



פרשת וירא

כ" חשוון תשפ"א VOL. 1 / ISSUE 59

By the time you will be reading this, I'm not sure what country you will be in. I am, however, sure that the country's name will not begin with the word *United*. Our society, even the world as we know it, has developed an anti-social, non-tolerant approach to anyone who dares to have a different opinion than my own. This overriding fault covers everything in life, from politics, vaccinations, being vegan, taste in clothing and eating and for sure masks. I mentioned to some people that even if – בס"ד let it be soon – things get back to a semblance of normalcy, the universities (the petri dish for so much שקר in the world) will never have debating teams again. If they do, it will become the fencing team, only using real swords. This is even true by people who show no outward signs of being disturbed, their fierce antagonism rises like a volcano, ready to consume everything in its way. I don't mean to include the anarchists who can't tell you to move away without at least two expletives. To understand their wild eyed ferocity, cursing people they don't even know with such raging cruelty, is probably a study of its own. Probably money is part of the answer but that only explains part of it. It is a horrible situation that must be dealt with – at least in the circle of Shomrei Torah U'mitzvos.

Many of us know the classic words of the Netziv in his Pesicha to Sefer Beraishis, where he quotes the Gemara in Avoda Zara (25a) that titles Sefer Beraishis as ספר הישר – the book of "STRAIGHTNESS". Rav Yochanan explains that it is because Avraham, Yitzchok and Yaakov are called ישרים as Bilaam asked תמות נפשי מות ישרים, he wanted to die the death of those that were known as ישרים. The Netziv wonders, of all the titles to give the Avos – Tzadikim, Kedoshim etc., why Yesharim? He then offers us an eye-opening Vort about the Bayis Sheini. Yiden were צדיקים, "חסידים ועמלי תורה", but they looked at others that lacked their level of Yiras Hashem with hatred, and considered them as צדוקים or אפיקורסים. This led to "שפיכות דמים בדרך הפלגה", extreme levels of strife that ultimately led to Churban Habayis. The Netziv continues that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is not happy with such צדיקים, only Yesharim find favor in His Eyes. How were the Avos Yesharim? They loved Hashem with the utmost fervor, but they treated EVERYONE with correctness and decency – STRAIGHT, honestly – NISHT GEDREITD AH KOHP; all while being impartial to the extensive gap to what others believed or how they lived their lives. They taught us Masechta after Masechta in Hilchos Derech Eretz; a non-Yashar who spent his days doing Chesed, if he were to be told that a city which legislated anti-Chesed would be destroyed, would likely jump for joy, mouthing Baruch Hashem between jumps. But Avraham goes to bat for them, trying again and again to save Sedom, a city which he hated both the inhabitants and their king. How amicable was Avraham to Lot! How fair he was when Lot was with him, the risks he took to save him despite knowing that Lot's weaknesses would dominate his behavior. Lot was the failed Talmid – the one that got away. Avraham earned the title of אב

המוון גרים, even to those who behaved in ways that would irritate lesser people. How easily did Yitzchak forgive Avimelech for nearly doing the unforgivable? How exemplary was Yaakov's reaction to the crook Lavan's deceit? Yaakov taught us how to lose our temper, as pointed out in Beraishis Rabbah (74) של קפדותו של אבות ולא ענותנותו של (74) - even when you are 100% percent right. So Bilaam says, in that moment, how can I hate them? They come from Yesharim, with such control over their emotions! So teaches the Netziv.

I am still fascinated by Lot and would like to take the Netziv's approach in learning some of the Pesukim. Avraham should really have been seriously annoyed and even betrayed by his nephew, his Talmid, the one who at this point should have been Avraham's successor in teaching the world about Hashem. Please note the wording of the Pesukim. (8:31) ויפרדו איש מעל – כי אנשים אחים אנהנו (8:31) אחיו (61:41) כי נשבה אחיו (41:41) - בן אחי אברהם (21:41) - אחיו (11:31) . וגם את לוט. This is teaching us not to abandon the title of אחי, even for someone who does not live up to your standards. Despite this, we know that there are some Baalei Aveira that this does not apply to – אינו עושה מעשה עמך - but most Yiden we encounter do not fall into that category. The Paskened the Mitzvah of חזון איש שנאו רע does not apply to תינוקות שנשבו, children that were captured, denied any exposure to Yiddishkeit.

Long ago I was on a plane going to Eretz Yisroel with Shlomo Carlbach – an experience that deserves its own article. He told me of an ecumenical meeting he attended in India. He met a "Swami" or something like that, whatever they call them, and רחמנא ליצני his right hand "man" was a girl from Tel Aviv. He asked her, what are you doing here? She replied, I found G-d here. Shlomo responded, you could have found G-d in Tel Aviv too. The girl answered, "IN TEL AVIV, NOBODY EVER TOLD ME THERE WAS A G-D". I have a nephew that is a Rav in Raanana. He has a yearly program taking Yiddishe Kinder from a nearby secular High school into a Shul. He takes out a Sefer Torah and shows them the Pesukim. He tells me, sadly, it is the first time these kids ever saw a Sefer Torah – ה' ירחם.

We all know that great people are also Yesharim, a Yerusha from the Avos. A great Tzadik was the Satmar Rav, Reb Yoel, whose opinion seriously opposed the Israeli government and everything associated with it (also needs its own article). The story that I heard was of two Bachurim collecting for Chinuch Atzmai in Eretz Yisroel. His initial response was to give them Mussar: collecting for the Zionist's? Then he said, but you are doing what your Rebbi told you to do and he pulled out \$500 cash and gave it to them. He continued to tell them how important it is to listen to your Rebbi, then he stopped and said, give me back the cash. He proceeded to write a check for \$500, explaining that people will never believe that I gave you the cash, but with the check you can prove it. A

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check for the Tzionim that I do not agree with; a Yashar who doesn't forget the אחזה.

This idea hit me hard as I read an article this week that made me cry. The article, written by Eric Mandel, a Middle East Political expert, is titled "Is It Too Late To Salvage The American And Israeli - Jewish Relationship". I quote the article to awaken us to a problem that is real, and maybe our tears will move us to do something - something! "Has the divide reached a tipping point where only two generations ago, Jews from America considered Israeli Jews their brothers and sisters but for many, they now only consider them at best distant cousins who they have little in common with. A 2018 A.J.C (American Jewish Congress) survey found only 28% of Israeli's consider American Jews "siblings" - and that was more than twice as the 12% of American Jews who viewed their Israeli counterparts that way, and Israeli Jews are more than twice as likely as their American counterparts (81% to 40%) to say that being Jewish is "very" or "most" important in their lives". על אלה אני בוכיה.

Only 12% of American Jews feel any allegiance, any brotherhood with Yiden in Israel. It is a distressing catastrophe - not only a painful statistic - but it is relevant to today's issues as well.

On the aforementioned plane trip with Shlomo Carlbach, I pointed out to him that a new Niggun on his new record was the same as one on a previous record. His response was that someone told one of the previous Belzer Rebbe's the same thing. The Rebbe's response was פון זיך קען מען שוין אויך נישט גב'ן - since when can you not steal from yourself? I would like to quote one of the early articles of Anfei Erez (vol. I issue 5).

This also creates another problem that deserves its own attention. It seems that small people need to broadcast their "good deeds" to remedy the mournful state of their souls. Even our liberal brothers and sisters sense that their purpose of creation was not to be members of J-street and sip poolside margaritas. I'll take the liberty to quote a דבר חכמה from a non-rabbinic source. Norman Podhoretz in his book titled "Why Are Jews Liberals" writes: "Contemporary liberalism demands that, unlike any other people, Jews must justify the space they take up on this earth. Furthermore, they must do so not, as they are commanded in the Bible, by loving G-d with all their hearts and all their souls and all their might, but rather by clinging with the same intensity to certain currently fashionable conceptions of what constitutes progress and how to define justice - even if these conceptions are highly questionable, and even if, as most blatantly in the case of Israel, obedience to them could be tantamount to committing suicide. In this way, the Torah of liberalism puts itself radically at odds with the very (thing) that comes closer than any other to encapsulating the essence of the Torah of Judaism, and the observance of which for more than three thousand years is probably the single best explanation of the mystery of Jewish survival: I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both thou and they

seed may live"

The statistic explains how it can be that 70% of American Jews would vote for someone, who, undoubtedly would create situations that would imperil Yiden in Eretz Yisroel - as he promised he would - and is aligning himself with Sonai Yisroel. It is because 88% of them have no connection to our brothers and sisters. It is as if you're talking about some little country in Africa whose name you cannot pronounce nor would you care. Our brothers and sisters, what have you done to Judaism? Tikkun Haolam, fixing the world? They have no clue what it means - saving the whales? Climate change? Social injustice? That's all nice but try and fix the world - or yourself - with a little RELIGION, the kind you cannot adjust to fit your whim, the aberration du jour.

My friends, allow me to rant a little bit. My blood still boils about some mental midget in England, who arranged a meeting in a park to protest about the Palestinians that were killed at the gate when they first started with the balloons. She, some kind of official of the Reform movement, said Kaddish for the poor departed souls who sent destruction into civilian homes. She probably never said Kaddish for her grandparents - or for somebody else's grandparents - murdered in Auschwitz. Misguided does not do it justice. I wish her well, and I'd try and help her if I could - trying to be like the Yesharim. I wish I or someone can help her, but as I see it, I doubt that any of her descendants will say Kaddish for her.

Rav Berel Wein, he should be well, once said something I cannot forget. How can it be that so many Jewish college students across America are pro-Palestinian? They are certainly part of the 88%. He said, when you have three Doros of eating in McDonalds you can have pro-Palestinian children. That טמטום הלב doesn't let Jews feel like Jews should. What an insight!

We wonder, how can they see things in such a different light? We are incredulous. There used to be an expression - you may not hear it again - we agree to disagree. But how incredibly sad it is to see so many Jews whose hearts and minds are devoid of religion, country and the brotherhood that has kept us alive for thousands of years. But they are still my brothers and sisters.

We hope that Eliyahu Hanavi will restore the hearts of sons to realize כולנו בני איש אחד אנהו - we are all brothers - to Aveinu Shebashamayim. Please, please, let it be soon.

Amongst those that are מצפים לישועה

אמני דאפריה
חיים טובים איתך

