

Shoftim 5773

BS"D Parashat Shoftim 5773

Devarim 21,7

אֵלֵינוּ הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה לֹא שָׁפַךְ דָּם וְלֹא רָאָה עֵינֵינוּ

"Our hands did not shed this blood, nor did our eyes see it"

Part A:

The parsha ends with the mitzva of egla arufa (the beheading of the heifer), which entails the following details:

- 1- The body of a murdered Jew is found outside a city in Eretz Yisrael.
- 2- Five members of the Sanhedrin are sent from Yerushalayim to ascertain by land measurement which city is closest to the corpse.
- 3- The high court (23 judges) of that city go to a bed stream where they behead the heifer.
- 4- The court and the city's elders wash their hands over the beheaded heifer, and declare:

אֵלֵינוּ הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה לֹא שָׁפַךְ דָּם וְלֹא רָאָה עֵינֵינוּ

Our hands did not shed this blood, nor did our eyes see it"

Meaning: We did not see this man when he left the city, hence we are not culpable for not providing him with food and accompaniment.

- 5- Kohanim then declare:

אֵלֵינוּ הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה לֹא שָׁפַךְ דָּם וְלֹא רָאָה עֵינֵינוּ 'וְלֹא שָׁפַךְ דָּם וְלֹא רָאָה עֵינֵינוּ

Accept this as atonement for your people Israel, whom you have redeemed, Lord, and do not hold your people guilty of the blood of an innocent person.

Part B:

The enlightened part of the world sighed a sigh of relief at the German defeat in 1945, except for the Jewish nation for whom there was no relief because the Shoah did not cease. It, in fact, expanded to areas in the world where the Germans never reached, and the number of victims have, by now, exceeded the body count of our people in the war.

This Shoah has many names. Some call it assimilation, others call it intermarriage, and detached, uninvolved intellectuals call it acculturation; but by any name the stench is the same.

In 1945, we numbered under 12 million people, and today 70 years later, despite the fact that normal nations increase geometrically not arithmetically (one by one), we number even less than at the end of the war. Of the estimated number of Jews in the United States, half are non-halachik. They have either converted by the reform movement, or recognized by the reform as being Jewish by virtue of a Jewish biological father.

Every occurrence of a Jewish man or woman marrying a gentile is for the Jewish nation not less than the death of that person. The Jew or Jewess and their offspring are forever lost to the nation, and they frequently become anti Semites.

This "death" can be compared in many ways to the corpse that is found in the episode of the eglah arufa (the beheaded heifer), but with a major difference.

The rabbis in every city where an intermarriage takes place cannot wash and say *"Our hands did not shed this blood, nor did our eyes see it."*

They cannot say "*Our hands did not shed this blood*", because these spiritual leaders are responsible to a great degree for the diluting of Jewish blood which was passed on from Sinai with the blood of gentiles whose relatives spilled Jewish blood.

They cannot say "*nor did our eyes see it,*" because they could not have escaped seeing and feeling the spirit and compulsion of assimilation in the streets, in the media, in the universities.

All the sermons, lectures and shiurim regarding Shabbat, kashrut or lashon hara, or daf hayomi cannot stem the tide of assimilation. Even within orthodox communities, there is barely a family that does not have a relative who left Yiddishkeit to marry a gentile.

There is no panacea for assimilation in a land where Jews mix freely with gentiles and with their culture in universities and in the work place. Not to speak of the other gentile habits the Jews adopt, such as alcoholism, drugs, sexual perversion down to marital infidelity all which exist even in religious communities, as was related to me by people who deal with these matters.

A Jew who lives among gentiles will eventually adopt their ways. Slowly and subtly, at first, then after he will run after their avoda zara. The cultural yetzer hara is determined and compulsive even attacking learned Jews, as recorded in the Gemara (Sanhedrin 102b).

Rav Ashi, editor and compiler of the Babylonian Talmud, once referred to Menashe the idolatrous King of Yehuda, in a very glib manner as "our colleague Menashe". That night Menashe appeared to Rav Ashi in a dream, and took issue with the too familiar manner in which he was referred to. In that dream, Menashe, the infamous distorter of the Torah proved himself to be even more knowledgeable than the great Rav Ashi. When Rav

Ashi asked the King how he became so enmeshed in idolatry? Menashe replied, "Had you lived in my times you would have grabbed your coat and run to worship idolatry".

There are no shortcuts or easy answers in the battle to maintain a holy Jewish soul. Adding another day school or building another mikva is nice but does little in keeping the next generation of galut Jews from decreasing in numbers and in religious fervor.

The chareidi Jew who encloses himself from the all absorbing gentile influences by dressing in a certain garb and speaking Yiddish can succeed in pushing off the day when his offspring will leave the fold, but they will leave as they did in Eastern Europe.

The only antidote is to escape from the gilded gentile cage. To come home as long as the opportunity to do so still exists.

I am certain that most rabbis who deal with the public in galut agree that the answer is to come to Eretz Yisrael, despite the fact that we too have our problems. However, the difference is like standing in a downpour of yetzer hara vs. standing in a drizzle of the yetzer.

However, the obstacles blocking the way of spiritual leaders to making the leap of faith or to even encourage their communities to escape the slippery slope of the galut are too many and too difficult for most rabbis to overcome.

If in the matter of eglarufah kohanim pray to Hashem:

קַח נָא חַטֹּאתֵינוּ וְכַפֵּר עֲלֵינוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְלֹא תִשֹּׁא אֶת אֵימָנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ

Accept this as atonement for your people Israel, whom you have redeemed, Lord, and do not hold your people guilty of the blood of an innocent person.

The spiritual leaders in galut cannot so easily dismiss the

reality of the Jewish assimilation by beseeching HaShem with the words, *"Accept this as atonement for your people Israel, whom you have redeemed, Lord, and do not hold your people guilty of the blood of an innocent person."*

The teshuva of the spiritual leaders of communities and yeshivot in galut, must set the example of overcoming personal weaknesses and return home to Eretz Yisrael.

And here we shall pray and await the day when Am Yisrael will close and lock the gate on our 2000 year punishment, and "assimilation" will be when we all speak one language of Ivri, and Ashkenazi marries Sefaradi, and we all pray in one nusach (liturgical text) and stand as one man with one heart in the Bet Hamikdash on the Temple Mount.

Shabbat Shalom

Nachman Kahana

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