the Tanach by their written word, appearing between two names of Hashem. They are:

מִשְׁרָדָה ,מִזְבֵּחַ ,מִשְׁפָּט

Native intelligence, the Temple, revenge against evil doers.

Rambam (Melachim chapter 5):

מִשְׁרָדָה ,מִזְבֵּחַ ,מִשְׁפָּט מִשְׁרָדָה וְמִזְבֵּחַ וְמִשְׁפָּט וְמִשְׁרָדָה
מִשְׁפָּט וְמִזְבֵּחַ וְמִשְׁרָדָה

Defines war which is a mitzva to wage as the war against the seven Canaanite nations (and by extension any war to liberate Eretz Yisrael); war against Amalek, and war against any non-Jew who threatens the life of a Jew.

In addition, we recite on most Shabbatot the following verses in the Av Harachamim liturgy before Musaf, Devarim 32,43:

מִשְׁרָדָה מִזְבֵּחַ מִשְׁפָּט מִשְׁרָדָה
מִזְבֵּחַ מִשְׁפָּט מִשְׁרָדָה
מִשְׁרָדָה
מִשְׁפָּט
מִזְבֵּחַ

Rejoice, you nations, with his people, for He will avenge

the blood of His servants; He will take vengeance on His enemies and make atonement for His land and people.

The prophet Joel 4,21:

וְיִמְלָא תְּמוּנָה 'זֶה יְמִינָה כִּי כִּי יְמִינָה

**Shall I leave their innocent blood unavenged? I will not.
The Lord dwells in Zion!**

Tehillim 79,10:

וְיִמְלָא תְּמוּנָה כִּי כִּי יְמִינָה כִּי כִּי יְמִינָה כִּי כִּי
:וְיִמְלָא תְּמוּנָה

Why should the nations say, where is their God? Before our eyes, make known among the nations that You avenge the outpoured blood of Your servants.

Tehillim 9,13:

וְיִמְלָא תְּמוּנָה כִּי כִּי יְמִינָה כִּי כִּי יְמִינָה כִּי כִּי

Sing the praises of the Lord, enthroned in Zion; proclaim among the nations what He has done. For He who avenges blood remembers; He does not ignore the cries of the afflicted.

Un-Jewish and un-rabbinic, indeed!

In the matter of avenging evil, we are partners with the Creator. HaShem deals with the big and numerous enemies, the small but deadly one He leaves to us.

In conclusion: there are many beautiful subjects and ideas in our parasha that I could write about, aside from HaShem's imminent wrath on our enemies. But as I perceive it, we are now in a time when Judenhass is going to fill a major role on the stage of history. We cannot afford the luxury of burying our heads in the sand and be oblivious to the changes in the United States and in many lands where Jews live today; not to

speak of the Middle East.

It brings to mind the prophetic words of the sinister Bil'am in Bamidbar (23,9):

וְיַגְעַל כִּי-יְהִי כְּבָדָל וְיַגְעַל כִּי-יְהִי כְּבָדָל ...

I see a people who live apart and are not involved when dealing with the other nations.

Many of the commentaries explain this verse to mean, that on that day (or time) of reckoning when HaShem brings down the enemies of Am Yisrael, we will remain unscathed and will be the leaders of the new world.

Shabbat Shalom,

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