



Parashat Ki Tisa - #272

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On the Haftarah...

Haftarah for Parashat Parah

The Sanctification of Hashem's Great Name

[Ashkenazim: Yechezkel 36:16-33

Yemenite Jews/Sefardim: Yechezkel 36:16-36]

"And I will sanctify My great name that was desecrated among the nations, that you desecrated among them. Then the nations will know that I am Hashem" (Yechezkel 36:23).

Our Haftarah is a special one, and is related to the additional Torah reading called "Parah." This portion deals with the "Parah Adumah" - the Red Heifer that is designated to rid us of all impurity incurred by contact with the dead. Its theme of purification explains why we read this portion in the weeks leading up to Pesach: after all, the holiday itself, and its requirement to visit the Temple, obligate us to purify ourselves. The purification described in this Haftarah, however, does not pertain to the individual, but rather to the entire Nation, at the conclusion of the Exile, when it truly needs it.

"And the word of Hashem came to me, saying: Son of man, the House of Israel, as long as they lived on their own Land, they defiled it by their way and by their misdeeds; like the uncleanness of a woman in the period of her separation was their way before Me" (ibid. 16-17). As is known, the Nation of Israel was mired in the most severe sins: idol worship, illicit sexual relations, and murder – sins that require a radical transformation, i.e. exile. "I poured out My wrath upon them for the blood that they had shed in the Land and because they had defiled it with their idols. And I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed through the lands. According to their way and their misdeeds did I judge them" (ibid. v. 18-19). Since we were unable to act as a Holy Nation, we were cast out among the nations of the world. But a severe problem, no less hideous than the one which caused the destruction, arose while we were in exile.

"And they entered the nations where they came, and they desecrated My Holy Name" (ibid. v. 20). What type of desecration of Hashem's Name are we discussing? Didn't the Nation of Israel reach the ultimate of desecrating Hashem's Name while performing those horrible sins? This desecration was something else, which the verse specifies: "It was said of them: These are the Nation of Hashem, and they have come out of His Land" (ibid.).

Humanity well knows that the Nation of Israel is the Chosen Nation and that the Land of Israel belongs to them. But things have gone awry: instead of being master of its Land, the Nation of Israel became a wandering and outcast Nation. It is an unbearable national failure. "But I had pity on My Holy Name, which the House of Israel had desecrated among the nations to which they had come" (ibid. v. 21). The entire purpose of Creation is sanctifying Hashem, who brought down his Divine Presence from the supreme worlds to the lower worlds in order to reside in them and illuminate them through the Nation of Israel. And yet this eternal plan directed the Nation of Israel to be temporarily located outside of its Land.

"So says Hashem G-d: Not for your sake do I do this, House of Israel, but for My Holy Name, which you have profaned among the nations to which they have come" (ibid. v. 22). Hashem acts in this way not for Israel's sake but in order to sanctify His Great Name: "And I will sanctify My Great Name, which was profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst, and the nations will know that I am Hashem, so says Hashem G-d, when I will be sanctified through you before their eyes" (ibid. v. 23). It was (and is) incumbent upon us to sanctify Hashem's name, but we betrayed our mission. So Hashem took the mission upon Himself. But did He repair this terrible affront to His Holy Name? "For I will take you from among the nations and gather you from all the lands, and I will bring you to your Land" (ibid. v. 24). The ingathering of the exiles, the revival of the Nation of Israel in its Land and returning to nationhood is the great sanctification of Hashem's name. In this way, everything returns to its proper order, according to the Divine plan. But it is not a redemption that occurs because the Nation of Israel merits it.

"And I will sprinkle pure water upon you, and you will be purified from all your impurities; and from all your abominations, I will purify you" (ibid. v. 25). A Jew who makes aliyah is not necessarily pure, but he will become pure. This idea is contrary to the view of some Rabbis that the purification of the Nation of Israel must

precede their return to Eretz Yisrael. The prophet Yechezkel teaches us, in the Name of Hashem, the exact opposite. The Exile is a desecration of Hashem's Name and not a place for purification. Purification can only occur in Eretz Yisrael.

"And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the heart of stone from your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh" (ibid. v. 26). Even some Jews who make aliyah will have a heart of stone, but they will receive a heart of flesh when they root themselves in the Land. The spiritual revival of the Nation will follow the national revival, according to the Divine blueprint. "And I will put My spirit within you and bring it about that you will walk in My statutes and you will keep My ordinances and do [them]" (ibid. v. 27). The performance of the Mitzvot comes at a much later stage in the purification of the Nation of Israel. It is caused by the purifying waters and the heart of flesh.

And in order to make it completely clear that our Redemption is not dependent upon our merits and repentance, Yechezkel emphasized: "And you shall remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good, and you will loathe yourselves in your own eyes on account of your sins and on account of your abominations. Not for your sake do I do it, says Hashem G-d, may it be known to you, be embarrassed and ashamed for your ways, House of Israel" (ibid. v. 31-32).

Yechezkel transmitted to us a precise plan for the Redemption and the revival of the Nation of Israel. According to this Divine blueprint, the Nation of Israel will first return to its Land, and only then experience, little by little, an ethical, spiritual, and religious purification. The Master of the Universe guides the purification of the Nation of Israel, first removing us from the impurity of Exile, and next renewing our body, heart and spirit. Only then are we ready to fulfill the Torah's mitzvot.

Just as the first part of Yechezkel's prophecy is coming true before our eyes, i.e. the return of the Nation of Israel to its Land, so too is a new idealistic, ethical, and spiritual spirit manifesting itself in our time. We must not despair that the process is a slow one. It will be perfected in later stages of our Salvation, and it will lead us to complete and supreme unity with Hashem and His Torah.

Rav Aviner on...

The Large Kippah

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

Wear a large Kippah! Not because you have to, but because you want to. In life, you don't do just what you have to. You also crave being good. Between the strong, exacting edifices of duty, there is a free atmosphere in which man's pure cravings flow freely.

Certainly there are obligations as well. Shulchan Aruch rules: "One should not walk four cubits with his head uncovered" (Orach Chaim 2:6).

And what is the minimum size?

1. According to Ha-Gaon Ha-Rav Shlomo Kluger, most of the head must be covered (Shut Ha-Elef Lecha Shlomo), for you need a "head covering", i.e., of the whole head, and most is equated with all.

2. According to Ha-Gaon Ha-Rav Ovadia Hadayah, the Kippah has to be visible from all sides (Shut Yaskil Avdi vol. 6, p. 292). Otherwise, it's not called a covering. Likewise, Ha-Gaon Ha-Rav Ovadiah Yosef said, "It should be recognizable and visible from all sides of the head, front and back" (Shut Yehaveh Da'at 4:1).

3. According to Ha-Gaon Ha-Rav Moshe Feinstein, it is best to take the strict approach and to cover most of one's head, but legally, it suffices to have a head covering (Shut Igrot Moshe, Orach Chaim 1:8). If it is too small it is not called a head covering, but just a decoration.

4. Some have ruled that the size of a hand suffices, because legally, another person can put his hand on his friend's head, and his friend can recite blessings (Igrot Moshe, *ibid.*).

See also many more details on this in my own humble commentary on the Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (3:6). Yet my point here is not to define the minimum size of the Kippah, because in life, a person does not just do the minimum. Rather, if something is precious to him, he adds to it with all his heart. A person does not live in a minimum size house. He does not buy a minimum size car, nor buy a secondhand shirt at the minimum price. People do not voluntarily subsist on bread and water. Rather, they augment their diet. All the more so should one augment his service to G-d, which is life's purpose. The house, the car, clothing and food are only means, but the purpose is to serve G-d. Therefore, a person will be happy to add on for the sake of his reason for living, thereby giving his life content.

Why, after all, do we cover our heads? It is so that we will have the fear of G-d (Shabbat 156b). As Kitzur Shulchan Aruch states: "We have to accustom even small boys to covering their heads, so that they will have the fear of G-d. We have seen this in the case of Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak, whose mother did not allow him to bare his head. She told him 'Cover your head so you will have the fear of G-d on you' (Shabbat, *ibid.*)" (Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 3:6). So, for a big Mitzvah such as this, we should be happy to wear a big covering on our heads. Certainly, the fear of G-d is the most important thing in life. "Fear Hashem your G-d" (Devarim 10:20). "And now, oh Israel, what does Hashem your G-d ask of you, but to fear Hashem your G-d?" (*Ibid.* 10:12). "The sum of the matter, when all is said and done: Revere G-d... for that is man's whole purpose" (Kohelet 12:13).

Why, in effect, do people cover their heads? It is because the Divine presence is above our heads (Kiddushin 31a). Is there anything more important than the Divine presence above a person's head?! Could there be anything more important to remember?! True, it is stylish nowadays for people to place themselves above all else, as if to coin a new verse: "I place myself before me always." Yet that is not our style. We, the disciples of Avraham and the disciples of Moshe, say, "I place G-d before me always" (Tehillim 16:8). Surely that is the most supreme purpose of all - that G-d longed to have an abode on this Earth. So also for such a big Mitzvah is this, we should long to have a big Kippah.

And why do we wear a Kippah? Our great master Rambam wrote, "Torah scholars conduct themselves with great humility... They do not bare their heads" (Hilchot De'ot 5:6).

Humility! A prodigious concept! Kitzur Shulchan Aruch teaches: "It says, 'Walk humbly with your G-d' (Michah 6:8). Do not say, 'I am here in an inner room, in the dark. Who sees me?' G-d's glory fills the whole earth, and for Him, darkness is like light. Humility and shame lead a person to subject himself to G-d" (Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 3:1). Great humility, a large Kippah!

You might ask: "But a large Kippah implies pride!" Sure it constitutes pride! But it is not pride for oneself, but pride for something larger. It represents pride that I am a Jew, pride over being part of a unique nation. Nowadays, nothing so marks Jews as their head covering.

Rabbi David Ha-Levi Segal [the "Taz" or Turei Zahav] already wrote that there is an outright prohibition against going bareheaded, because of the verse "Do not follow any of their customs" (Leviticus 18:3) (Orach Chaim 8, Taz 105. Quoted in Mishna Berura 2:11). True, this is a very novel idea. Yet based on this novel idea, Ha-Gaon Ha-Rav Avigdor Neventzal wrote, "Baring one's head to appear non-observant violates a prohibition that while not actually being something one must give up one's life to avoid, still verges on it" (Be-Yitzchak Yikarei on Mishna Berurah, *Ibid.*). The innovation is thus two-fold. True, it says in Chochmat Adam that wearing non-Jewish attire must be avoided with one's life, but Rav Neventzal's comment still remains a double innovation.

Interestingly, the author I. E. Peretz, who was not at all religious, wrote a short story about a poor Jew who was framed, and his punishment was to cross between two rows of soldiers who whipped him until he bled. He advanced without stumbling, but suddenly he discovered that his Kippah had fallen off. So, he turned around, walked back and picked up his Kippah and covered his head. Then he walked with his Kippah on his head until he fell...

As I said, I. E. Peretz belonged to the Enlightenment, but unlike others of that movement, he did not attack G-d-fearing Jews, but was impressed by their pure hearts and by their heroically sacrificing themselves to sanctify G-d's name.

So, always wear a Kippah. A big Kippah. Wear it during sports, war games, in battle, always wear one.

You might ask: how can I wear a large Kippah when there are Torah scholars greater than I who wear small Kippot? Am I greater than they?! Certainly I am smaller than they, but I do what I do, and they do what they do. They are busy doing very great things for the sake of G-d's glory, while I am involved with smaller things, such as wearing a Kippah. Yet for me it is a great Mitzvah. I love it, I yearn for it, I rejoice over it, and through it, G-d has given me a way to stand fast. I am a small person with a big Kippah.

Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law

Halachot of Visiting Museum

Israel Museum

Q: Is it permissible for Cohanim to enter the Israel Museum, since there are bones there?

A: Yes, they are not real bones, but imitations made from different materials.

Gush Katif Museum

Q: Is it permissible to visit the Gush Katif Museum in Yerushalayim?

A: Yes, while making sure that one guards his Ahavat Yisrael (see Sefer Ha-Tanya, Chapter 32).

Special thank you to Orly Tzion for editing the Ateret Yerushalayim Parashah Sheet



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