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Parashat Vayakel-Pekudei 5772 - #226

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On the Parashah...  
The Wars of Hashem:  
Why King David was not Permitted to Build the Temple  
[Sefer Al Diglo #75]

There are those who explain that our King and Master David was admonished: "You have shed blood abundantly, and have waged great wars. You will not build a house to My Name, because you have shed much blood on the Land before me" (Divrei Ha-Yamim 1 22:8).

But this understanding is surprising, because if this were so – if King David was truly punished on account of his wars - why didn't Israel's prophets instruct him to refrain from wars for the rest of his life? Is it proper that a person sacrifices himself for the Nation of Israel, the Land of Israel and the Kingship of Israel, and is in the end told: "This was a mistake"?! The prophet Avigail in fact praised King David for his wars: "For Hashem will make my master a faithful house because my master fights the wars of Hashem and evil has not been found in you all of your days" (Shmuel 1 25:28). And what about the general principal that it is a Mitzvah to wage an obligatory war? According to the Ramban, this includes conquering the Land of Israel; and according to the Rambam it includes protecting Israel from an enemy. So how can a person be admonished when he is fulfilling a Mitzvah, and – on account of this – be told that he may not build the Temple? Where is it written that a soldier may not build the Temple?

It is true that a Cohain who murders may not recite the Bircat Cohanim, because "And when you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you, even when you recite many prayers, I will not hear, your hands are full of blood" (Yeshayahu 1:15). Halachic authorities, however, have ruled that this does not apply to a Cohain who is a soldier of Tzahal and kills in war: "And on the contrary, it is proper to say to them: 'May your hands be strengthened and may your power increase'" (Ha-Rav Ovadiah Yosef in Shut Yehaveh Daat 2:14). And above all, our righteous Messiah himself, as the Rambam says, will both wage the wars of Hashem and build the Temple (Rambam, Hilchot Melachim 11:1).

The true obstacle to King David building the Temple - as Rav Sa'adia Gaon explains - was not an ethical-spiritual deficiency connected to his participation in wars, but rather the need for him to dedicate his life exclusively to the labor of war. Changing gears in his old age, and dedicating his life to a different labor altogether was not what Hashem had in mind for him. This would be the life-project not of King David, but of his young son, who would sanctify

his entire life to building a house for Hashem (Rasag, Targum Ha-Tanach Le-Arvavit Le-Divrei Ha-Yamim 129:9).

One must understand that the building of the Temple is the final, climactic step and not the beginning. There are three Mitzvot which we are commanded when we enter the Land - Building the Kingship of Israel, fighting the war with Amalek, and building the Temple - and they must be performed in this order (Rambam, Hilchot Melachim 1:1-2). Therefore, anyone who is involved in building the Kingship of Israel is also involved in the waging of war, which is necessarily connected to it, as in the words of the Rambam's title: "Laws of Kings and their Wars". And all of this precedes, and leads to, the building of the Temple.

Anyone who fights the wars of Hashem is involved in the preparation of the Temple. And this is what was said of King David: Although you were not involved in the actual building of the Temple, you nevertheless prepared it by the great wars which you waged, and now your son is able to build it. Our Master Ha-Rav Avraham Yitzhak Ha-Cohain Kook similarly writes: "In building the Temple, as the King said to the prophet Natan: 'See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the Ark of God dwells within a curtain' (Shmuel 2 7:2), the prophet responds to him with the word of Hashem: 'Did I speak a word with any of the rulers of Israel, who I commanded as shepherds of my Nation saying, why do you not build me a house of cedar?' (ibid. verse 7). When the times comes, 'I have appointed a place for my Nation Israel, and planted them, that they may dwell on it, and be troubled no more, nor will the children of wickedness torment them anymore, as in the beginning' (ibid. verse 10), then the time will have arrived to build the Temple. Everything that King David, may peace be upon him, did, all the wars that he waged with the enemies of Israel to break the nations of the world from around our neck and to expand the borders of our Land, all of this was a preparation and a readying for the ultimate goal of building the Temple" (Ma'amrei Ha-Re'eiyah vol. 1, pp. 246-247).

## Rav Aviner on... Serving G-d with Joy

[Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah – Ki Tisa 5772 – translated by R. Blumberg]

**Question:** When I pray, I feel nothing special. When I fulfill Mitzvot and study Torah, I do not connect to G-d. If this is the reason that I am serving G-d, I am clearly missing out on the essence. How can I improve my situation?

**Answer:** This is a delicate point. If a person serves G-d in order to get excited, he is probably not serving G-d but serving himself. That is, such worship of G-d is insincere.

Obviously, even worship of G-d that is insincere still counts as worship of G-d. Yet, if you are serving G-d even though you do not feel any connection, then you are worshipping G-d sincerely, and certainly would not want to descend to the level of insincere worship.

We can rest assured that at the end of the path we will feel an enormous, wonderful feeling, yet that is not the reason that we are serving G-d. There is a difference between knowledge and will. We know that this is the way things will be, yet that does not serve as a motive.

The book Mesilat Yesharim opens by saying that the foundation of saintliness is to derive pleasure from G-d (Chapter 1). Yet this should not be understood to mean that we should have selfish longing for that pleasure (see Orot Ha-Kodesh, 3:167).

The Master of the Universe created man with the goal that he should achieve pleasure in the service of G-d, yet our goal in serving G-d must not be that pleasure, but rather, to do G-d's will. Or, as Maran Ha-Rav Avraham Yitzchak Ha-Cohain Kook worded it: "To shower contentment upon our Creator" (Mussar Avicha 2:4). Achieving perfection in our worship of G-d means worshipping Him "to fulfill G-d's needs" -- exclusively to fulfill G-d's will and not to receive any reward, even the reward of excitement.

Imagine a person who has saved a whole city, for which he received a reward of a thousand silver pieces. He must rejoice over his having saved a city and not over the reward that he received (Ibid.).

Our supreme goal must be the performance of G-d's will, and not just to get excited about it. A person does not always get excited. Maran Ha-Rav Kook quotes the book Chovot Ha-Levavot as saying that if someone wishes to change his own nature for the better and to carry out a revolution inside himself, he must be ready to taste "bitter medicine" (Sha'ar Avodat Elokim, Chapter 5). Obviously, the medicine will just as likely be sweet, yet in advance we must be ready if occasionally it turns out to be bitter (Mussar Avicha, 2:1)

We do not always get excited. Ha-Rav Ra'anana, the son-in-law of Maran Ha-Rav Kook, complained that he did not feel progress in his Torah study. Rav Kook responded that during learning, he too did not feel anything special.

## **Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law**

### Missionary Literature

Q: I received literature in my mailbox from Jews for Jesus. While I would like to throw it straight into the garbage, I saw that the booklet contains G-d's name. What should I do with it?

Answer: It should be thrown in the garbage. [M. Tzion – note: I personally have seen Rav Aviner do this when giving a talk on the subject in the yeshiva!]

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