

JEWISH STATEHOOD (II)

by Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom

INTRODUCTION

The double Parashah which makes up this week's Torah reading covers chapters 16-20 in Vayyikra and includes many significant and central themes, Mitzvot and value statements of the Torah weltanschauung.

I would like to raise five structural questions, relating to the placement of various commands, command-sequences and hortatory statements. After raising these questions, we will continue surveying the recent history of Religious Zionism in the second part of our three-part essay on Jewish Statehood.

II

"AFTER THE DEATH"

Our double-Parashah opens with the following introductory phrase:

And Hashem spoke to Mosheh after the death of the two sons of Aharon, when they came near Hashem, and died.

Following this associative verse (which evidently ties the commands which follow to the death of Nadav and Avihu), Hashem tells Mosheh to instruct Aharon regarding the yearly ritual cleansing of the Mishkan which, we soon find out, is Yom haKippurim. As Rashi points out (along with many other Rishonim), the connection between the proper way to enter the sanctum sanctorum and the death of Nadav and Avihu is clear; to wit, do not die as they died, rather perform the following service and you will live. As Ramban points out, however, this leaves us with a bit of a problem in the sequencing of the text – there are a full five chapters of commands which interrupt the narrative of the death of Aharon's sons and the command regarding the proper way to enter the Kodosh Kodoshim.

These include * (Ch. 11) the prohibitions of eating various animals, fish and birds (and the attendant ritual impurity); * (Ch. 12) The ritual for purification of a yoledet (woman who has given birth), * (Ch. 13) the various forms of Tzara'at (scale disease), including that affecting clothing; * (Ch. 14) The purification ritual of one afflicted with Tzara'at (as well as the wondrous Tzara'at haBayit) and * (Ch. 15) the ritual impurity of a Zav, Zava and Nidah - those with healthy or unhealthy sexual emissions.

What are we to make of these intervening chapters? There are two (seemingly opposite and apparently mutually exclusive) ways to understand the import of this opening phrase:

1) The Mitzvot presented in Chapters 11-15 were given directly after the death of Nadav and Avihu and form an immediate response to that tragedy, whereas the Mitzvot presented in Chapter 16 is disconnected from their death. In other words, the phrase *after the death* (Aharei Mot) indicates that the text from here on in is after their death and not directly connected to it.

2) Alternatively, one could reasonably argue (and this does seem to be the conventional approach), that all of the Mitzvot presented in Chapters 11-15 were given at a different time, but committed to writing there for other reasons. A variation of this approach posits that these Mitzvot were given at that time (right after the tragedy of Aharon's sons) but are neither thematically nor conceptually associated with that death and would have been given in any case.

In sum, our first question is how to understand the opening phrase *and does Aharei Mot reconnect us to the death of Aharon's sons - or does it disconnect us from it?*

The second question addresses the entire scope of Mitzvot and directives relating to the cleansing of the Mishkan. Why is this section presented in the middle of Sefer Vayyikra, after a host of Mitzvot relating to the Mishkan and purity and before another long list of such Mitzvot. It would have been reasonable, *prima facie*, to have this section either presented at the end of the holiness section of Vayyikra (perhaps after Chapter 24) or at the beginning of the Sefer. What is the rationale behind its location?

III

YOU SHALL BE HOLY

The third and fourth questions relate to this well-known (but not necessarily well-understood) charge. At the beginning of our second Parashah, the Torah states:

And Hashem spoke to Mosheh, saying, Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel, and say to them, You shall be holy; for I Hashem your God am holy. (Vayyikra 19:1-2).

What does this mean? More to the point, we have already heard a similar charge:

For I am Hashem your God; you shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I am holy; nor shall you defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creeps upon the earth. For I am Hashem that brings you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God; you shall therefore be holy, for I am holy. (Vayyikra 11:44-45)

Is the command/exhortation at the beginning of Chapter 19 different in any substantial manner from that at the end of Chapter 11?

The fourth question relates to the refrain which repeats throughout the first half of Parashat Kedoshim (Chapter 19). Although nearly all of the commands given there are of an interpersonal nature (Bein Adam liChavero), about every other verse ends with the refrain Ani Hashem (I am Hashem). Why does this area of law merit this anthemic repetition, which is not found in more ritually-oriented texts? (although it is found in the Parashat ha'Arayot; see below).

The final question deals with the end of each of our two Parashiot. The last chapter of Aharei Mot (Chapter 18) is commonly known as Parashat ha'Arayot (the section dealing with sexual improprieties). It opens with a general warning against imitating the idolatrous ways of either the Egyptians or Canaanites, and then proceeds to list, taboo after taboo, the sexual liaisons which the Torah forbids:

And Hashem spoke to Mosheh, saying, Speak to the people of Israel, and say to them, I am Hashem your God. After the doings of the land of Egypt, where you dwelt, shall you not do; and after the doings of the land of Canaan, where I bring you, shall you not do; nor shall you walk in their ordinances. You shall do my judgments, and keep my ordinances, to walk with them; I am Hashem your God. You shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments; which if a man does, he shall live in them; I am Hashem. None of you shall approach to any who is near of kin to him, to uncover their nakedness; I am Hashem (18:1-6)

Following this detailed list, the Torah presents its social agenda in the first half of Parashat Kedoshim. The second half of Parashat Kedoshim, however, seems to be a near repeat of the Parashat ha'Arayot – the same forbidden liaisons are mentioned, albeit in a different order. The one difference which marks this list as unique is that it is not a list of prohibitions (Azharot), rather, it is a list of consequences (Onashim). As opposed to the Molech-prohibition of Chapter 18:

You shall not give any of your offspring to sacrifice them to Molech, and so profane the name of your God: I am Hashem. (18:21),

the referent verse in chapter 20 states:

Whoever he is of the people of Israel, or of the strangers who sojourn in Israel, who gives any of his seed to Molech; he shall surely be put to death; the people of the land shall stone him with stones. (20:2)

Why, then, are these sections not integrated? This question is really two: Why aren't the prohibitions and punishments included in one verse (e.g. you shall not give any of your offspring to sacrifice them to Molech, for you will surely be put to death, the people of the land will stone you with stones because you have profaned the name of your God, I am Hashem), or at least in successive verses? Even if we grant that the entire section of prohibitions, for one reason or another, needs to be presented as an independent list, why not immediately follow that list with the list of consequences? Why interrupt the two presentations with the interpersonal social agenda of Chapter 19?

IV

SUMMARY OF QUESTIONS

- 1) How do we understand Aharei Mot and the relationship between the Mitzvot in Chapters 11-15, the Mitzvot following the phrase Aharei Mot and the death of Nadav and Avihu?
- 2) Why is the Kapparat haMishkan (cleansing of the Mishkan) presented in the middle of Sefer Vayyikra?
- 3) How are we to understand the call to be holy in 19:2 against the background of the earlier exhortation to holiness at the end of Chapter 11?
- 4) Why is the chapter which is replete with interpersonal Mitzvot underscored by the refrain Ani Hashem ?
- 5) Why is Parashat ha'Arayot divided into two presentations ñ first the Azharot, then the Onashim, with Chapter 19 in between?

As we did last week, we will continue our brief survey of the development of Religious Zionism with an eye towards suggesting several considerations which we, as a religious community, ought to consider. Those suggestions will only be raised in the final installment next week. In the meantime, after we bring our survey iup to date, we will again provide provisional answers to these five questions.

V

R. YITZCHAK YAIÁKOV REINES AND THE MIZRAHI

Rav Reines (1839-1915) was a charter member of the Hibbat Tziyyon movement which championed settlement of the Land within the religious community. Unlike many of his colleagues, however, Reines deliberately distanced the notion of Aliyah, settlement and eventual sovereignty from Messianic aspirations. (See last week's issue for a brief description of the Messianic activist school):

In responding to the overwhelming majority of rabbinic leaders in Central and Eastern Europe who saw Zionism as a profane and illegitimate attempt to hasten the coming of Mashiach, Reines wrote the following in the journal HaMelitz in 1900:

"Anyone who thinks the Zionist idea is somehow associated with future redemption and the coming of the Messiah and who therefore regards it as undermining our holy faith is clearly in error. [Zionism] has nothing whatsoever to do with the question of redemption. The entire point of this idea is merely the improvement of the condition of our wretched brethren. In recent years our situation has deteriorated disastrously, and many of our brethren are scattered in every direction, tot he seven seas, in places where the fear of assimilation is hardly remote. [The Zionists] saw that the only fitting place for our brethren to settle would be in the Holy LandÖAnd if some preachers, while speaking of

Zion, also mention redemption and coming of the Messiah and thus let the abominable thought enter people's minds that this idea encroaches upon the territory of true redemption, only they themselves are to blame, for it is their own wrong opinion they express."

Reines, who, at Herzl's invitation, had participated in the first Zionist Congress in 1897 in Basel, Switzerland, was effectively proposing a new way for the religious and rabbinic community to approach Zionism - a perspective which had the potential to build a bridge over the schism which enveloped European Jewry. If the political program of the Zionists could be detached from eschatological visions and the community of Shomrei Torah uMitzvot could see the political movement as utilitarian in nature, there would be little reason for the principled opposition expressed by the rabbinic leaders of the day. Rav Reines, who was considered a highly respected rabbi in his own right (he served the community of Lida, Lithuania from 1885 until his death), In the first years of the century, he organized the Mizrachi (Mercaz Ruchani = "Spiritual Center") party and chaired its first convention in Bratislava in 1904.

From its inception, the Mizrachi party participated fully in the Zionist enterprise, including education towards Aliyah, establishing agricultural settlements in the Land and full involvement in both the political and military infrastructures developed before and under the British Mandate. The Mizrachi certainly saw great religious significance in the resettlement of the Land within the greater national revival (see Reines' Or Chadash Al Tziyyon, Vilna 1902) and saw themselves as the religious voice within the Zionist enterprise. Nevertheless, it was the disassociation of Zionism from Messianism which opened the door for many young religious people to find a "comfort zone" within the Zionist movement and to build, guard and debate the great issues of the day along with their secular brothers and sisters.

This perspective remained the legacy of the Mizrachi party well into the early years of statehood; it was only in the aftermath of the 1967 and 1973 wars that a radically different understanding of Zionism took hold in the Religious Zionist community. The chief spokesmen of this new understanding were all influenced by the brilliant and voluminous writings of the first Chief Rabbi of Palestine, Rav Avraham Yitzchak haKohen Kook.

VI

RAV KOOK AND ZIONISM

Rav Kook (1865-1935), as a young rabbi in Boisk, was deeply impressed and moved by the first Zionist Congress of 1897. In 1898 he authored a pamphlet, titled simply "On Zionism", in which the nascent seeds of his world-view, his understanding of world and Jewish history and his appreciation of the national revival can already be found. To better understand Rav Kook's perspective (and still respect the space limitations of this forum), we will cite three quotations from later writings of his:

On The Land of Israel: The Land of Israel is not something external, not an external national asset, a

means to the end of collective solidarity and the strengthening of the nation's existence, physical or even spiritual. The Land of Israel is an essential unit bound by the bond-of-life to the People, united by inner characteristics to its existence. Therefore, it is impossible to appreciate the content of the sanctity of the Land of Israel and to actualize the depth of love for her by some rational human understanding - only by the spirit of God that is in the soul of Israel. This spirit radiates natural hues in all avenues of healthy feeling and shines according to the measure of supernal holy spirit, which fills with life and pleasantness the heart of the holy of thought and deep Jewish thinkers. The view of the Land of Israel as only an external value serving as a cohesive force - even when it comes only to reinforce the Jewish idea in the Diaspora, to preserve its identity and to strengthen faith, fear [of God] and observance of Mitzvot - bears no permanent fruit, for this foundation is shaky compared to the holy might of the Land of Israel. The true strengthening of the Jewish idea in exile will come about only through the depth of its immersion in the Land of Israel, and from the hope of the Land of Israel it will receive always its essential characteristics. The expectation of salvation is the force that preserves exilic Judaism - the Judaism of the Land of Israel is salvation itself. (Orot #1: written during World War I)

On the one hand, one can clearly see a bold and intense relationship between the People and the Land which has its roots in both mystical and theological concepts. There is a nearly explicit rejection of secular Zionism as a guiding philosophy - yet it also validates a great deal of the underlying spirit of secular Zionism, insofar as there is an organic and inexplicable tie between Israel and her Land (or Israel and her People). Not only is the Jewish community in the Land the "salvation itself", but, by implication, the strengthening of that community is a definitive step towards realizing that salvation.

On the State: The State is not the greatest human happiness. This may be said regarding a "normal" state, which rises no higher than a common bond of responsibility, leaving the many ideals, which are the crowning glory of humanity, floating above it, never touching it. This is not true regarding a state which is fundamentally idealistic, in which the highest ideal, which is the greatest happiness of the individual, is engraved in its existence. Such a state is truly the highest level of happiness - and this state is our state, Medinat Yisra'el, the foundation of God's throne in this world, whose entire desire is that God and His Name be one, which is truly the greatest happiness. Certainly, this happiness demands clarification in order to elevate its light in days of darkness; but this is no reason for it to cease being the greatest happiness. (Orot Yisra'el 6:7 - written in 1925. Note that Rav Kook refers to "our state, Medinat Yisrael" over twenty years before statehood was achieved)

In this brief paragraph, Rav Kook elevates nationalism to a religious ideal. As opposed to secular nationalism, which is not only "merely" utilitarian but often degenerates into barbarism (cf. HaDevir vols. 10-12, p. 35), Israelite nationalism is a fundamental ideal. Note, however, that the state envisioned here has not yet been, at least in perceptible terms, close to the reality of Medinat Yisra'el. Much as we may cherish our precious Medinah, it is hard to see it is, even through the rosiest

pair of glasses, as a state "whose entire desire is that God and His Name be one". At first glance, it would seem that Rav Kook is exposing his own naivete in this paragraph. That is not the case. He was quite aware of the many tensions inherent in the "national idea" and how very far most of the Zionist leaders were from having theologico-eschatological concerns at the forefront of their political program. How, then, are we to understand Rav Kook's statement about the state?

A proper understanding of Rav Kook's appreciation of Zionism and the national revival (including the revivification of Hebrew as the national language) is rooted in his understanding of Teshuvah. Although often translated as "repentance", Teshuvah literally means "return" and indicates that a person who has erred is now returning to the proper path. Rav Kook took this notion several steps further - in three bold steps:

1) Teshuvah does not just mean "returning to the path"; rather it also means "returning to one's true essence". This idea, by the way, is not his innovation. Although the origins of this idea can be found in the Rabbinic period, much of this thinking is sourced in the writings of the Maharal of Prague (see, especially, the opening chapters of *Netzach Yisra'el*). 2) Teshuvah does not only apply to the individual; the nation itself may (and eventually must) participate in a "national return". That being the case, any "national revival", including a return to the Land, the language etc. represent a form of Teshuvah (awkward though it may be). 3) It is possible for people to be moved to do Teshuvah without consciously deciding to do so. In other words, a person may decide to "return" even if his motivation is not "religious" - and that is still considered to be an act of Teshuvah.

The upshot of Rav Kook's approach to Teshuvah is that the national return to Eretz Yisra'el and the reestablishment of Jewish sovereignty with all of the trappings of statehood, represent an unconscious act of Teshuvah which are paving the way for a full, conscious and spiritually endowed Teshuvah of the nation.

As such, Rav Kook saw the entire Zionist movement, in all of its political manifestations and social developments, as an integral piece of "the ultimate Teshuvah":

The revival of the Nation is the foundation of the great building of Teshuvah, the Teshuvah of the supernal Yisra'el and the Teshuvah of the entire world which will follow. (*Orot haTeshuvah* 17:1)

It is crucial to note that Rav Kook did not overlook or blind himself to the many violations, both in deed and creed, of which the secular Zionists were guilty. While embracing the pioneers for their self-sacrificing efforts at swamp-draining, farm-building and land-defense, he castigated them - always with love - for their own lack of religious commitment.

In sum, we see two very different schools within Religious Zionism in the early years of this century. Whereas Rav Reines made every effort to minimize the meta-historic significance of resettlement, Rav Kook saw the return to the Land in the most significant eschatological terms. We might term these two schools "pragmatic Religious Zionism" and "Messianic Zionism" - although neither title does justice to the tremendous minds and spirits which animated these schools.

VII

WHERE WE ARE TODAY

As mentioned above, until the late 60's and early 70's, the overwhelming sentiment within the religious sector of Israel was "pragmatic". Although many believe that the State represents the first-fruits of the Messianic era, programmatic agenda were never based upon that consideration. Military decisions, political machinations, diplomatic assessments and the like were always made from "practical" perspectives, utilizing the best information available at that time.

There are several events that dramatically shifted the Hashkafah within the Mizrachi camp in the past thirty years. A proper survey is beyond the scope of this study; we will just mention the euphoric feeling which swept Israel (and the Jewish world) in the wake of the 1967 war, the "starring role" played by students of the Yeshivot Hesder (who combine rigorous Torah study with Army service) in the 1973 war; the development of Gush Emunim in the mid-70's (the leaders of Gush Emunim, the movement dedicated to settling Yehudah, Shomron and Azza, proudly referred to their movement as "the heirs of the old Zionists"), the election of Menachem Begin in 1977 along with a host of other sociological factors. Be that as it may, the reigning ideology in the national-religious camp has been more favorable to Rav Kook's understanding of history - as well as an understanding of the role of the State as interpreted by his son, R. Zvi Yehudah Kook (1891-1981).

Although many attempts have been made by noble individuals and worthwhile institutions to build bridges between the various ideological segments within Israel, the schism which divides religious from secular is not only felt in the strained relationship between "Charedim" and "Hilonim", but also between left-leaning secularists and right-leaning religious Zionists, whose politics are informed by their understanding of the meta-historic significance of the State within the Messianic scheme.

We will, as promised, conclude this essay next week; in the meantime, back to Sefer Vayyikra.

VIII

KEDUSHAT YISRA'EL

As we compare the two "charges" to be holy found in Sefer Vayyikra, we note a significant difference between them:

For I am Hashem your God; you shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I am holy; nor shall you defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creeps upon the earth. For I am Hashem that brings you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God; you shall therefore be holy, for I am holy. (Vayyikra 11:44-45)

And Hashem spoke to Mosheh, saying, Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel, and say to them, You shall be holy; for I Hashem your God am holy. (Vayyikra 19:1-2).

The call to holiness in Chapter 11 is directly associated with the Exodus; such a mention is not found in Chapter 19 (nor in 20:7-8). I'd like to propose that there are two different motivations towards holiness, each of which is manifested in a unique fashion.

As a result of the Exodus, we "belong" to God (see Vayyikra 25:55). As such, we are directed to act in a holy fashion which will reflect our belonging to a holy God. This is manifested in a series of laws which are commonly considered Hukkim, including the laws regarding forbidden foods and ritual purity. Were it not for God's command, we would have no reason to abide by these regulations:

R. Elazar b. Azariah said: How do we know that a person should not say: "I cannot stand to wear Sha'atnez" [or] "I cannot stand to eat pig"; rather a person should say: "I certainly can, but my Father in Heaven decreed that I may not", therefore Scripture states: "I have separated you from the nations to be Mine". (Sifra Kedoshim 9:12).

In other words, our avoiding ritually prohibited foods and the like is solely motivated by our "belonging" to God. This is the first form of Kedushah - Kedushah Kinyanit.

On the other hand, there are many ethical values which the Torah wishes for us to internalize, such that ethical behavior is not only the norm, but is instinctive. This Kedushah is not born of our belonging to God (and, as such, representing Him), rather it is the product of our direct relationship with the Almighty. To wit, we face God and wish for His sanctity to be reflected in our behavior and values. We might term this Kedushah Musarit. As such, all of the interpersonal norms which are dictated in Parashat Kedoshim belong to this second type of Kedushah - not sanctity which is the result of our belonging to God, rather a sanctity which comes from our facing God, as it were.

We can now review our questions and respond.

Why is the cleansing of the Mishkan placed in the middle of Sefer Vayyikra?

Recall that the purpose of the Mishkan is twofold - to create a "meeting place" for man and God, as well as the vehicle for enshrining the Shekhinah among Am Yisra'el (see Sh'mot 25:8). In order for our society to become a holy community which properly houses the Shekhinah, the vehicle of that sanctity must be pure. To move from the sanctity which does not defile the Mishkan (see Vayyikra 15:31) to a sanctity which enshrines the Shekhinah, the central locus through which that sanctity is achieved must be pure.

This also explains why the refrain "Ani Hashem" highlights the interpersonal Mitzvot in Parashat Kedoshim. In direct apposition to the secular/religious split so prevalent in western thinking, Judaism sees the foundation of societal ethics as being: "Ani Hashem". What is the underlying cause of our sanctity? What motivates us to act with such ethical concern? It is the presence of God in our midst and the realization that we always stand in relationship with God.

We can now better appreciate the phrase Aharei Mot at the beginning of our double-Parashah. The first series of Mitzvot given immediately after the death of Nadav and Avihu (Chapters 11-15) are, as

summed up in 15:31, the steps necessary in order to insure that the Mishkan is not defiled. Before anyone can attain the level of "those close to God", through whom "He is sanctified" (10:3), we must first take care not to profane the Mishkan - by observing the Kedushah mandated by the One who resides there.

If we wish to grow beyond this level, and achieve the status desired by those two sons of Aharon, we must move from Kedushah Kinyanit to Kedushah Musarit - from "decreed sanctity" to "internalized sanctity". In order to achieve that, as above, the Mishkan itself must be cleansed - and then we can progress to the call of Kedoshim Tih'yu.

As to why the Parashat Arayot is split into two and interrupted with the interpersonal Mitzvot of Ch. 19: Any society can accept, and perhaps abide by, rules which forbid certain behavior. It is not nearly as simple, however, for a society to punish violators - especially with capital punishment. The Torah is teaching us that although we may be prepared to accept the prohibitions, it is (ideally) a society which has achieved the status outlined in Parashat Kedoshim that has the moral right to punish. (see B'resheet 9:6 and the comments of Riva"sh there).

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