



Parashat Vayechi 5771 - #168

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On the Parashah...

If you will it, it is not a dream

In this week's parashah, we see Yaacov and Yosef's incredible love for Eretz Yisrael when they make their relatives take an oath to bury them there. In this spirit, we bring the following Q&A from Rav Aviner -

Question: Once again a sense of dizziness confounds our leaders, who raise the idea of giving up part of our Land, G-d forbid. How should we struggle for our Land?

Answer: If we want to cure an illness, it is not enough to focus on its external signs, we must understand its cause. What is the reason for all of this weakness? Fear. Fear of enemies both from within and from without. Fear of all types of problems and difficulties. If this is the case, what is the medicine? Strength and courage. How do we attain strength and courage? From love of the Land of Israel and understanding the value of the Land. When we love and understand, we will be ready for great toil and self-sacrifice, and we will not fear anything. General Yitzchak Sadeh, one of the founders of the Palmach, wrote that a truly courageous person is not necessarily someone who abandons his feelings of fear, but an idealistic person who understands the greatness of his mission. Therefore a physically weak person can say, "I am courageous." The Rebbe of Gur, the author of "Sefat Emet," explained at the beginning of Parashat Shelach that the Land of Israel is acquired through desire and toil. We are not denying that building the whole length of our Land did not involve great toil, but when there is desire, people are ready for any amount of toil. He wrote that the same applies to learning Gemara. We can add that this is also the case with marriage.

We therefore know the solution: To fill the Nation of Israel with the desire for the Land of Israel. This desire certainly exists, because without it, there would be nothing here: No building of the Land, no return to Zion, no establishment of the State, and no founding of the army. We should therefore be more precise: We must strengthen the desire of the Nation of Israel for the Land of Israel.

We have already learned this from Yaakov Avinu. Hashem said to him: "The Land upon which you are lying, I will give to you and your descendants" (Bereshit 28:13). This is

surprising: This is an extremely small area?! Rashi explained: "The Holy One, Blessed be He, folded up the entire Land of Israel under him. He hinted to him that it would be easily conquered by him like the four amah (six feet) which is the place of a person." If a person knows that the Land of Israel is his place, it is easy for him to conquer. If a person "lies down" on the Land of Israel, i.e. displays self-sacrifice for it, it is easy for him to conquer. And if "this is the stone upon which he lays his head" (Bereshit 28:18), then it is easy for him to conquer.

Why exactly is the detail of Yaacov Avinu putting the stones there important? Answer: These stones are the stones of the Land of Israel, and they were very dear to him. At the end of the Kuzari (5, 27), the Jewish spokesman is asked, when will the Redemption arrive? He answers: "When they yearn for the fundamental yearning, as it says: 'For Your servants hold her stones dear, and cherish her dust'" (Tehillim 102:14). The love of the stones by the Nation will bring Redemption. The Gemara relates that Rabbi Abba would kiss the stones of Acco and Rabbi Chaim bar Gamda would roll in the dirt of the Land of Israel, as it says: "For Your servants hold her stones dear, and cherish her dust" (Ketubot 112a-b). There is something strange in Rashi's commentary on this Gemara. He simply copies the verse, without offering an interpretation. I saw an explanation – I believe in the name of the Vilna Gaon – that those Rabbis who kissed the stones and rolled in the dirt did not do so to fulfill the above-mentioned verse, but because they loved the stones and dirt of our Land in the depths of their souls. This is the secret: To strengthen love.

Avraham Avinu was told: "Arise, walk in the Land, its length and its breadth, for I am giving it to you" (Bereshit 13:17). Our Sages explain: "In order that the Land would be easily conquered by his children" (Baba Batra 100a). The love of the journey makes the conquering easy. Yitzchak Avinu was told more: Do not only "Arise, walk in the Land," but "Dwell in the Land...live in the Land" (Bereshit 26:2-3). And Yaacov Avinu even more so: He laid down on the Land, he clung to the Land. Even if he had only laid down on four amah he would have been able to spring forth and conquer the entire Land, as is written in the commentary "Da'at Zekenim Mi-Ba'alei Ha-Tosafot": "The Land upon which you are lying' means that I will give you that upon which you lie; and you will spread out in every direction by yourself and conquer all of your surroundings, as is the case with important horsemen. They give them a little land and they conquer all of the surrounding with their courage."

If we strengthen the love of the Land of Israel, we will then hold on it with self-sacrifice, and even spread out to the west, east, north and south. If you will it, it is not a dream.

Rav Aviner on... Regarding Army Service for Women

[Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah – Behar-Bechukotai 5766 – translated by R. Blumberg]

Our Rabbi, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Kook said that theoretically speaking, even women are obligated to fight in a Milchemet Mitzvah [compulsory war]. As the Mishnah states, "Even a groom from his chamber and a bride from her wedding canopy [must go to war]" (Sotah 44b). Likewise, Rambam rules, "In a Milchemet Mitzvah all must

go to war, even a groom from his chamber and a bride from her wedding canopy” (Melachim 7:4). Our situation today would be classified as a Milchemet Mitzvah by Ramban, since we are still at war in our conquest of the Land (Note 4 from Ramban’s Additions to Rambam’s Sefer HaMitzvot), and by Rambam, since our wars involve “assisting the Jewish People against their enemies” (Melachim 5:1). The latter is itself an extension of the Torah’s command, “Do not stand by when your neighbor’s life is in danger” (Vayikra 19:16).

Yet our Sages said, “It is the nature of man to conquer, but not the nature of woman” (Yevamot 65b). Therefore, Radbaz, Rabbi David ben Zimra, wished to soften Rambam’s statement and to say that he didn’t have in mind actual military tasks but offering soldiers assistance, in line with Rambam’s comment that women should “provide food and water to their husbands” (Melachim 7:4). This novel thought is not mentioned in the Mishnah, the Talmud or in Rambam, who quoted the Mishnah word for word. It is clear that Rambam’s intent was about all military tasks (and the same can be found in Sefer HaMitzvot, at the end of Shoresh 4).

Rambam would explain that “It is not the nature of women to conquer” was not said regarding Milchemet Mitzvah and women bearing weapons in them. While women bearing weapons is normally forbidden due to “No male article shall be on a woman” (Devarim 22:5 and Nazir 49a), in a compulsory war, a life and death situation overrides all else.

In this way Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehuda clarified the fundamentals of the law (Sichot Rabbenu: “Ish VeIsha” se’if 42-43 and Le-Netivot Yisrael vol. 1, p. 124). Yet he immediately added that in making a halachic ruling, it is essential to take into account the trials and obstacles to modesty faced by girls serving in the army. “In girls’ military service, there is a danger of moral decline, and it is hard for a girl to maintain her pristine modesty... It is a fact that in the army there is a problem with modesty.” Therefore, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehuda directs us to turn to the “judge who will be in those times” (Devarim 17:9), in other words, the Chief Rabbis of Israel. As is known, the Israeli Chief Rabbinate forbade girls to participate in military service, in any form of a draft, from then until now.

Therefore, later on Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehuda publicized his view opposing military service for girls, in accordance with Radbaz, not because that is the essence of the law, but as a fence around modesty. He also said that we should view National Service as a way of preparing girls to serve their Nation and Land: “Our holy Mishnah states for all time that in a Milchemet Mitzvah even the bride goes forth from her wedding canopy. According to the decision and clarification of the greatest later sage following Rambam – Radbaz – the Mishnah means that girls should assist the army. Today this can be accomplished through the ‘National Service’ arrangement, bearing in mind our Sages’ enormous caution regarding situations where modesty is at stake, as described at the end of Kiddushin” (Sichot Rabbenu, *ibid.*, 44).

Obviously, even regarding National Service, not all locations are the same. Some are reputable, and it is a mitzvah to serve there, but unfortunately there are also places where things are different. We can employ the following yardstick: Just as we won't eat food unless it carries the approbation of an authorized Rabbi, so too, a girl should not do National Service without the program in question receiving the approbation of an authorized Rabbi or Rebbetzin.

Yet regarding military service for girls, that program has always been rejected entirely by the Chief Rabbinate of Israel, and Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehuda issued the same ruling. If, however, a girl enlists all the same, we have to engage in damage control. We must therefore praise the "Aluma" Organization which directs girls to army programs in which less immodesty prevails, providing them with guidance and assistance all through their service. After all, if someone is falling, we don't push him down further. We further must praise the pre-military program for girls, "Tzahali Va-Roni Yoshevet Tzion," slated for opening. If a girl is going to enlist either way, we have to strengthen her in Torah and the fear of G-d in preparation for her enlistment, and Torah study is always good.

Obviously these words of praise are not meant provide any legitimacy to girls' military service. They are only an expression of our bearing responsibility for the entire Jewish People, even if they do not follow the straight and narrow. After all, there are co-educational pre-army programs, including one of the Reform Movement, and they, too, provide great assistance to draftees, hence they belong to the umbrella organization of the pre-military programs. All the more that there is a place for pre-military programs for religious girls. May we be so fortunate that from "Tzahali VaRoni Yoshevet Tziyon" we should advance to "The princess's glory is all on the inside" (Tehillim 45:14).

Kitzur Tefilat Amecha - #22

[adapted for middle-schoolers by Rabbi Shmuel Jablon from Rav Aviner's three-volume commentary on the siddur "Tefilat Amecha"]

The central part of Psukei Dezimra is Ashrei. During the times of the Gemara, what to say in Psukei Dezimra wasn't yet decided. In general, people could say what they want. But the Gemara in Berachot says that "everyone who says Tehillah Le-David three times a day is promised to have a portion in the World to Come." We say it twice at Shachrit and once at the beginning of Minchah. This has been going on a long time.

Why is Ashrei so special that saying it three times daily gets you the World to Come? The Gemara in Berachot notes that Ashrei has two things that are particularly special. First, it goes in Alef-Bet order from Alef to Tav. This signifies completion. We say at the beginning and end Tehillah Le-David - a praise of David. Since we praise Hashem in Alef to Tav order, we are praising Him for absolutely everything. In addition, in Ashrei we have special Kavana when we say "You, Hashem, open your Hand and satisfy the needs of all who live." When

we say this, we are recognizing that Hashem has made a world where all needs can be fulfilled. It is true that sometimes they are not. Millions are hungry. But this is because, while Hashem has done his part of providing what everyone needed, people haven't done their part of making sure everyone gets fed. When we say that Hashem has provided for the needs of all, we recognize Hashgachah Pratit - that Hashem is involved in the lives of all those who live. This is an important part of Judaism.

Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law

Decrees of our Sages

Question: Why did our Sages prohibit eating chicken and milk together? Why didn't they have more confidence in us, as surely we can tell the difference between fowl and meat? Furthermore, why was this decree not extended to fish as well?

Answer: This is a general question regarding all of our Sages' decrees. They did not enact decrees quickly and did not want to burden people. Rather they saw what was happening in reality and based on what they saw, warned people.

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