

Vayikra 5773

BS"D Parashat Vayikra 5773

Part A:

Parshat Vayikra discusses two types of animal sacrifices: the Olah (burnt offering) and the Shelamim (peace offering).

Our generation is divided between those who can be likened to the Shelamim and those who can be likened to the Olah.

The Shelamim is a "happy" sacrifice. The altar gets the innards of the animal; the officiating Kohen gets the breast and a foot, and the korban's donor receives the flesh. This is the good life where there is something for everyone, without really trying.

The Olah sacrifice, is quite different. The entire sacrifice is placed on the altar with no human being, neither the officiating Kohen nor the donor, receiving any part of the sacrifice for their consumption.

Many Jewish communities in the galut can be likened to the Shelamim, but in Eretz Yisrael we are like the Olah sacrifice – it's all "for the Boss".

Here we have to pay a price for returning home. In chutz la'aretz when a situation in one area becomes intolerable, a Jew picks himself up and moves to another. When we were thrown out of Spain, our fathers went westward and settled in Germany, Poland and Turkey. When "difficult" neighbors move onto our streets, we move to the sun-belt, leaving behind the synagogues built with such gusto and joy 50 years before, so the Gentiles will be able to continue their prayers there. We go south to Miami and west to L.A.; and when these places are too far, we set up new communities in Teaneck and the Hamptons.

However, Eretz Yisrael is the Jews' last stop – it is home. Here we must stand firm in defense of our emunah (faith) and eternal destiny.

Part B:

In the ten years of these weekly messages, I have been very vigilant not to discuss internal Israeli matters with the Jews in the galut, since they choose not to be part of our national discourse and as such their opinions lack validity and substance.

However, since the schism between the majority of the chareidi community here vis-à-vis the general public has percolated to the galut, and I have been asked to give my opinion, I will do so reluctantly.

In view of the ongoing controversy regarding military service, I would seriously warn the chareidi public in Boro Park, Flatbush, Williamsburg and other centers in the USA and other lands of the galut, to be very prudent, vigilant, discreet and mindful in the manner and the terms which you refer to the Medina and to our government. You could very well find yourselves standing in front of an Israeli consulate begging for refugee status and immediate entrance to Medinat Yisrael, and our government will take you in and provide you with housing, food and clothing. So derech erez for the people who are giving their lives in the defense and rebuilding of our Holy Land.

On the issue of what is referred to in our media and in the Knesset as “shi'va'yon ba'ne'tel” (equality in carrying the national burden), regarding citizens who refuse to serve in the army or in any other national service, I am opposed to recruiting anyone in the military who is not motivated, whether it be a charaidie yeshiva or kollel student, a secular person, a pacifist or just an ordinary batlan (idler).

To serve in the army of Israel is not a “national burden,” –

on the contrary, to serve the national interest of the Jewish nation is not a "burden" but very much a privilege and a mainline mitzva. To protect, to defend and preserve our new-ancient home land after 2000 years of being trampled upon, crushed, repressed and subjugated at the whim of any goy in the galut is a miracle of biblical proportions.

We have a small but technologically advanced army able to defeat any and all enemies, with the help of Hashem, of course. From my own experience, I can frankly say that whoever does not experience being a soldier in Tzahal will have lost the opportunity to acquire those attributes that contribute so much to the making of a ben-Torah: determination, endurance, firmness, resolution, tenacity – all the attributes necessary for a young person to overcome the difficulties that lay in the way of reaching the level of a talmid chacham.

The reasons why certain young men are not motivated to serve in Tzahal are quite obvious. If it is a secular person it could be fear, or ignorance of the needs of the country, or the desire to acquire money. An ideological pacifist lives in an imaginary world of his own making and is the dream of every despotic murderer who laughs at the naivete of this fool. An idler just takes up time and space between his birth and death, and leaves no finger prints of his stay in this world.

The big question is: Why would a young man who strives to live a Torah life to its fullest not leap at the chance to fulfill the mitzva of protecting his fellow Jews in Eretz Yisrael, even if it means leaving the bet midrash for a limited period?

I suggest:

The difficulty with the chareidie attitude is not limited to the military, it has to do with many things in life.

We are all in agreement that there is only one Torah and nothing in it will ever be changed by HaShem. The Torah contains 613 mitzvot with another 7 rabbinic mitzvot, as

stated in the Mishna, Gemara and codified in the Shulchan Aruch and its commentators, and as they are applied to life in the responsa literature throughout the ages.

Nevertheless, Judaism takes many forms. Torah as practiced in Germany when Harav Shmshon Refael Hirsch was the religious leader was far far different from the chassidic Judaism of the Rebbe of Tszanz in Galicia, and the Judaism of Galicia was very different from that of Lithuania and Latvia. The minhagim (customs), liturgy, language, approach to life, dress, approach to halacha and all else of the Jews in Europe are different than those of the Jews in Iraq and Iran, and they are all certainly different from the Jews in Yemen.

In countries where the gentiles studied in universities, the Jews held doctorate degrees. In countries where the gentile majority ate and slept on the floor, the Jews ate with their fingers from a common bowl. As the Yiddish axiom goes "vie es christzichlech es yiddishtzech" – as the christians (gentiles) go, so go the Jews including religious ones.

The cultures which surround the way Jews keep the Torah take their respective forms from the general gentile population where the Jews lived. The accomplishments, art, cultivation, dignity, dress, elegance, enlightenment, grace, refinement and sophistication of Jewish communities were all shaped by the general gentile population, after several generations of the Jews residing in a particular land of the galut. It can be summed up in the joke: What is the combination of a yekke (a Jew from Germany) and a chassid? Answer: He always arrives exactly one hour late.

After so many generations in the United States, the indigenous culture of orthodox Judaism created there is expressed by Yeshiva University, the Young Israel movement, the Orthodox Union and others like them.

The chareidi life styles – both Lithuanian and Chassidic –

which began in the US after the Second World War are not indigenous to the American way of life, but rather imports from Eastern Europe and implanted in the US by great rabbis, like Harav Hagaon Aharon Kotler zt"l of Lakewood, Harav Hagaon Avraham Kalmanovitz zt"l of the Mirrer yeshiva, Chabad and Chassidic rabbis who came from Eastern Europe and revived in the US their particular sects which had been destroyed in the holocaust.

The process of how yiddishkeit will look in Eretz Yisrael in future generations began 100 years ago, and could take many years to establish its final form – in the advent the Mashiach does not appear before.

Now if we ask ourselves, what is the pure indigenous Yiddishkeit being developed here that was not imported from the lands of the galut?

The Yiddiskeit that is being formed here is influenced by the many factors that constitute Eretz Yisrael; such as the warm weather (clothing), food, military challenges, international geopolitical pressures, the manifold peoples who constitute the population and the rate of intermarriage among them, the topography of the mountainous north with the coastal Mediterranean plain. There are also dominant spiritual values which are indigenous to the Holy Land, as the Gemara (bava batra 158b) states:

The very atmosphere (air) of Eretz Yisrael enhances one's wisdom

Or the Mishna in Tractate Kailim, chapter 1 Mishna 6:

There are 10 levels of sanctity in the world. Eretz Yisrael is holier than any other land in the world

And so many more expressions regarding the unique characteristics of Hashem's land.

The chareidi lifestyle and world outlook was imported here by the survivors of the holocaust. I checked my maps of Eretz Yisrael, but could not find one place here called Belz, Satmar, Gur, Punavitz Mir or even Tsanz, which is the root of my family that came to Eretz Yisrael from Galicia in 1863.

The authentic Torah lifestyle that is being developed here is anchored in the "land". In the galut the Jew held no great passion for the soil of Spain or Poland, but here the soil gives forth the first section of the Mishna Zera'im. How we plow, how we plant, the prohibition of mixing different kinds of vegetables (Ki'la'yim), the various tithes, Bikurim, the Omer and all else. The halacha creates a profound connection with the land, as being lived out by our tenacious resolve never to leave the lands which were liberated in the Six Day War.

Military service plays a major part in the Yiddishkeit being developed here. The number and percentage of religious officers in Tzahal (kipa seruga – religious Zionists) grows daily, and the halachot problems arising from serving in our air force down to submarines have created a Torah literature which would do honor to Rabbi Yosef Karo, the codifier of the Shulchan Aruch.

The Yiddishkeit being developed here as an indigenous creation of Eretz Yisrael is to be found in the religious Zionist camp, it is not in the chareidi camp for the most part.

Eventually, there will be a merger of ideologies between Chareidie isolation and the religious Zionist open and inclusive ideology that sees the Medina as the hand of Hashem and our responsibility to bring Torah into every facet of society. If the chareidi rabbis will not acknowledge the miraculous times in which we are living, then the chareidi community will be marginalized from Israeli society, with very undesirable implication for them.

The desire of an individual to dedicate his life to Torah study is a very worthy ideal. However, when it becomes a way of life of a very large community, coupled with a lifestyle of no army service, no work and no participation in the Medina, down to refusing to recite hallel on Yom Ha'atzmaut or to offer a prayer for the soldiers of tzahal – the chareidi community will have to consider the price they will pay. That price is the negative feelings of most Israelis not only to the chareidi lifestyle but to the Torah itself. This is a very very heavy burden to carry.

No one will force them to change. But they will be ostracized from Israeli society. It will eventually express itself in the reluctance to provide welfare, and perhaps even negating their right to vote. Another terrible result of their refusal to participate in our military has resulted in the fact that one third of the soldiers in Tzahal today are women, which is contrary to Torah law.

Over the last several years a ray of hope has presented itself in the form of a yet small but important group of people called "CharDaL" – a contraction of the words charadie dati leumi. They are a merger of the religious Zionist perception of the Medina as a vital stage in our final redemption, which includes military service, together with many of the trappings of charadie society. The emphasis is on Torah learning and strict adherence to the Shulchan Aruch, including the code of dress and modesty of the chareidi camp. I, and many of my friends, belong to that group, which we hope will serve as the model for integrating all forms of religious sectors.

The yeshiva world of the religious Zionist is growing qualitatively and quantitatively, paralleling the chareidi yeshivot in erudition and passing most in the percentage of serious students.

The shining stars in the religious Zionist skies are yeshivot like: Merkaz Harav, Har Hamor, Bet El, Har Beracha, Alon

Shvut, Sha'avim, Sha'vei Chevron, Ateret Yerushalayim and many many more. In addition there are over 100 hesder and pre-army yeshivot. The applications for admission to all these yeshivot is far beyond their ability to accept all requests. These yeshivot produce great talmidai chachamim, active rabbis and judges for the national religious court system, in addition to the thousands of teachers for the growing school population.

Part C

Permit me a personal story of one of our sons who was serving within the framework of a hesder yeshiva.

He was in tank training school, about an hour and a half drive from Yerushalayim. I went to visit him, but knowing that they train well into the night, I arrived at the base at 11:00 PM. At the area of the hesder soldiers, I asked for Kahana and was directed to the base bet kneset. I looked through the window and saw our son and another soldier learning Gemara together. I realized that I had no right to disturb them even for a moment, because after a back-breaking day of training their learning at this time of night was soaring into the highest levels of the shamayim. I turned away to go home.

At that moment, I recalled an incident in the life of Yehoshua Bin Nun as recorded in the Book of Yehoshua (5,13-15)

¹³ *Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?"*

¹⁴ *"Neither," he replied, "but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come." Then Joshua fell face down to the ground in reverence, and asked him, "What message does my master have for his servant?"*

¹⁵ *The commander of the Lord's army replied, "Take off your*

sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy.” And Joshua did so.

The Gemara (Airuvin 63b) explains that at that time, Yehoshua and the Jewish army of liberation was laying siege to the Canaanite city of Yericho. During the day they were occupied with military operations, and when night fell Yehoshua and his men rested in preparation for the next difficult day. Suddenly, an angel appeared before Yehoshua with a threatening sword in hand, and reprimanded him for neglecting to study Torah that night when military matters were on hold.

When our son came home for Shabbat I asked him a few questions quite innocently: Until what hour do you train at night? He replied that if the tanks don't go out at night they are usually off by 11:00 PM. Then I said that I was glad that he was able to get to sleep at that hour. He nodded, but did not say that every night he learns in the bet kneset.

About a year later I revealed to him of my night visit, when I turned around and went home. He was very embarrassed, but admitted that he and his friend had completed the tractate of Makot during the nights of the tank course.

Just a little story of a hesder yeshiva bocher (student). But it makes one wonder where holiness really is.

Part D:

The following is an extract from my book “With All Your Might,” written before Rosh HaShana four years ago, but very appropriate for these days.

To the Exalted One, Creator of All Things, Rebono Shel Olam;

I am sending You my yearly e-mail (Elokim Mail) to report on the state of Your people as perceived from the virtual world, which of course is quite different from what is perceived from the real world.

It's that time of year, when Your children withdraw a bit from the distractions of this life in order to introspect on what we have or have not done properly this past year.

It is a time when seeing in the mirror a few more white hairs does more than just effect a shrug of the shoulders. It's that time of year when we realize our frailty before the heavenly judgements, which will be meted out in a few short days. Who shall live in this world and who will be taken away to another dimension; who will rise and who will fall; who will smile and who will weep?

It is a time when life is not taken for granted, and the "I" of each person becomes the most essential thing for us who are insecure in the knowledge that our futures are being determined by forces over whom we have no control.

But, Father in Heaven, there are people, who in addition to their pains and longings, are very much aware that You, the judge of all things, are not exempt from pain. Of course You put up an impressive show of strength and glory before the myriad of angels and other creatures ever present in the seven heavens; however, we know about that very secret room called "mistarin" into which You enter every day alone to cry for the glory of Am Yisrael and Your glory, which was lost to the goyim; and of course for the Bet Hamikdash which You had to destroy. Don't be surprised that we know about Your secret room, in fact its right there in tractate Chagiga 5:a – for all to see.

At this time, I have to confess to an on-going sin, which I was unable to rid myself of until a little light of understanding flickered on. How can I explain? On following the events of human history, I thought to myself that if anyone would run their business the way You run the world, he would be quickly bankrupt.

You created Adam and Chava, placed them in the most perfect

setting imaginable, Gan Eden. Within the first three hours of their lives they sinned, were sentenced to die and were driven out of Paradise. The next generation was even worse. Kayin killed his brother Hevel. Ten generations down the line, You destroyed all living things except for a small remnant enclosed in a floating pea pod.

Then You destroyed the five cultural centers of the world – Sedom, Amora and their sister cities.

Indeed, it took 1948 years for the first person to be born who was capable of acknowledging You – Avraham Aveinu.

However, as time goes by I realize Your infinite “business sense”. You made the “best deal” ever possible, where You always win and never lose! The goyim, starting from Adam, were never intended to be profit-making merchandise. The first 2000 years of history are the time it takes to set up a business when one always loses. The real “sechora” (merchandise) began with Avraham and Sara. From that time on, Your capital and interest has soared to heavenly heights.

Your chosen people, Am Yisrael, no matter what You bring upon us, always come back for more. Our loyalty to You is not dependent on Your actions towards us. The destruction of two Temples, 2000 years of Galut, inquisitions, crusades, pogroms concentration camps, world anti-Semitism, and more, were never able to extinguish the flame. Who else is capable of making such a perfect business choice!?

On the one hand, I can understand Your need to retire to the “room” in anguish over our suffering, as expected from a parent whose children are not well. But, on the other hand, You have every reason to be proud of Your loyal children; they are the source of Your joy.

Just observe us at any given moment. We have returned to Your holy soil, from which the world was created. Your children in Eretz Yisrael cling to every available meter of land,

building and restoring it to its former glory, before it was devastated by the now extinct Romans. Your children are bringing the voice of Torah to all parts of the land. There have not been so many Yeshivot and Batei Knesset in the land probably since the time of Hillel and Shamai. The agricultural mitzvot, for which Your servant Moshe so much wanted to enter the land, have come alive: Shmita, truma, ma'aser, etc.

The holy army of the future Massiach – Tzahal – daily brings the call of Torah to the air and under the waves – places where they never were before. The brave soldiers of David Ha'melech protect Your holy people as has never been done in the last 2000 years. From the young men in boot camp up to the highest officers, they are all imbued with the feeling that they are Your messengers in establishing Your new-old kingdom in Yerushalayim, and all Eretz Yisrael, from the River Prat to the “great river of Egypt”.

The knowledge that we are surrounded by hundreds of millions of enemies does not deter Your children from fulfilling Your wish that the Holy land be rebuilt as the spiritual center of the world.

In the fleeting second of my existence in this world, and the limitations You have imposed on my ability to comprehend, I can still discern the wondrous qualities of the people You have chosen.

Father in Heaven – You have every reason in the universe to be delighted with Your choice of the children of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov. We, in Eretz Yisrael, will be eternally loyal to You, no matter what You in Your infinite wisdom deem proper and necessary to mete out to us. If there are signs of weakness or frailty in parts of our nation, it can be blamed on the difficult nature of our existence, not on their desire to rebel against Your kingship.

We know that this coming year will be critical for the history of Your world. Terrorism, Iran, Islam, etc. But these are, thank G-d, Your problems not ours, because You have revealed to the prophets (Yoel 3:5 and Ovadya 1:17) that in Yerushalayim and Tzion "there shall be refuge".

So this Rosh Hashana, when You open the books of our lives, remember what the gemara in Ketuvot writes, "Whoever resides in Eretz Yisrael is in a state of non sinning (sharuy belo avon)."

While trying to be as impartial as possible, I can say in all frankness:

1) You have every justification before the many prosecutors of Am Yisrael in the shamayim, to forgive our wrong-doings.

2) To ignore our shortcomings in the light of the love we feel for You and our meseerat nefesh..

3) To inscribe Your children in Eretz Yisrael and those of the Jewish nation not yet here, in the Book of Life.

4) To bless us with feelings of inadequacies, so that we should constantly strive for perfection in the performance of Your Torah.

5) Open our hearts and eyes to see the positive qualities in every person, as stated by the great Hillel, as being the essence of the Torah.

Have a great Eternity;

Shabbat Shalom

Nachman Kahana

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