

Teruma 5775

BS"D Parashat Teruma 5775

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

Heroes and Role Models this week in Eretz Yisrael

It is natural for people to revere individuals who stand head and shoulders above the crowd, paragons of virtue; they are our "heroes". They are role models who we wish to emulate, even when we know that our capabilities do not match theirs. We also villainize individuals who we believe betray the virtues we hold dear.

This week in Eretz Yisrael, we had the opportunity to undergo a "role model" experience centered around 7 people.

1 and 2. There was a changing of the guard in Tzahal. Lieutenant General Binyamin Gantz concluded four turbulent years as army Chief of Staff. It was a time when we witnessed a "new" Middle East, where imbedded Arab regimes tumbled and Jihadists are calling the agendas of nations.

Lieutenant General Gantz was replaced by Lieutenant General Gadi Eisenkot. In the next four years, the General will be challenged by multiple enemies. Upon his shoulders will rest the security of the nation. It is therefore no wonder that he concluded his acceptance address with the pasuk

יְהוָה יִתֵּן בִּלְבָבוֹתָם אֱמוּנָה וְשָׁלוֹם וְיִשְׁמַח בָּנוּ וְיִבְרַךְ אֶת אֲמֹתָינוּ

HaShem will give boldness to His nation, HaShem will bless His nation with peace

At the close of the formalities, the two generals went to the Kotel. One to give thanks to HaShem for having had the privilege to be counted among the ranks of Yo'av ben Tzruya, King David's Chief of Staff, and Avner ben Ner, King Shaul's CoS, and Yehuda HaMacabee; and the second to beseech HaShem to provide him with the courage, wisdom and patience to lead HaShem's holy army to even greater victories.

Binyamin Gantz and Gadi Eisenkot are heroes to millions of us Israelis. May HaShem shine His continence upon them both.

3. Minister Uri Orbach, who passed away this week at the age of 54. To know him was to love him. In his quiet way he demonstrated the kindness and light of the Torah way of life. He is a hero to many people in his careers as a journalist, writer and broadcaster, with his sharp religious wit.

4-7. Four young, Chareidi yeshiva students who were released this week after a month in a military prison for failing to register with the army as required by law (registration is not induction) for all men and women upon reaching 17 years of age.

They were met by thousands of Chareidim who lauded their outstanding mesirat nefesh (self-sacrifice) in defense of the Torah by refusing to even appear at the Draft Board to show that they are alive. The courage of other young men of their age who stormed Hamas strongholds in the face of thick enemy fire in our previous military campaign in Azza, pales in front of the courage demonstrated of these 4 young men who preferred the 30 day suffering of a military prison. Their place in Olam Haba (paradise) is forever guaranteed! Sic!

The Foundation Stone of our

National Existence

Our parsha begins by repeating the word “truma” (endowment or contribution) three times. The reason, as explained by our rabbis, is that there were three presentations of trumot: Exactly one half shekel from every adult male, to be melted down to produce the silver bases for the wooden poles which formed the Mishkan. A second half shekel for the purchase of animals for the public sacrifices in the coming year. And the third “truma” of gold, silver, copper and various textiles for the Mishkan, this time in accordance to the generosity of the individual.

There is an essential lesson to be learned from this.

The first two citations of “truma” refer to issues of a collective public nature – the silver bases of the Mishkan and public sacrifices. These expenditures are fixed at a half shekel from every adult male irrespective of one’s personal financial status.

The third donation for the general construction of the Mishkan above the silver bases, as a reflection of one’s personal generosity.

The Torah is teaching us that in matters which effect the **foundation stones** of our national life, the responsibility falls equally on each person. No one is exempt, and no one can take credit more than anyone else. However, in matters which effect an individual’s private life, he is free to make the choices which will best serve him and his interests.

Being a Torah Jew is analogous to a train ride. We all pay the same amount for a common destination, and have no control over the train’s direction or its speed. The direction and speed are the elements common to all the passengers. However, one may sit in the car of his choice. Face the front or the back. Learn Torah, read a book, send an SMS or sleep. All these

freedoms are ours because they reflect our personal preferences.

The **foundation stone** of our national and religious existence is Eretz Yisrael. We are endowed with the holy task of securing the Jewish Medina to the extent that there be no doubt that we have come home forever. In a word – “security”.

There is no excuse for any man of conscience to escape this mitzva.

I, too, believe that the study of Torah protects Am Yisrael, but with several qualifiers:

If you receive payment for learning, you don't come close to protecting Am Yisrael. In fact, the opposite is true! To receive payment of Torah study degrades the Torah, and endangers us.

No one in the draft age group of 18-25 has reached the level where his Torah erudition can make a dent in the heavens.

Torah study of less than 16-18 hours a day also does not add any armor to our defense.

Torah study which counterbalances our sinful ways and protects the nation is in the domain of mature talmidei chachamim (scholars) who have completed the Talmud and Shulchan Aruch several times. And whose personal virtues of love and fear of HaShem override their intellectual accomplishments.

Those who begin their study day at 5 AM and their eyes fall shut at midnight are the authentic candidates to be Torah giants. All the rest are like cadets in a school for officers. A few will succeed, the majority will remain mediocre.

The parasha states that the goal of the Mishkan was to provide the atmosphere whereby the holy Shechina (spirit of HaShem) would dwell within the People of Israel. The initial condition for this is the unity of our nation. The divisiveness into

small cliques or factions of religious conduct creates financial competitiveness and personality cults which lead to unwarranted hatred of fellow Jews.

The Jewish people have come a long way since Moshe first commanded us to strive that the Shechina dwell among us. But it seems that we still have a way to go.

On a personal note

In my many attempts to understand the Chareidi refusal to serve in the defense of our nation, I discussed the matter with important rabbis and roshei yeshiva. They claim that they value the self-sacrifice of our holy soldiers; however, their students protect the nation no less than the military. And the protection is provided not only through the great scholars, but even by dedicated if only mediocre ones, because quantity becomes quality.

However, these conversations always reach a point of no return when I ask the rabbi or rosh yeshiva the critical question.

That assuming you are sincere in your claim that you value the self-sacrifice of our holy soldiers and that your students are partners in the security of our nation. Why then do you refuse to offer a prayer (mi she'bai'rach) in your yeshiva on Shabbat for the welfare and success of our soldiers? And why do you ostracize a family whose son is a soldier?

At this point, the conversation invariably ceases to be polite and logical, and the name calling begins.

Long ago and far away, I concluded that the Torah is so huge and life is so complex that no one hashkafa (outlook) can contain all that is true. No group or person has a monopoly on the truth, but every great talmid chacham has found a piece of it. Therefore, I will try in my personal life to create a

patch quilt for my hashkafa by bringing together what I see as pieces of truth from many directions.

My basic premise was that life in the galut is a lie, which could not be dispelled whatever the number of Jewish communities, yeshivot or shtieblach there. So my wife and I left for the Holy Land 53 years ago.

Another premise was that I would not live on the periphery of society in my own homeland, as I did as a Jew in a Christian country.

I would learn Ivrit to the best of my ability, serve in the army, pay my taxes honestly, sing Hatikva and salute the flag. Rejoice with my people and cry when one is hurt.

I would dedicate my life to learning and teaching Torah in the holy atmosphere of Eretz Yisrael. The sweep of my friendships include people from Me'ah Sha'arim to deniers of the Torah as being HaShem's revelation to His nation Israel. All Jews are HaShem's children, and I don't recall being appointed as His CPA to count other people's sins.

I negate the claim that secular study is prohibited and that it is a mitzva to be as ignorant of the world around us as possible, as claimed by the Breslav Chassidim. I believe that the study of science is a window to the intelligent design of HaShem's world.

I reject the "shulchim" of Chabad who expend their energies in the galut rather than building a more perfect society here in Eretz Yisrael.

The way to go is the merger we find in the Hesder yeshiva system, where the persistency of Torah study binds with the desire to defeat our enemies.

In a nutshell: I believe that the call of our generation is the strengthening of Torah erudition and the strict

fulfillment of mitzvot in Eretz Yisrael, while fortifying our national presence in all parts of the Land.

With the pinnacle of all our efforts the rebuilding of the Bet HaMikdash, in our time be"H.

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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