

Emor 5774

Why is a Kohen Prohibited from Marrying a Divorcee?

Our parsha's prohibition on marriage between a Kohen and divorcee has caused great consternation throughout the ages, especially in light of the Torah's rationale that a Kohen is required to be "kadosh" (holy), implying that a divorcee is an inappropriate wife for one who is holy!

Indeed! Why does the Torah penalize a woman who had a bad marriage through no fault of her own, and has now met a Kohen who wants to give her a new life? Did not Amram, father of Miriam and Aharon, remarry Yocheved after divorcing her, who then gave birth to the holy Moshe Rabbeinu?

I suggest:

The Midrash states that prior to presenting the Torah to Am Yisrael, HaShem offered it to the 70 gentile root nations of the time. The descendants of Eisav, who comprise the majority of today's European nations, rejected the Torah because of the injunction against murder. The descendants of Yishmael rejected the Torah because of the injunction against thievery; as did every other civilization reject the Torah which did not conform to the essence of their souls.

When this universal rejection of Torah occurred, HaShem expelled all the gentile nations from his spiritual realm; just as a man divorces an unsuitable wife. HaShem will never restore the gentile peoples to an eminent spiritual status, be they Christian, Islam, Hindu, etc. For once divorced, HaShem the ultimate "Kohen" (source of blessings) will never take back the divorced nations.

HaShem singled out the sons of Aharon to be "Kohanim" – His personal emissaries in this world. Kohanim were appointed to service the most intimate connections between the Creator and

His nation Yisrael. Kohanim maintained the Holy Temple, offered up the sacrifices, redeemed the first born, and were restricted from coming into contact with the dead (because HaShem is the source of life in this world and the next). Kohanim traditionally comprised the majority of the Sanhedrin, and were the teachers and leaders of the nation.

HaShem prohibited a Kohen from marrying a divorcee not because of any blemish or flaw upon her, because there are none, but to serve as an everlasting reminder that HaShem, the ultimate source of kohanic blessings, will never restore the “divorced” gentile nations to His favor.

The Holocaust – Because Jews Were There

The Holocaust is the most barbarous calamity to befall the Jewish nation. Its devastation outranks even the destruction of the two Batei Hamikdash, as explained in Midrash Eicha 4 in its analysis of chap. 79 in Tehillim: “Mizmor Le’Asaf” – a song of praise (to Hashem) composed by Asaf (the Levi). The Midrash points out that this introductory sentence is totally incompatible with the text, which deals with the projected destruction of the Bet Hamikdash. It should read “Kina Le’Asaf” – a lamentation composed by Asaf not “Mizmor le’Asaf” – a song of praise composed by Asaf.

The Midrash explains that the destruction of the two Batei Mikdash is certainly a calamity of the first order. However, even within the context of this punishment, Hashem showed His mercy by venting His anger on the wood and stones of the structure rather than permit mass murder of His people.

So the inescapable question: How did it come about in Hashem’s world that six million Jews, including one-and-a-half million children and millions of God-fearing Torah Jews, were sent to Olam Haba (the next world) through the chimneys of Eisav’s death camps?

It would be flippant and irreverent to answer that the Shoah

was punishment for our sins. For all Jews are mutual guarantors (*kol Yisrael arayvim ze la'ze*), but only the Jews of Europe and parts of North Africa suffered that fate, whereas the Jews of the U.S. and Eretz Yisrael were not only spared, but also prospered.

I wish to state my personal understanding of these events, which consoles me in some small way when facing the unspeakable horrors of the Shoah.

The Gemara (Bava Kama 60a) explains the underlying meaning of the verse (Shmot 22:5)

אִם יִשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל
יִשְׂרָאֵל-יִשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל

*If a fire spreads **to weeds** (in another's field) and devours **bales of wheat or uncut wheat** or the field, the negligent perpetrator must make payment.*

The Gemara explains that “weeds” are the evil doers of the world and “the bales of wheat” are the righteous of Am Yisrael. When HaShem decrees that the “weeds” be destroyed, the free hand of the Angel of Death begins with the coveted “**bales of wheat**” – the righteous **who happen to be there** among the evil doers.

I reject any allegation that my fellow Jewish brothers and sisters sinned to a degree which justified the horrors of the Shoah. Some “experts” at counting other peoples’ sins place the blame on assimilation. But never has Jewish history encountered the numbers and rate of assimilation and intermarriage found today among the Jews of the United States, yet they continue to thrive. Other sin counters put the blame on Zionism, while others, on the lack of Zionism.

The Shoah was Hashem’s decree which began with the First World

War, that the evil descendants of Eisav should put an end to one another; that Eisav should devour Eisav. Russians should kill Germans, and Germans should slaughter Englishmen, the Ukrainians should kill the Americans, and Americans should kill the Turks etc. And it is common knowledge that the Second World War was a continuation of the First World War, after an extended cease fire.

The Jews were turned into smoke and soap, because the leash on insanity was released, and the Jews were caught up in it BECAUSE WE WERE THERE! And we were there because we did not understand that when Eisav kills Eisav, it is no place for Ya'akov to be.

When the inhibitions of hatred are released, then the ever-present hatred of Jews rises to the fore and Eisav seeks to put an end to Ya'akov.

If you reject the proposition that the two world wars were death sentences decreed on the goyim, and we were swept into it just because we were there, you are left with two very bad options: That the Jews of Europe sinned to the extent that 1,500,000 little children had to die; or the whole matter is beyond our comprehension, so let's just continue building bigger and more expensive holocaust museums and go back to living.

If one lives in a depraved gentile society, then no matter how *frum* or how erudite in Torah, one could one day find himself swept up in the tsunamis and 9/11's of that nation. The Jews were cast to the unbridled hatred of the Eisavic Christians because we were there.

Aliyah: The Saving of Jewish Lives

The basic message of *aliyah* to Eretz Yisrael in my writings is essential; however, there are those who are distracted from the issue because I present it in a blatant and strident form.

Permit me to explain why I wrap the beautiful gift of aliyah in sandpaper and not in a lace-topped package wrapped with a pretty ribbon:

1. Rabbis in every generation are required, as was Moshe Rabbeinu, to transmit to the Jewish nation the Torah we received from HaShem at Sinai.

In the uncompromising tug-of-war for the Jewish mind and heart, we, as the disciples of Moshe, are pitted against today's disciples of yesteryear's *meraglim*. If we should fail to convince the nation to go up to the "Land" in the way of Yehoshua bin Nun and Calev ben Yefuneh, the matter will come before the *beit din shel ma'ala* (the Heavenly court) to the detriment of us all.

My messages, and those of many other rabbanim in Eretz Yisrael who see the hand of God in our present history, will appear as tolerant, benign, gentle, and pale when compared to the same message which HaShem has sent and will send through the tragic events of Jewish history.

Is our cajolery to leave the galut more strident than the same message sent by HaShem through the devastating Holocaust and cataclysmic assimilation of our people in the galut?

I believe totally in the sanctity of Eretz Yisrael and the uplifting spiritual effect it has on those who live here. But this is not the primary reason that I call for *Aliyah*. My reason supersedes even the most essential mitzvot in the Torah – it is the saving of Jewish lives. What would you say if passengers on a sinking ship refused to climb onto the life rafts because the captain did not say "please"?

In the face of the ultimate question of whether "to be or not to be", style and form are relegated to secondary status.

Short of tying a rope around the collective bodies of Jews in the galut and pulling them here, I can only shout through the

megaphone of words.

To return to the beginning of this week's message. If HaShem ordered the Kohanim to serve as a reminder of His eternal rejection of all the other nations from His spiritual world, how can so many of the nation of Yisrael choose to live among those who HaShem rejected? Why do we wish to speak their languages, emulate their ways and eventually marry their daughters?

We have seen what happens when Eisav attacks Eisav and when Yishmael (the Arab states) attacks Yishmael. In the not far away future HaShem will decree that Eisav will attack Yishmael, and woe to any Jew who will be present among them at the time.

Now is the time to break away from the galut, and find deliverance and salvation under the "wing" of Eretz Yisrael.

It is incumbent upon anyone who can cajole, beg, implore, threaten and all else, in order to release the Jews in the galut from their psychological and spiritual incarceration, even at the risk of sounding "unfriendly".

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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