

Vayaira – Chayai Sarah 5771

BS"D Vayaira and Chayai Sarah 5771

Part 1

Among the many questions that arise from the parasha, one is conspicuously glaring.

When HaShem informed Avraham of His intention to destroy the five totally evil cities of the-then fabulous area of the eastern plain (picture Las Vegas or San Fransisco), Avraham reacted in defense of the evil doers by beseeching HaShem to find some way to spare them. However, when Avraham was told to take his beloved son Yitzchak and offer him up as a sacrifice, Avraham obediently accepted Yitzchak's fate without uttering a word in defense of his son. Why?

I submit:

The fate of the peoples of the plain was sealed by the evil they had wrought. However, Avraham, being the tzaddik that he was, believed that no man is beyond teshuva when the circumstances of his present existence change. Fifty righteous men should be sufficient to save the lives of the cities, claimed Avraham; and he even succeeded in lowering the number to ten righteous men. Today the majority of those people are evil, but there is hope for tomorrow.

This is the task of the tzaddik, to eradicate evil while inspiring the evildoer to change.

The episode of Yitzchak was on a quantum different spiritual level. Yitzchak's life was to be taken away not as a punishment for sins committed, but for quite the contrary. His death as a sacrifice would raise up his soul to a spiritual sphere that no soul before him had ever reached. His soul was

to enter into the most inner spiritual precincts of creation, just short of the kisay hakavod – the highest throne of HaShem.

In these circumstances, could Avraham have requested that Hashem renege on His desire to draw Yitzchak to Him?!

When surveying the difficult history of our people in Eretz Yisrael from the first day of our independence in 1948 until now, one might conclude that HaShem chose this generation of Jews in the Holy Land for collective punishment. Wars, rationing, economic hardship, terror, military threats, absorption of millions of olim, boycotts, international condemnations, etc. – all these and more have been the lot of the Jews who have returned home. One might conclude that HaShem is relating to us with the severe quality of judgment (midat hadin) somewhat along the same lines – though not as extreme – as the judgment meted out to the people of Sedom and Amora, Ninveh and Rome – each in his time.

However, nothing could be further from the truth.

The difficulties we are facing are not punishments. Rather they fall into the category of akaidat Yitzchak, who underwent immense stress in order to reach greater spiritual heights. So too, the difficulties we are facing in the Holy Land are all designed to raise us to unprecedented spiritual heights.

Throughout our two thousand years of galut when any “two-bit” Christian or Moslem criminal could kill, burn, exile and force conversion on any Jew or on an entire Jewish community, we were powerless to defend ourselves. This untenable situation produced a psychological response within the leadership, and certainly among the nation as a whole, that this would be our fate until the Mashiach appears.

Our lot was to be trampled upon, crushed, violated, encroached on, annihilated, repressed, scattered, subdued, subjugated, suppressed – eventually to be branded with a number and then

turned into soap. It is an ugly picture of what the galut did to us.

The results of the inhumane treatment we received at the hands of the goyim is projected in the most glaring way in pictures of Jews in Eastern Europe and the Mellahs of North Africa.

“These cannot be the people whom God had chosen, for it is so easy to dehumanize them”, was the accepted feeling among the Church leadership and the Imams of Islam.

We were universally viewed as the eternal “wandering Jew,” cursed because of our rejection of Muhamed according to Islam and our rejection of Yeshu according to Christianity.

It was so accepted and logical that many Jews willingly converted out of Judaism, while those who remained faithful stooped low under the physical and mental loads of “Jude” yellow patches and other degradations – each Jew with his own personal inferiority complex.

Out of the ashes of our degradation, HaShem created Medinat Yisrael. On the 5th of Iyar 5708 (May 14, 1948) Jews all over the world looked up to see the flag of Israel raised in Yerushalayim. The following day we were invaded by seven Arab armies (with many German volunteers), led by British officers. The barely existent and fledgling army of Israel defeated the invaders and increased the size of the Medinah threefold. Jewish hearts began to pulsate as they had not done in 2000 years. A Jewish homeland in Eretz Yisrael! A 2000-year dream come true, just as the prophets had predicted.

Jewish soldiers destroyed the enemy, which had not been done in Spain, Poland, Germany, Ukraine, Russia, Yemen, Iraq and more.

With each military victory the Jewish soul comes closer to healing. Every air force sortie, every enemy killed, indeed every house and tree has revived the atrophied hopes and

dreams of our people.

Here in Eretz Yisrael, HaShem the ultimate healer, is drawing us away from the galut complex of pessimism, inactivity, acceptance of anti-Semitism, passivity and tolerance as second-rate citizens in gentile lands.

The difficulties we are encountering here are aimed at drawing us closer to Hashem as His chosen people, just as Yitzchak was drawn closer to HaShem while being bound on the altar waiting to be sacrificed.

With every terrorist that we kill, whether he be from Chamas, Chizbala, "Palestinian?" authority, flotilla terrorists or their supporters – the world becomes a cleaner, more hygienic place and we take one more giant step away from the inferiority complex imposed upon us by the galut.

Now if one should argue that this is not the way of gentle, happy, compassionate, Chofetz Chaim Judaism, recall that the Jewish nation upon entering the Holy Land was commanded to perform three immediate mitzvot: After appointing a king (leadership), the king would then raise an army to destroy Amalek and then build the Bet Ha'Mikdash.

We don't have a king today, but we have national leadership. We cannot build the Bet Hamikdash at this moment in our history, but we can plan and study its laws and rituals. Amalek? They abound here within the land as a fifth column and without. The Rambam defines Amalek as anyone who plans, dreams and prepares to kill Jews. The mitzva of destroying Amalek is being carried out daily, albeit not at the rate that would have satisfied the prophet Shmuel when he admonished King Shaul for not fulfilling the mitzva in its entirety.

Often, when walking down the street and seeing a soldier with beard and payot, I put my hand on his shoulder and say, "This is how a Jewish soldier has to look". I would do it to every soldier, but the ones with beard and payot understand what I

mean and embarrassingly reply “toda”.

To be convinced of what I stated above, one need not do more than compare the links in the generation chain in Eretz Yisrael with those in the galut.

Tens of thousands of our youth study Torah in yeshivot and ulpanot (girls' schools) implementing their studies in the love of the land and pride in being Jewish. They serve in the army in the most dangerous and special units for the boys, and National Service for the girls. They know Yerushalayim, the Temple Mount, Chevron and all other holy places like the palm of their hands.

Their brains are not occupied with fast cars, great weekends, the Giants against the Eagles, Harvard or Princeton. Our healthy youth worry about the next hillside and how to connect it to the nearby settlement.

The galut Jew continues in his atrophied state of do-nothing of historic importance, while their Jewish identification wilts as an unused muscle and paralyzed limb.

Eretz Yisrael is called “Eretz Ha'chayim” because here a Jew comes alive, Chazal declared every inch of chutz la'aretz to be contaminated with “Tum'at eretz ha'amim” – the gentile lands of impurity, because the soul of a Jew who lives there becomes inflicted with its tuma.

We still have a way to go to rid ourselves of the 2000 years of galut, as witnessed by Medina's concern about what the “nations” might say if we act in our defense, or the presence of such a large number of disloyal Arabs in the country, or the large influx of illegal Africans to the country, or the limitations put upon soldiers even when waging a war. But time will teach us how to act.

Part 2

The strong and proud stance of a Jew, as expressed in parashat Vayaira, would seem to appear incompatible with Avraham's demeanor vis-a-vie the municipal leaders of Chevron. He bowed down twice before them while negotiating the purchase of Me'arat Ha'machpela as a burial place for Sarah.

We find a similar passivity on the part of Ya'akov when he prostrated himself seven times before his brother Aisav, and when he objected to what his two sons, Shimon and Levi had done to the city of Shechem.

Is this the same Avraham who led his army of 318 men in battle against the four kings, destroying them and their nations? Is this the same Ya'akov who was prepared to do battle with his brother Aisav, if need be?

So who were the real Avraham and Ya'akov? Were they like the Jews of Europe's ghettos and those of Brooklyn, or like the soldiers of King David and the soldiers of Medinat Yisrael's navy commandos?

I submit that Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov were servants of HaShem. They did not act in accordance with their personal feelings or thoughts, but what would best serve the "idea" for which the world was created – the Jewish nation that will connect the spiritual and physical worlds through the Torah.

When we first meet the nation's fathers and mothers in the Torah, they are just a family and not yet a nation. The antagonism of the goyim in Eretz Yisrael to the first Jews in the world was personal – Nimrod against Avraham, Paro of Egypt against Avraham, Avimelech the Phillistine against Avraham, Lavan against Ya'akov and the people of Shechem against Ya'akov's family.

Individuals against individuals.

On this level, the enemy is also to be seen as individuals, with no collective responsibility on those surrounding them.

When receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai, we attained the status not only of a nation but of God's chosen nation. From then on, until this very day, the antagonism of the gentile turned into establishment, institutionalized "anti-Semitism" – hatred of the Jew because we are God's chosen people – and was directed against both the collective "Jewish nation" and against every individual Jew.

Here everything changed.

The antagonism of individuals towards individuals changed to religions vs. Judaism and gentile nations vs. the Jewish nation.

Now here the lesson for our time.

Before the Allies bombed the city of Dresden, Germany – eventually killing over 200,000 residents – did they warn the civilians to leave?

Before Hiroshima and Nagasaki were "atomized" and reduced to ashes, did the US warn the Japanese to evacuate their women and children?

War, by definition, is not one individual soldier confronting another individual soldier on the other's land. It is the battle for life between nations.

In this situation the men fight, the women support and the children dream of revenge. There are no innocents among those who identify with the enemy.

When Yehoshua liberated the Holy Land from the occupying Canaanites, not one Canaanite leftist professor was left to write their history. King David knew this when he fought in his time, and his future descendant – the Mashiach – will also know how to treat the collective enemies of Am Yisrael.

We, in Medinat Yisrael, are fighting two wars. One is the silent undeclared war of the Christian world against us, because we are God's chosen nation and they know it.

The other is the declared war of Islam fought by the battalions of the Arab countries, the PLO, and Iran through their proxies of Chamas and Chizbala.

In this war against Islam, there is no place for traitors of the ilk as the South African Judge Goldstone or the so-called Human Rights Commission of the UN, who would have every Israeli soldier to be accompanied with a legal expert advising him when he may or may not shoot – if the soldier lives long enough for the expert to check his legal books.

The soldiers of Tzahal are the emissaries of the millions of Jews who were murdered by the gentiles for their one "crime" of being Jews.

The responsibility of the Israeli government is to expose the hypocrisy of the Christian and Moslem religions, and give the green light to the soldiers of Tzahal to perform their duty in protecting the Jews in Eretz Yisrael – in the spirit of Yehoshua bin Nun, King David – and Dresden.

Shabbat Shalom

Nachman Kahana

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