

Vayikra 5776

BS"D Parashat Vayikra 5776

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

To Protect, Defend and Preserve

I am often asked why I dwell on the Chareidi communities with their anti-Zionist ideology or indifference to the miracles we see daily in the Holy Land, rather than taking the non-observant elements in our nation to task?

The answer is twofold: 1- The non-observant have little or no relevance on the future destiny of the Jewish people. For the most part, they will not remain within the Jewish fold for more than one or two more generations. Whereas the Religious-Zionist and Chareidi communities will have to live together until the Mashiach comes and declares who is correct or resolves our differences.

2- The conduct and ideas of the non-observant do not reflect the Torah in any way. But Chareidi rabbis claim to speak for classic Torah Judaism, which from the religious-Zionist view is often a distortion of the Torah's truth. This is major issue within our nation to which we cannot be oblivious; it reflects in almost every aspect of our lives together in Eretz Yisrael.

Two types of offerings

In the intricate world of korbanot (sacrifices) three factors must be taken into account: The recipient of the korban – HaShem, represented by the mizbai'ach (the altar); the officiating Kohen or Kohanim, and the korban's donor.

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

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 donor receives the meat which he may eat in specified areas of Yerushalayim. This is the good life where there is something for everyone, for the altar, for the Kohen and for the holy Jew who brings the sacrifice.

The Olah sacrifice, is quite different. The entire sacrifice is placed on the altar, with neither the officiating Kohen nor the donor receiving any part of the sacrifice for consumption (the Kohen receives the animal's skin).

Today there are orthodox communities which can be likened to the Shelamim sacrifice and those that are like the Olah.

In the US and in other parts of the galut, the happy Shelamim sacrifice is preferred, for there is a part for everyone. Hashem receives His in the 20-minute morning minyan, Shabbat kiddush club, and daf hayomi while traveling to work. The local rabbinic officiant (in lieu of the Kohen) receives his reward as long as he doesn't bring up disturbing matters, such as aliya or ethical behavior in business.

And the baal habayit is secure in his share of the good life, while also enjoying a clean conscience.

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 eastward to Germany, Poland and Turkey. When "difficult" neighbors move into 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."

In contrast, the holy Jews in Eretz Yisrael are like the Olah sacrifice; for here it is all "for the Boss". Eretz Yisrael is the Jews' last stop – it is home. Here we stand firm in defense of our emunah (faith) and eternal destiny.

However, not all is perfect in our religious life in Eretz Yisrael. There exists here an unfortunate and unnecessary schism between most of the Chareidi community and the general public on the issue of military service and attitude toward the Medina.

Before proceeding 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 very soon standing in front of an Israeli consulate begging for refugee status and immediate entrance to Medinat Yisrael. Our government will take you in and provide you with housing, food and clothing. So act with sincere derech erez towards 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 bearing the 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 Chareidi 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 "burden". On the contrary, to serve the national interest of the Jewish nation is an immense privilege and main-line mitzva. To protect, defend and preserve our ancient-new homeland after 2000 years of being trampled upon, crushed, oppressed 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 say that whoever does not experience serving in Tzahal will have lost the opportunity to acquire or develop those attributes that contribute so much to the making of a ben-Torah: determination, endurance, firmness, resolution, tenacity.

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 naiveté of this fool. An idler just takes up time and space between his birth and death, and leaves no fingerprints of his stay in this world.

The Big Question

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?

The answer is the happy Shelamim sacrifice: the good life where there is something for everyone, for the altar, for the Kohen and for the holy Jew who brings the sacrifice. Why struggle and sweat and even get shot at when one can have a "happy" privileged life with a mehadrin le-mehadrin hechsher. The difficulty with the Chareidi 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. The lifestyle of observant Jews, and as it was influenced the way Torah was practiced in Germany when Harav Shmshon Refael Hirsch was the religious leader, was far different from the Chassidic Judaism of the Rebbe of Tsanz 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, many rabbis 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.

If one would ask, what is the indigenous Yiddishkeit being developed in Eretz Yisrael and not imported from the lands of the galut? The Yiddiskeit that is being formed here is influenced by 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:

הַיָּמִינִים הַיְּבֵרִים אֶת הַיָּדִים וְהַיְּבֵרִים אֶת הַלֵּב :הַיָּמִינִים הַיְּבֵרִים אֶת הַלֵּב

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

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

עֲשָׂרָה שְׁבוּעוֹת קִדְשֵׁי הָעוֹלָם :אֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל הִיא קְדוֹשָׁה מִכָּל אֶרֶץ הָעוֹלָם

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

Along with 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 map 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 "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 and how we plant. The prohibition of mixing different kinds of vegetables (Ki'la'yim) and the various tithes, Bikurim, Omer and all else. The Halacha creates a profound connection with the land, as being lived out by our tenacious resolve never to leave it.

Military service plays a major role 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 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 Chareidi 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 pay. That price is the negative feelings of most Israelis not only to the Chareidi lifestyle, but because of their negative feelings to the Torah itself. This is a very very burdensome hunchback to carry.

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 Chareidi 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 Chareidi society. The emphasis is on Torah learning and strict adherence to the Shulchan Aruch, including the code of dress and modesty. 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 Zionists 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 requests for admission to all these yeshivot is far and beyond their ability to accept all.

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 facedown 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 your 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 realize where sanctity really is.

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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