

Va'etchanan 5772

BS"D Parashat Va'etchanan 5772

Part A:

The Jewish Army

One day many years ago, I received a distressing call from my father, HaRav Yechezkel Shraga Kahana zt"l. He asked to see me, and I heard in his voice that he was crying.

After hurrying to my parent's home in the Kiryat Moshe section of Yerushalayim, I saw my father crying for the first time in my life. We sat together and he began telling a story of his childhood, parts of which I already knew.

My father was born in the Galilee city of Tsfat and, in the middle of the First World War in 1917 he reached bar mitzva age.

As the Turks were retreating before the advancing British forces, they took everything edible. In addition to the hunger, a devastating typhus epidemic broke out in Tzfat. Life lost its orderly functions, and there certainly were no yeshivot or organized Torah study. Since Torah study was top priority in our family, my grandfather, Harav Nachman Kahana zt"l, decided to take his youngest son, 13-year-old Yechezkel, to Europe where he could study and develop in relative quiet. However, he was left alone and with no means of support other than from the yeshiva.

The yeshiva was located in a Galician town that had three names. The Jews called it Ushpitzin, which means guests because the Jews there were known for their hospitality; the Polish name was Os'wie'cim (oshvi'chim); and twenty or so years later, it was renamed Auschwitz by the Germans.

My father had occasion to be in Warsaw, Poland's capital,

where he ventured into the city center. He did not know that it was the same day the Poles had declared their independence and were staging a grand military parade. My father, who was dressed in the black kaftan and cap of a *yeshiva bocher*, wanted to see the parade. At that moment, a Jew approached and warned him in Yiddish, "Young boy, don't go there, but know that when the Mashiach comes, we Jews will have a huge military parade." My father followed the man's advice and left. He quickly forgot the incident.

Many years after, when my father was already living in Israel, he was standing on Jaffa Road in Yerushalayim when he suddenly heard music. It was Yom Yerushalayim, and the music was part of a big military parade. At that moment, he recalled what that man had told him half a century before in the city square of Warsaw – that when the Mashiach comes, we Jews will have a huge military parade. My father could not stop crying, and called me to his home.

The years have passed and my parents are no longer with us. My attention is now focused on the future generations.

Our youngest son is a very senior officer in Tzahal. Last week, he invited his Abba and Imma to attend a unique military event at one of Israel's most guarded bases. Among those present were the Defense Minister, the Chief of Staff, the Generals of the Air Force and Navy and the heads of various security agencies.

Major generals, brigadier generals, colonels, lieutenant colonels abounded. But despite the differences in rank, two outstanding features unified them: the grave look of experience mixed with responsibility, and the inescapable look of a sweet Jewish face.

I have an undeniable military streak in me. One of the most emotionally uplifting events in my life was when I was inducted into Tzahal and wore a uniform for the first time. My

military orientation is not the result of playing with tin soldiers as a young boy, but rather because of the way I absorbed the sum total of my Torah learning. The Tanach – Chumash, the Books of Yehoshua, Shoftim, Shmuel, Melachim etc. – and Jewish history as it played out in Eretz Yisrael all contributed to my understanding of the unique Jewish personality of God's chosen people in Eretz Yisrael, as opposed to the personality of a Jew in the galut.

The role model of the authentic Jewish character is a man who was destined not to be born, because his soul was so closely tied to HaShem. According to the Midrash, Adam himself donated 70 years of his life so that this man should be born. He is David, son of Yishai from Bet Lechem, the King of Israel and principal ancestor of the Mashiach.

King David was a talmid chacham, dayan, posek, military general, leader of men, fierce and relentless towards the enemies of the Jewish people. Yet, he was sensitive enough to author Tehilim, humble, aware of his shortcomings, zealous in his defense of the Jewish people, and magnanimous enough to forgive those who caused him anguish.

In our time, the study of Torah and intense nationalism are seemingly opposing values. However, nothing can be further from the truth, as we see in the end of parashat Devarim continuing into our parasha:

21 At that time I commanded Joshua: "You have seen with your own eyes all that the Lord your God has done to these two kings. The Lord will do the same to all the kingdoms over there where you are going. 22 Do not be afraid of them; the Lord your God himself will fight for you."

23 At that time I pleaded with the Lord:

24 "Sovereign Lord, You have begun to show to Your servant Your greatness and Your strong hand. For what diety is there in heaven or on earth who can do the deeds and mighty works

You do?

25 Let me go over and see the good land beyond the Jordan—that fine hill country and Lebanon. “

Our history over the following 850 years, until the first Temple's destruction, was replete with wars. When there was a brief period of unusual tranquility after the victories of Barak and Devorah and later after the victory of Gideon, the Book of Shoftim records

the land was tranquil for 40 years

The reason for the wars of old has not changed and is very relevant in our own times, and has no chance of changing until HaShem Himself intervenes in human affairs.

The reason for the gentiles' animosity towards the Jewish nation, wherever we are, is explained in the Talmud (Shabbat 89a):

Why was the mountain called “Sinai” [similar to the word ‘sinah’ meaning hatred]? – it was the mountain where hatred descended upon the nations [toward the Jewish people, because we received the Torah from HaShem].

Anti-Semitism exists in the galut just as it does when we are in Eretz Yisrael. The nations say to the Jews in galut, “Go to your land”; and when we are in our land the nations say, “Go back to where you came from”.

However, there is a vast difference between our reaction to anti-Semitism in the galut and when we are in Eretz Yisrael. It can be encapsulated in one word – Tzahal.

In the galut, we are unable to physically defend ourselves. In Eretz Yisrael, our enemies fear the head and iron fist that wear tefillin, as stated by Rabbi Eliezer in Brachot 57a.

(Rabbi Eliezer refers there to the head tefillin, because the hand tefillin are covered).

Part B:

Today, the first of August, marks the end of the Tal Law that deferred full-time yeshiva students from serving in the army.

It does not mean that tomorrow every 18-year-old yeshiva student will be drafted into the army, but it does mean that they are eligible for army service. There is a slow-but-growing-number of chareidi young men who are becoming involved in the Medina and its institutions. Every year, more and more volunteer for army service, with many chareidi men and women studying in academic institutions.

This obviously upsets many chareidi people, but I see it as a positive step in our nation's recovery from the degrading and spiritually debasing mental illness brought about by 2000 years of galut.

What I see happening in Eretz Yisrael during more than 50 years that I am here can be summed up in the first two words of kaddish – yitgadal ve'yitkadash – it will be great and it will be hallowed.

The reference is to HaShem's holy name, which in time will be known and made great among all humanity and become hallowed.

I see these two words as the protocol for what we are now experiencing as HaShem returns His people to Eretz Yisrael. This protocol states that the Medina will become "great" by establishing itself socially, economically, militarily, scientifically and internationally, and then the inborn spiritual nature of the Jewish people will make the land holy. Yitgadal ve'yitkadash!

The situation in which "the study of Torah and an intense nationalistic orientation are seemingly opposing values" is

rapidly changing.

King David's world outlook that military service to protect the Jewish nation in Eretz Yisrael is a God-given requirement will become second nature, so much so that people will look back on our times in embarrassment.

I see, in the not-distant future, a Tzahal composed of young talmidei chachamim, where a non-observant person will not be permitted to join the ranks, because to be victorious in battle the army camp must be a hallowed site.

The words of Rabbi Eliezer (Midrash Devarim Reah 4) will be actualized:

The sword and the book descended entwined from heaven

What I am suggesting is drawn from the writings of the Rambam (Hilchot Melachim chapter 11):

If a king will arise from the House of David, who, like David his ancestor, is steeped in the study of the written and oral Torah and will bring all of Israel to walk in the way of the Torah and restore its mitzva observance and will fight the wars of God, he can be considered as the Mashiach.

If he succeeds in all the above, defeats all the enemy nations, builds the Bet Hamikdash and gathers in the remnant of Israel, then he is surely the Mashiach.

The time will come when peace will reign in the Holy Land. But it will be conditional upon fulfilling the stipulations set down for Yehoshua Bin Nun in our parasha – liberating all the lands according to the Biblical borders and defeating all the enemies of the Jewish people.

There is no doubt in my mind that this will be performed by God-fearing men dressed in the uniforms of Tzahal – the

Mashiach's army.

Part C:

The July 27, 2012 Jewish Press edition ran a headline, "US Jewish Federations to Drop 'Zionism' from their Global Plans".

The article states that the Jewish Federations of North America rejected the inclusion of the term "Zionism" or "Israel" in its major system-wide planning document that determines the allocation of money for new Federation initiatives outside the United States.

Jews in the United States are distancing themselves more and more, both emotionally and practically, from the State of Israel. It is found in Jewish groups on opposite sides of the religious and ideological spectrum, and everyone in the middle.

Although these Jewish Federations are headed, for the most part, by non-observant Jews, they share common feelings with their chareidi brothers in the US regarding the Jewish State.

Is it possible that one feeds off the other as they share in their animosity to the renaissance of Jewish life in the Holy Land?

Is it possible that behind all this is the desire by certain religious groups for the money which is usually earmarked for "Zionist Israel" to find its way into their coffers?

These two groups, which are so far from each other in every way, find common ground in their anti-Israel feelings.

But do not be surprised; it was predicted by the prophet Zecharia (12:1-2)

*A prophecy: The word of the Lord concerning Israel.
The Lord, Who stretches out the heavens, Who lays the
foundation of the earth, and Who forms the human spirit*

*within a person, declares:
“I am going to make Jerusalem a noxious cup to the enemies
who surround her. And Judah too will besiege Jerusalem.*

Part D:

Last week I wrote that tens of thousands of God-fearing Jews publicly celebrating the conclusion of the daf hayomi in the galut when the gates of Eretz Yisrael are open for all Jews, is bizzare.

In a stadium in New Jersey, they pay homage and revere the Talmud; the very Talmud that states that one who voluntarily lives in the galut is as if he has no God.

Whatever I wrote on the matter cannot compare to the devastating commentary of Rashi, in this week's parasha.

Moshe tells the Jewish nation (Devarim 4:9)

*Only be aware, and guard yourselves closely so that you do
not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade
from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your
children and to their children after them.*

And Rashi comments:

*When you will not forget them (the laws of the Torah) and
uphold them earnestly, you shall be considered intelligent
and wise. But if you shall pervert them through unawareness,
then you shall be considered as fools.*

Shabbat Shalom

Nachman Kahana

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