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Parashat Vaera - #265

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## On the Haftarah... The Home and the Vineyard

[Ashkenazim/Sefardim: Yechezkel 28:25-29:21  
Yemenite Jews: Yechezkel 28:24-29:21]

Charedi Jews approached the Chafetz Chaim, the exalted sage of his generation, to complain about the actions of the residents of Eretz Yisrael. In their opinion the pioneers, despairing of messianic hope, had abandoned Torah learning and mitzvah observance. The Chafetz Chaim answered them by quoting a single verse from our Haftarah: "[And they will dwell upon it securely] and build houses and plant vineyards" (Yechezkel 28:26). He thus showed them that when it comes to building up the Land of Israel, the prophet mentions houses and vineyards, not batei kneset and yeshivot. This great Torah scholar obviously wanted batei kneset and yeshivot to be built in Eretz Yisrael, but he accepted that the revival of the Nation of Israel would begin at a more basic and material stage. This stage would provide the foundation for the spiritual awakening which would arrive at a much later time.

We can compare our Nation's history to that of an individual. The birth of a nation, like its revival, is parallel to the birth of a child. At the beginning of his life, his parents' concerns are not about his spiritual development, but ensuring his physical and emotional growth: proper eating, taking care of his physical hygiene and dedicating much attention to him in accordance with medical instructions. Only much later, after a healthy body and strong and balanced soul are established, can the parents help advance the child to the next stage: learning Torah and observing its mitzvot.

This is the picture which is painted for us by the prophet Yechezkel in his description of the return of the Jews to Zion: they will first involve themselves with building and

agriculture. Although "man [and, by extension, Nation] does not live by bread alone, rather he lives by everything that comes from the mouth of Hashem" (Devarim 8:3), we must nonetheless admit that ensuring one's material existence is an essential first stage. The Jewish Nation returning to its Land must first ensure its survival from an economic and security standpoint.

Even in relation to the Temple itself, our Rabbis formulated the important principle: "We build with the profane and sanctify afterward" (Meilah 14a). The stones used in the building of the Temple receive the highest holiness, and it is forbidden to use them for a profane purpose. Nonetheless, it is difficult to prevent the workers from occasionally sitting on them or even climbing on them when need be. Therefore, in order to prevent desecrating the holy, the requirements of building postpone the stones' receiving their holiness to a later period. They remain in a non-holy state until the structure reached its completion, and only then do they receive the highest level of holiness. The Talmud explains this idea with the help of the famous principle: "The Torah was not given to angels" (ibid. 14b). We are not angels and we are unable to immediately build a reality which is completely spiritually. Only little by little can the foundation of our world attain its true value.

The much hoped-for Messianic Redemption does not necessarily need to come as an immediate revolution. It will be the result, rather, of a gradual development, as our Rabbis' express in the Jerusalem Talmud (Berachot 1:1): "[Redemption arrives] slowly, slowly," stage after stage.

Everything begins with the ingathering of the exiles, as the prophet Yechezkel informs us in our Haftarah: "Thus says Hashem, G-d: When I gather in the House of Israel from the nations in which they are scattered, and I will be sanctified by them in the eyes of the nations, and they will dwell on their Land which I gave to My servant, Yaakov" (Yechezkel 28:25).

It seems at first glance that the concept of "Kiddush Hashem" (sanctification of Hashem) does not apply to our current reality. Without wanting to speak ill of our dear Nation, it seems that we are not always an example of religious people who observe the mitzvot. Isn't it more appropriate to speak now – to our great distress – of "Chilul Hashem" (desecration of Hashem)?

But Yechezkel relates to a different type of sanctifying of Hashem's Name: the return of the Nation of Israel to its Land. The fact that the Nation of Israel is located in the Exile is itself a desecration of Hashem, since this seems to imply that the Divine plan for the Chosen Nation has failed. This plan turned out to be an historical failure, i.e. a Divine failure.

The "Wandering Jew", who reaches the farthest borders of the world arouses great doubt among the nations of the world regarding the probability of a Divine plan for Hashem's Nation. The Creator's plan appears as a fleeing draft, destined to disappear or be replaced by a different plan and a different nation, Hashem protect us. There is no greater desecration.

In contrast, when our battered Nation gathers together and builds its Land, it is revealed before all humanity that Hashem spoke the truth - that the Torah did not err and that the Divine decision relating to the eternity of Israel is irreversible! The prophetic promises stating the revival of the Nation of Israel were not in vain and were not falsehoods. When the word of the prophet is actualized before the shocked nations of the world, there is no greater sanctification.

The return to Zion is accompanied by the promise: "And they will dwell upon it securely" (ibid. 28:26). This is not discussing a "return" which would last only a short period of time, and which was destined to fail because it was not planned for properly; rather the Nation had the wherewithal to lay all of the necessary foundations so that it could firmly root itself in its Land.

Yechezkel provides us with details: "And they will dwell upon it securely and build houses and plant vineyards and dwell securely – when I execute judgments on all who disdain them, who surround them, and they will know that I am Hashem, their G-d" (ibid.). There are therefore two elements that are mentioned which allow the existence of the Nation in its Land: building and agriculture. He adds a third factor, no less essential, relating to our security. The verse repeats this point. Until the day arrives when humanity turns its swords into plough shears, we need a strong, defensive army. "If you want peace, prepare for war" – the Latin saying goes. The Rambam, the great halachic authority on laws relating to our national life, dealt with this matter in the section of the Mishneh Torah: "The Laws of Kings," whose complete name is "The Laws of Kings **and their Wars**" which prepares us for this reality.

But we can justifiably ask ourselves: are we currently living securely in our Land? Haven't we endured many bloody defensive wars? Isn't there still Arab terror which cruelly victimizes our innocent civilian population? Hasn't the promised tranquility of our return to our Land disappeared?

We must distinguish between two types of security: 1. The far off, idealistic state of peace and love occurring between the nations of the world. 2. The realistic, practical state based on our ability to protect ourselves and to stop enemy attacks with the aid of a deterrent war.

Our Land is also a place of national refuge which Theodore Herzl, the founder of Zionism, mentioned. But a long time before him, Yechezkel told us: "When I execute judgments on all who disdain them and who surround them." The concept of peace found in the Torah is not necessarily built upon that of peace-loving neighbors, but often built upon the fear we instill in them: "I will provide peace in the Land, and you will lie down with nothing to fear...and a sword will not cross your Land. You will pursue your enemies and they will fall before you by the sword. Five of you will pursue a hundred, and a hundred of you will pursue ten thousand, and your enemies will fall before you by the sword" (Vayikra 21:6-8).

It may seem paradoxical that this verse connects the concept of peace with pursuing our enemies. We can nevertheless agree that this situation, even if not ideal, still provides us with a certain level of security and relative peace. This is certainly preferable to our tragic period of wandering throughout the world where we suffered countless persecutions, pogroms and

the Holocaust. We can now sleep quietly in our beds, since we have an army to protect us, and which is capable of driving away our enemies. We must give thanks to The Holy One, Blessed Be He, that five million Jews can instill fear into two hundred million zealous Arabs. We have yet to reach the new level of which the Torah speaks - of one to a hundred - but we have already surpassed the lower level of one to twenty.

We obviously hope that our power of deterrence is sufficient to prevent a war. But we can at least be assured that in the near or distant future: "A sword will not cross your Land" (ibid.). If there will be an unpreventable war, it will take place on enemy territory so that our elderly, women and children can live in peace in our homes and in security in our vineyards.

## Rav Aviner on... Go Learn Medicine!

[Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah – Shemot 5773 – translated by R. Blumberg]

Dear friend, dear young person, go study medicine. It is a great Mitzvah to prolong life and to improve quality of life. Do it!

Unfortunately, there is a great shortage of physicians in the State of Israel, and throughout the West in general. So, go study to be a physician.

I will not deny, however, that it isn't simple. It takes self-sacrifice.

\*The course of study is very long. With internships and residency, becoming a family medical practitioner can take up to twelve years.

\*The salary isn't that high, unless you reach the top of the line.

\*The hours are long and there is grave responsibility.

For all these reasons, there is a shortage of doctors in the West. People are individualists.

They think mainly about themselves, and not about others, and they prefer short studies that lead to an easier, more lucrative profession.

Therefore, if you are an idealist, go become a physician.

If a physician is not an idealist, if all he has in his head is money and status, and if he doesn't really care much about patients; if he is unwilling to heal the poor for free; such a physician, even if he is excellent, is the object of our Sages' dictum, that "the best of the physicians go to hell." In our country, however, most physicians – almost all of them, thank G-d – are bound for heaven.

It is great Mitzvah to be a physician. See Rabbi Eliezer Pappo's work, "Pele Yoetz, s.v., "Rescue", which explains our Sages' well-known utterance: "Even the most vacuous of Jews are as full of Mitzvot as a pomegranate." How can this be? It is because they save lives. Pele Yoetz stresses that someone who saves lives is greater than a Torah scholar. So go save lives. Even increasing quality of life is a form of saving lives: when a person is physically healthy, and he is also mentally healthy, he leads a tranquil life, steeped in Torah, purity and family harmony (see Rambam, Hilchot De'ot, Chapter 4). Therefore, Rambam writes in his Shemoneh Perakim that medicine is not a profession like any other, but a profession that is a Mitzvah.

Rambam was so adamant that Ha-Rav Moshe Feinstein needed to answer why Rambam required everyone to study medicine to save people. His conclusion was that it was a great Mitzvah, the Mitzvah of giving life.

How great and how marvelous are your deeds, oh G-d, as evinced by modern medicine which grants life, prolongs life and increases the quality of life for so many people.

Once, a physician gave a lecture to a convention of prominent CEOs, and asked them, "Who here would be alive today if not for modern medicine?" Out of 40 people, only one raised his hand.

Obviously, everything I'm writing applies to females as well. Our own women deserve to have female physicians. True, women are permitted to go to a male physician, but it isn't always pleasant for them. Pregnancy and childbirth are not easy experiences, and going to male physicians just adds to the unpleasantness. So, we ask for a bit of mercy. Please, good women, go study medicine.

Yet I will not hide from you a fact that makes me hesitate before encouraging you to study medicine: studying and practicing medicine involves self-sacrifice for a male – for a young mother this self-sacrifice is twice, three times or four times as great.

Therefore, do as follows: obtain advice from a female physician who will tell you what she has gone through in her studies, and then decide. If you decide to go forward, you will earn our greatest esteem. And let me take this opportunity to say candidly that being a nurse is likewise a great Mitzvah, likewise involving enormous self-sacrifice.

How fortunate you all are, emissaries of G-d in curing G-d's Nation, Israel!

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

### **Shut Rabbenu Tam Tefillin**

Rosh Chodesh

Q: When does one put on Rabbenu Tefillin on Rosh Chodesh, since we remove Tefillin before Musaf?

A: Some say that one should put them on after Musaf (Pri Megadim 25:16 – Mishbetzot Zahav). But according to Mekubalim one should not put on Tefillin after Musaf, and one must therefore be careful to put them on before Musaf (Piskei Teshuvot 25 note #211).

Purim

Q: One who puts on Rabbenu Tam Tefillin - which Tefillin should he wear during the reading of the Megillah on Purim?

A: Some have the custom to wear Rashi Tefillin and some have the custom of Rabbenu Tam Tefillin (Nitei Gavriel – Purim, chapter 51 note #3).

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