



Parashat Emor 5771 - #185

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On Yom Ha-Atzmaut...
Two Articles:
Building Eretz Yisrael Together:
The Charedim and the Secular, and Everyone in Between

The Charedim and Self-Sacrifice for Eretz Yisrael

Question: You often say that Eretz Yisrael requires self-sacrifice, and you quote numerous sources about this. Yet Charedi rabbis do not hold this way. Instead, they emphasize the Mitzvah of "Guard yourself very carefully" (Devarim 4:15). How can we know which is the right way?

Answer: I have never seen a halachic ruling by a Charedi rabbi stating that Eretz Yisrael does not require self-sacrifice. Moreover, throughout the generations, Charedim have shown self-sacrifice for Eretz Yisrael. They've moved here, lived here and established settlements here, all under dangerous conditions. Petach Tikva was founded by Charedim from Jerusalem in 5635, under danger of malaria, as the famous Hebrew song, "Yoel Moshe Solomon" relates.

Likewise, it was not always easy in Jerusalem itself, facing the hostility of Arab neighbors. The people suffered from contagious diseases, lethal plagues, attacks by bandits, poverty, lack of food, and worst of all, lack of water. Small children cried out day and night, "A little water!" Many families moved to Jaffa and Gaza. Out of despair they would drink from foul cisterns. In 5589 a miracle occurred through the disciples of the Vilna Gaon, and a spring poured forth outside the city for eight days, an hour and a half each day, enabling them to carry off thousands of flasks of water (see the book "Mossad Ha-Yesod," pp. 124-125).

Here is a Charedi story:

During the 5689 riots, on Friday, the 17th of Av, rioters ran wild throughout the country, cruelly ransacking and murdering. In the afternoon, thousands of inflamed Arabs stormed out of the Mosque of Omar after being saturated with the hateful incitement of the Mufti, Haj Amin Al-Huseini, and marched forward, armed with knives and clubs. Most of them advanced towards the neighborhoods of Meah Shearim and Beit Yisrael, with cries of "Slaughter the Jews." At the head of the inflamed throng marched an Arab sheik, waving a long sword and firing up the rioters not to have pity on men, women or children, since it was a holy war -- a jihad.

When the rioters reached the Italian hospital, two Charedi youths emerged from the flour mill at the southern edge of Meah Shearim and advanced towards the rioters. One of them, who had curly side-locks flowing from under his hat, pulled out a pistol and shot straight into the mouth of the sheik walking in front, and he died on the spot. The inflamed masses were seized with fright and they began to flee in the direction of Damascus Gate, while the two youths chased after them, throwing a hand grenade which killed three more rioters. Moreover, the rioters trampled one another to death during their escape.

That same bearded youth who fired the pistol was the saintly Rav Aharon Fisher, father of the illustrious Rav Yisrael Yaakov Fisher, Chief Rabbinic Justice of Edah Ha-Charedit in our own times.

The next day, the great Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, who lived in the Old City, had to go to Meah Shearim as a Mohel. His family and friends were terribly worried about him, and they begged him not to go, but he insisted. He would not forego the Mitzvah.

The eighty-year-old rabbi, clad in his tallit, walked to Meah Shearim not by way of the Jaffa Gate, but by way of the Damascus Gate, a troublesome spot even in normal times. He walked calmly along the same route where thousands of murderers had walked, in order to fulfill the Mitzvah of circumcision, and he returned by way of the Jaffa Gate. When he was later asked why he went specifically by way of the Damascus Gate, he responded, "So that the Arabs would not think that they had succeeded in banishing the Jews from even one corner or street in Jerusalem." And why had he returned by way of Jaffa Gate? "Such is my regular custom, in order to fulfill the words, "Walk around Zion. Circle her" (Tehillim 48:13) (Be-Dor Tahapuchot, Rav Shlomo Zalman Sonnenfeld, pages 226-229, 393-396).

It is well-known that the illustrious Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld was not a Zionist. Quite the contrary, he ascribed to the opposite view. He was the most Charedi of Charedim, and an opponent of Maran Ha-Rav Araham Yitzchak Ha-Cohain Kook.

To say that the Charedim did not sacrifice themselves for this Land is a severe libel. Meah Shearim was established on a spot where people were afraid of bandits. The Charedim sacrificed themselves for the Land, or more precisely, for the word of G-d, who commanded us to settle the Land.

Weiss Shendor Wakes Everyone for Selichot?!

In the midst of the Holocaust, a brilliant Torah Scholar, Ha-Rav Yisachar Shlomo Teichtal (who had been an anti-Zionist but changed his opinion during the Holocaust), delivered a Dvar Torah in Slovakia when he returned there during some stage of his hiding from the Nazis. He was responding to the Ultra-Orthodox view against returning to Eretz Yisrael because of the secular nature of Zionism.

He said: What can we say, how can we speak and how can we justify ourselves? G-d has found the sin of your servant.

I will tell you a story: In a small town there was a Shamash of a Shul who died, leaving behind a widow. The people of the community thought about how they could provide her with some financial support, for at that time there was no pension for widows. Perhaps it would be possible to allow her to continue the work of her late husband. On the other hand - it is not proper for a woman to serve as the Shamash of a Shul. Eventually it was decided that she would carry out those activities that could be performed outside of the synagogue, while the tasks of the Shamash during prayer times would be filled by the worshippers themselves, on a voluntary basis. Thus the woman would be able to continue earning the salary that her husband had received.

It came time for "Selichot," and as part of her job the woman had to get up and go about from

house to house in the village, waking the people for Selichot. She took the special "Selichot Klopper" in her hand and headed for the most distant house in the village – the home of Weiss Shendor. When she knocked on the door, Weiss Shendor awoke, alarmed at the disturbance at such an unusual hour. When he opened the door and saw the wife of the Shamash, he asked what she wanted. She explained that as part of her duties she had to go from house to house, waking everyone for Selichot. When Weiss Shendor heard this, he tried to persuade her that it was not seemly for a woman to go about outside so early in the morning, in such cold and wet weather, and that it would be better if he did the job in her stead. The woman accepted the offer and handed him the "Selichot Klopper," and Weiss Shendor set off to wake up the people.

Upon knocking at the first house he was asked to identify himself. He answered, "I am Weiss Shendor, and I have taken it upon myself to wake up the people for Selichot."

The house owner was incensed. "Weiss Shendor? A pork-eater like you isn't going to wake me for Selichot!" With that he slammed the door and went back to sleep.

He went off to the second house and again came the question, "Who is it?" Again he gave the same reply, and again the same response: "Weiss Shendor? A Shabbat desecrator like you will not come and wake me for Selichot!" Again a door was slammed in his face.

The same thing happened at the next house: "A swindler and gambler like you will not wake me for Selichot!" – and so on, at every house throughout the entire village. The wake-up round ended with nothing more to show for itself than a trail of scorn and disdain. Not a single person got up for Selichot.

When the congregation was gathered for the morning davening, the Rabbi asked: "What happened this year - no one came to the Shul for Selichot?" The people started justifying themselves and explaining that it was all Weiss Shendor's fault. He was a shady character who was notorious throughout the village. Because it was he who had come to awaken them for Selichot, each of them had refused to come.

"Fools!" responded the Rabbi. "It's true that Weiss Shendor is guilty of everything that you've accused him, but at this time he was waking you for Selichot. He wasn't doing any of the bad things that he's known for. So why didn't you get up?"

Here Rav Teichtal burst into tears and shouted: It's true that the Zionists desecrate Shabbat and so forth, but it was they who awakened the Nation and shouted: "Get out of the rubble, the non-Jews hate us, there is no place for us, except in Eretz Yisrael" – and we didn't listen! (Based on the testimony of Mordechai Rosenfeld, who was present during Rav Teichtal's talk, as recorded in Be-Sheva, vol. 163, 3 Tishrei 5766).

Rav Aviner on... One Shepherd or Several?

[Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah – Acharei Mot 5771 – translated by R. Blumberg]

Question: Do we, the religious Zionists, have one shepherd as do the Charedim, or several?

Answer: There are several shepherds, and all of them are beloved. Once we could say that we had one shepherd: Maran Ha-Rav Avraham Yitzchak Ha-Cohain Kook, and after him, Rabbenu Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehuda Kook, but now we have several shepherds.

Yet when we say "shepherd", we have a preliminary question to clarify: upon which green pastures is he shepherding the flocks, and where is he leading them? And if the shepherd does not know which direction to go, he must look at the flock: "If you do not know, fairest of women, Go follow the tracks of the sheep" (Shir Ha-Shirim 1:8). As is well-known, *Ikvei HaTzon* [the tracks of the sheep] is the name of a book by Maran Ha-Rav Kook, in which the Shepherd explains the characteristics of the sheep, as far as how to lead them.

Now then, where are the sheep headed? The answer is simple: we are rising to rebirth.

We are not ignoring all the shortcomings in our communal lives, writes Rav Kook in his book *Orot*. Yet even taking all that into account, we have to concede that we are being born anew as a Nation, a Nation in its Land and in its State.

And here is where the shepherd's task comes into play: we need workers and soldiers, and no less than that, we need men of faith and men of spirit. That is the shepherd's task: to invest a soul into the Nation's rebirth, or, more precisely, to uncover the soul hidden within the Nation's rebirth.

In this regard, Maran Ha-Rav Kook had four ideas about who should do this:

1. The Charedim. Certainly the Charedim, who are devoted to Torah and Mitzvot, to the fear of G-d and to sterling character, should be the natural spiritual leaders of the Nation's rebirth. Yet, as is well-known, that has not materialized. Why not? This is not the place to analyze that. It suffices for us to accept the fact that the Charedim have not taken an interest in the Nation's rebirth in its Land.

2. The Mizrachi. Seemingly the Mizrachi is suited precisely to this. After all, engraved upon its flag are the words: the Nation of Israel in the Land of Israel according to the Torah of Israel. Yet here a problem arose, writes Rav Kook in his letters: the Mizrachi are compromisers. They compromise both on Torah and on the Land of Israel. Since they compromise on Torah, the Charedim are not attracted by them, and since they compromise on the Land of Israel, the Zionists are not attracted by them.

Yet, let us not fall prey to slander. Their compromises do not necessarily stem from weakness, but from a calculation of national responsibility, that in order to gather vast numbers under that umbrella, they mustn't be overly precise - they should round out corners. Once more, this is not the place to discuss this. Suffice it to say that in actual fact, the Mizrachi did not fulfill its role of leading the Nation.

3. Degel Yerushalayim. Therefore, Maran Ha-Rav Kook conceived the idea of establishing a new movement that would bind together within it Charedim devoted to the Nation's rebirth. After all, they will be Charedim, hence the God-fearing public will place their trust in them, and since they will be devoted to the Nation's rebirth, the Zionists and the nationalists and the builders will derive from them a lofty spiritual soul. Obviously, all this would not happen in one day, but through a prolonged process. Yet this plan did not succeed either. Once more, we will not discuss why, although that is very important. Rather, we will advance in our analysis.

4. Mercaz HaRav. The fourth idea, which has in fact succeeded, was Yeshivat Mercaz HaRav, the Central Universal Yeshiva. The Yeshiva itself has undergone changes and transitions, but it addresses young people profoundly connected to the Nation's rebirth, to the rebuilding of the Nation in its Land, to the Army and to the State, and it raises them up in Torah until they become great Torah scholars. Rav Kook and Rav Tzvi Yehuda envisioned the correct process, and from the Yeshiva, whose beginnings were small, were born numerous Yeshivot, spread throughout our Land, each with its own special hue. The result has been hundreds and thousands and tens of thousands of great Torah scholars glorifying the Nation and serving as its spiritual leadership. Myriads of women have obviously contributed as well.

Clearly, when we say "leader", we do not mean a dictator before whom all stand at attention, but somebody who gradually taps into all of the spiritual resources stored away in the Nation. As with any human process, ups and downs are likely to occur. It is important to note, however, that while dozens and dozens of Yeshivot stemmed from Yeshivat Mercaz HaRav, each with its own particular character, anyone who takes a look at them in the spirit of intellectual tranquility, must admit that there are no great differences between these "daughters" of the mother-Yeshiva. What divides them is minor compare to what unites them: the Nation's rebirth in its land according to its Torah.

True, these small differences bring with them large arguments, yet such is the nature of the lively world of the spirit. This is also the impression one gets from studying Talmud and Jewish law. He thinks he is drowning in a sea of crashing waves, of countless debates, but the truth is that the Rabbis agree on 99% of the issues, with the "world wars" being fought over that 1%.

Yet the very existence of those hues needn't bother us. The main thing is that everybody should respect everybody else. Differences of opinion -- yes. Divided hearts -- no.

It is natural for there to be differences of opinion. There always have been and there always will be. Even when the Sanhedrin arises and there is one law, there will still be diverse opinions. But out of this plethora of views will come a single halachic decision, and even that decision could be reversed over time. As is explained in the first chapter of Mishnayot Eduyot, that is the “banquet hall” to which we aspire – a time of uniform law. In the meantime, however, we remain in the “waiting room,” where we are expected to honor one another. We needn’t agree, but we have to show respect. We mustn’t ridicule. We mustn’t engage in name-calling. We mustn’t compartmentalize or assign labels. After all, the ends do not justify the means. One does not perform a Mitzvah by way of a sin. And even for the sake of the greater goal of one’s view winning out, one mustn’t ridicule anybody, let alone a Torah scholar. And even more so we must not ridicule anybody in the public media for all to hear. That is not the “waiting room” that will lead us to the “banquet hall”.

Indeed, amongst the Rabbis who have spread out from the central Yeshiva, there are many variants: some are more open, some are less so; some love secular knowledge more and some less; some take an interest in culture, and some back away from it; some are more devoted to the State and to the Army, and some less so, and so on, through all the various differences.

At such a time, we have to remember that it is impossible to unite by force or to force our views upon others. After all, we are not talking about small details which one can sometimes forgo for the sake of unity and peace, but about differences in approach that very often are deeply ingrained in the life force of that Torah scholar. It may represent his *raison d’etre*, through which he views his entire mission.

Therefore, there is also a blessing in the fact that each sapling keeps a distance from the other saplings, as in the metaphor of Maran Ha-Rav Kook (Orot HaKodesh 3:15), lest they steal air and sun and water from one another. Each sapling can develop in a totally free manner. And when it grows up and becomes strong, all of the saplings will join together and the entire row will appear in all its perfection.

Indeed, every approach has to be clarified and strengthened on its own terms, for when all is said and done, a new question stands here before us: the Nation’s rebirth. Certainly this is an age-old question, yet for us, no question could be newer. And such was the practice of the first scholars of the Mishnah: every one of them delved as deeply as he could into his master’s words, in order to pass them on as an inheritance down through the generations.

They did not engage in comparing their master’s approach to other approaches, with questions and answers. Rather, their mission was this: to delve deeply and to understand and to clarify and to strengthen the words of one’s master. Only later generations could engage in the work of comparing and unifying after each approach had been well fortified, as may be understood from Rashi on Niddah 8b, at the bottom.

The guiding principle must be for each one to tend to his own garden without trampling the garden of his fellow, and the magnificent end will come.

Parenthetically, it is not clear that among the Charedim there is only one shepherd.

And indeed, this whole communal division between Charedim and Religious Zionists has no place. There is only one Torah. Neither does the communal division between secular and religious have any place. We are all one people. “And who is like Your Nation, Israel, one Nation in the Land” (Shmuel 1 7:23).

Kitzur Tefilat Amecha - #52-53

[adapted by Rabbi Shmuel Jablon from Rav Aviner’s three-volume commentary on the siddur “Tefilat Amecha”]

One of the ways in which we describe Hashem in the Shemoneh Esrei is El. This is one of Hashem's names, and relates to Chesed. Therefore, in the Shemoneh Esrei, after we twice describe Hashem as El, we say that he does "good Chesed." By saying this now, when we are praising Hashem, we are recognizing that everything we have in our lives is due to Hashem's Chesed and mercy. We are not entitled to any of it. Without this Chesed, nothing would remain.

We describe Hashem's Chesed as "good." Can there be Chesed that is not good? There are certainly things that may appear to us as good, but turn out to be bad. For example, if a parent gives a child too many sweets, the child may think it is good - but it's really bad. But all of Hashem's Chesed is good. Sometimes we don't see the "big picture" and feel that things are not good. But eventually, even if it takes many years, it becomes clear that Hashem has indeed done Chesed for us. The Gemara in Pesachim notes that in this world we say the blessing of "Dayan Ha-Emet" for bad news and "Tov Ve-Ha-Meitiv" for good news. But in the world to come we will only say "Tov Ve-Ha-Meitiv" as we will recognize that everything Hashem does it truly for the good.

#53

The first blessing of the Shemoneh Esrei ends with our blessing Hashem as the protector of Avraham. Despite all of the difficulties and challenges Avraham faced, he was protected. He experienced many miracles. The Rambam says that the closer someone gets to Hashem the more Hashem protects him. Avraham was so close to Hashem that Hashem always protected him. This protection carries down for all generations, even if it is at a different level than Avraham had. Klal Yisrael, as a Nation, has this protection, and we need to be thankful to Hashem for this special gift.

Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law

Killing a terrorist when he has stopped murdering

Q: Is it ethical to kill a terrorist when it is logical to assume that he will no longer murder?

A: This question can be divided into two parts: 1. From the perspective of reality, how is it possible to be certain that he has stopped murdering? It is impossible to know. 2. Even if we know that he will no longer murder, we must still kill him. But why – isn't this the law of a "rodef" (literally "pursuer" - a case in which one is permitted to kill a pursuer so that the pursued person is saved from harm)? If he is in pursuit, we kill him and if he is not in pursuit, we do not kill him. There are three answers given by halachic authorities: a. The terrorist is not finished being a "rodef". He is not an "individual rodef" who is angry with a particular person and wants to kill him, he is a "communal rodef" who wants to kill Jews and he does not care which Jews they are. If we capture him, put him in jail, and he is later released, as is the custom – to our great distress – he will continue to murder. The organization of parents of those murdered by terrorists has exact records which state that more than 180 Jews have been murdered by released terrorists who have murdered again. This means that when you free a terrorist with the proper goal of helping Jews, you endanger more Jews. This person is therefore not a one-time "rodef," but a perpetual "rodef." b. The halachic authorities also say that you should kill him in order that others will see and be frightened. This "rodef" is teaching other "rodefim" through his action. If he kills Jews and when the police approach, he gives up and we have mercy on him, we encourage others to act like him, thus endangering other Jews. Therefore, in situations like these, we must be extremely ethical. The question is, ethical to whom – the "rodef" or others Jews? Answer: to both of them. We must be ethical

to the Jews who have done nothing wrong and to him, since if we kill him, we stop him from killing others and lessen his "Gehinom" (punishment in the World to Come). The Mishnah in Sanhedrin (71b) says that the "ben sorer u-moreh" (the rebellious son – see Devarim 21:18-21) is killed on account of his future. While he has done many things wrong, he has not committed a sin for which he is liable for capital punishment, but he is killed so that he will die innocent and not guilty. In our case the terrorist is already liable, but he should die liable and not even more liable. We do not use the concept "he should die innocent and not die guilty" to create new laws, but to explain them. C. These are halachot of war, and in war, we do not lock up an enemy who is shooting at us, but we fire back at him. This is similar to what King Shaul said to the "Keni" (Shmuel 1 15:6): "Go, depart, go down from among Amalek, lest I destroy you with them." This means, even though you are my friend, if you are there, you could get hurt or killed. In the halachot of war, we do not make such calculations as it says, "The best of the non-Jews should be killed." The Tosafot raised a major difficulty with this statement: how can we say such a thing when according to halachah it is forbidden to kill a non-Jew and all the more so the best of the non-Jews (Tosafot to Avodah Zarah 26b and see Beit Yosef Yoreh Deah 158)? Tosafot explained that this statement refers to a time of war. This non-Jew seems pleasant or, in our case, he killed but he will be pleasant. No, we did not make such calculations in a time of war; even a pleasant-seeming non-Jew is killed. In sum: we therefore see that killing a terrorist is ethical.

Family Matters - Ha-Rav writes weekly for

the parashah sheet "Rosh Yehudi" on family relationships

"A five year old begins to learn Chumash"

As is known, our Sages established that a five year old should begin to learn Chumash (Avot 5:21). As in all human endeavors, however, we must remember that life is not a science and this is an average age, not a strict requirement.

In general, children cannot control themselves until this age. Rabbi Moshe ben Machir therefore writes in his book "Seder Ha-Yom" not to bring a child to school before this age, since it causes the child much distress with little benefit. One Rabbi in the Gemara told his student, who was a teacher, not to accept a child until the age of six and then feed him like an ox (Ketubot 50 a). Before that, only feed him small portions.

But do not be mistaken: none of this should be done with coercion. One must create a pleasant atmosphere through which the desire to learn is awakened within the child (Rashi ibid.).

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