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Parshat Tazria

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RED HEIFER, AMALEK, AND REACTIONS OF NATIONS

WRITTEN BY RABBI SHAY TAHAN

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You must be living under a rock if you didn't come across one of the thousands of videos and articles published recently about the Red Heifer (Para Adumah). It seems like everyone is nervous about it. What scares people so much about the Red Heifer?

We are now in the month of Nissan, which was set as the month of the final redemption, as Chazal said (ראש השנה יא): "In Nissan we were redeemed (from Mitzrayim) and in Nissan we will be redeemed when Mashiach comes." Proceeding to the month of Nissan, we read the four special Haftarot. Starting with Shekalim, continuing with Zachor, which is to remember what Amalek has done to us and reaffirm our obligation of wiping out the seed of Amalek. Then we read the parasha of the Red Cow (Parah Adumah), and finally end with the sanctifying of the new month of Nissan. Is there a connection that passes through all of them?

We are all familiar with the first Rashi in Parashat Chukat that says the red cow is named a chukah (a decree) since the nations harass us over it, saying, "What's the reason for such a mitzvah?" Therefore, the Torah says it's a chukah, meaning a mitzvah with a reason that isn't known to us. For many years, I asked a couple of questions. The first is that Rashi continues later and gives a reason for the mitzvah, that it's to atone for sin, what we call teshuva. Secondly, I asked that I never heard the nations ever harassing us over the red cow.

I always explained that the nation's harassment is over the concept of teshuva, as Christianity doesn't believe in doing teshuva, and thus they tease us by saying that since the cow represents teshuva, it's really false and has no meaning.

Although that is a beautiful explanation, recent events have given rise to a new explanation as suddenly many harass us over the red cow. Since the war started in Israel, there have been literally thousands of videos about the red cow, called in English the red heifer. It seems like the whole world is busy with the red heifer except the Jews. Even Hamas spokesmen Abu Obeida,

who appears once in a while with his face covered with keffiyeh, warned about the Jews planning to bring the red heifer.

When Hamas spokesman spoke at the mark of the 100th day of the war, he explained to everyone's surprise that the reason Hamas opened the war was because the Jewish people are preparing to bring the Red Heifer. It is truly strange that someone as important as a spokesman would speak about "spiritual myths" instead of talking about concrete reasons such as what they claim to be a war over the occupied land.

But why is this happening, and why now?

In order to understand this correctly, we need to look



at the reading of the Shabbat before reading about the Parah Adumah (Red Heifer), when we read about Amalek. In Bilaam's prophecy, he said (במדבר כד, כ): "Amalek is the first among nations [to declare war against the Jews], and in the end, [at the final war], he shall be destroyed", teaching that Israel's first war was with Amalek and also the last war before the arrival of the Mashiach. That means that we are facing today a war with the same Amalek. But who is Amalek today?

We are accustomed to thinking that only the Germans are the Aryan race, since the Nazis claimed to be the pure Aryan race. However, in reality, the original Aryan race is the Persian-Indo, showing an ethnic link between Germans and Iranians. Many are familiar with what many rabbis have said, that Germany is Amalek, apparently linked to Haman the Amalekite. Since Haman was Persian, we can see that the Persians, who are an Aryan race, are the same Amalek of Haman that continued to spread to Germany and Iran.

If so, we can understand that when the Torah speaks of remembering Amalek, it's pointing to the last war indicated by Bilaam that will take place with Persia. This is actually how the Gemara (עבודה זרה ב, ב) points out that the last war will be between the Christian power and Persia.

It's fascinating to see that the Gemara points out

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the nature of today's Persians, who are compared to a bear. They eat and drink copious amounts like a bear, they are fleshy like a bear, they grow their hair long like a bear, and they never rest, like a bear. The meaning of "eat and drink" is that they weren't directly involved in wars but rather let their many proxies fight for them while they sit comfortably in their towns, eating and drinking. This is also the meaning of growing hair; obviously, it doesn't mean they literally grow hair as it's Hashem who grows the hair on a person. Rather, it means that they grow their proxies on all sides and over the Middle East, much like hair grows all over. This is the reason they claim to have fought many wars and not rest, as they mean they armed and controlled all those proxies.

The Gemara continues to say that after Mashiach comes, Hashem will ask them, "With what did you occupy yourselves?" They will respond before Him: "Master of the Universe, we have built many bridges, we have conquered many cities, and we have fought many wars", Indeed, as they do today, they build, arm, and prepare many nations to fight their many battles.

The next Shabbat reading after Amalek is Parah because the Para Aduma (Red Heifer) is the only sacrifice brought outside the Beit Hamikdash (The Ramban mentions that the nations are bothered by the fact that the Para Aduma is brought outside the Temple), and this drives the world crazy. But why? Because they know that the majority of Jews don't go into the Temple Mount, what they call El Aqsa, because they aren't pure. Purity will only come once we have a

Red Heifer and undergo the process needed to purify ourselves from impurity. Then we can all enter the Temple Mount. The Muslims are very scared of that event because they know that redemption will then take place once Jews enter the Temple mount, and they will be forever doomed. Since they feel this event is very close, they are extremely nervous and scared.

This fear is sincerely based on the Rambam (הלכות פרה אדומה פ"ג ד"ה), who fascinatingly records that there are 10 Red Heifers throughout time. The first was made by Moshe, the second by Ezra, seven others were made until the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash, and the last ten will be done by Mashiach.

This is the reason for the thousands of videos and articles warning about the Red Heifer phenomenon. Moreover, this is the reason they started a war to prevent us from moving forward with the Red Heifer. This is evident in the name of the war - Tufan El Aqsa, the storm of El Aqsa. The war is all about the Temple Mount.

We all know that this last war is a religious war between the evil forces of Iran, who we explained are Amalek, and Israel. This religious war remarkably is over the Temple Mount as they try to do everything to delay the coming of the Mashiach. But this doesn't help them, as symbolized by the reading of the Haftarah of Hachodesh HaZeh, which comes right after the weekly reading of Parah. This symbolizes the new month, the month of redemption that comes with the victory of the Jewish nation over their enemies, after the purification done by the red cow and the destruction of Amalek.

BATTLE OF BELIEFS: HALACHIC INSIGHTS ON YESHIVA AND SERVICE

One of the most heated discussions in Israel revolves around the question of drafting yeshiva boys into the army. Yeshiva boys are students of Jewish religious schools where they study religious texts, primarily the Talmud, often for many years.

First Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion instituted a policy that exempted a small number of yeshiva students from military service. This exemption was part of a broader effort to reach a compromise between the religious community and the state regarding military conscription.

In 1949, Ben-Gurion agreed to exempt a quota of 400 yeshiva students annually from military service. This decision was made in the context of the delicate balance between the new state's secular nature and the demands of the religious community. The agreement was known as the "status quo agreement" and was intended to regulate the relationship between the Israeli government and the religious community.

The rationale behind this exemption was to allow for the continuation of religious studies within the yeshivas while also recognizing the importance of military service for the security of the state. It was seen as a way to accommodate the religious lifestyle of these students while still meeting the needs of the military.

Over time, the number of yeshiva students exempted grew significantly, leading to criticism from various sectors of Israeli society. Critics argue that the exemption has created a situation where a significant portion of the ultra-Orthodox population does not serve in the military or participate in national service, leading to issues of inequality and a perceived lack of contribution to the country's defense.

The "Ben-Gurion exemption" remains a contentious issue in



Israeli society, with ongoing debates about the balance between religious freedom, national security, and equal burden-sharing in military service. Various attempts have been made by different Israeli governments to revise the exemption policy, often resulting in political tensions and challenges.

This debate touches upon several key issues in Israeli society.

Firstly, it involves the balance between religious and secular life in Israel. The ultra-Orthodox community, which includes many yeshiva students, has historically been exempt from compulsory

military service. This exemption has led to tensions with the secular and other religious Jewish communities who argue that everyone should share the burden of national defense.

Secondly, there are economic considerations. Some argue that integrating yeshiva boys into the military would help reduce the burden on the economy, as the majority of Israelis serve in the military while the ultra-Orthodox community's exemption means they are not contributing to this aspect of national service.

Additionally, there are questions of fairness and equality. Critics of the exemption argue that it creates a disparity between those who serve in the military, often facing significant risks and making personal sacrifices, and those who do not.

This debate is deeply entrenched in Israeli society and has political, social, and religious dimensions. It touches upon core issues of identity, national unity, and the role of religion in the state. As such, discussions around drafting yeshiva boys into the army continue to be one of the most contentious and divisive topics in Israeli public discourse. Our discussion here will not delve into those painful and serious

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points, but rather focus solely on the halacha aspect of whether a yeshiva bachur or kollel yungerman should close his Gemara at any point to join the efforts of the war in a scenario where he doesn't compromise his religious standards and where there is no politics involved.

We should start by noting the obvious: if there is imminent danger to a Jewish person, community, or city, of course, everyone without exceptions should go and fight the enemy in order to save them. This includes people who are learning, as no one is exempt from the mitzvah of saving a life. This is a Torah mitzvah of "לא תעמוד על דם רעך" - "Do not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor."

Obligations of Torah Students in Times of War.

In this article, we want to examine this exemption from a halachic perspective. On one hand, the fact that the wars being fought are considered "milchemet mitzvah" as the Rambam writes (פרק ה מהל' (מלכים ה"א): wars fought to assist Israel from an attacking enemy. Such a war is obligatory on everyone, as the Rambam states (פ"ז מהל' (מלכים ה"ד) that in a milchemet mitzvah the entire nation must go out to war, even a groom from his chamber, and a bride from her pavilion. Therefore, the yeshiva boys are not exempt from assisting.

We find that the tribe of Levi went to wars (soon will be explained that torah students are compared to shevet Levi). We see this from the fight of the Hasmoneans, who were Kohanim, against the Greeks. We also learn that a Kohen goes to war from the fact that the Torah does not exempt him, as it does to other newlyweds, if he marries a divorcee against Torah commandments. This demonstrates that he must still fulfill his obligation to fight in wars.

Sources Where Students Do Not Go Out to Fight Wars.

On the other hand, there are a few places where the Rambam exempts Torah students from joining the fighting force. For example, the Rambam writes (פרק יג מהל' שמיטה ויובל הלכה י"ב) that the tribe of Levi doesn't go to fight wars, and he compares those who dedicate their lives to learning to the tribe of Levi (שם הלכה יג). Rav Chaim Kanievsky (דרך אמונה שם) writes that from here you learn that the yeshiva students do not go out to fight wars.

Drafting Torah students is so severe that Avraham Avinu was punished, and his children were destined to be enslaved in Egypt because he drafted students for a war (נדרים לב, א ובר"ן).

There are several reasons to exempt them from fighting. One reason is the belief that those who learn Torah benefit the war effort more than the actual soldiers who are fighting. This is supported by statements from Chazal, such as on the pasuk (במדבר לא, ד): "A thousand per tribe, a thousand per tribe." Chazal said (תנחומא מטות סימן ג') that the repetition in the pasuk teaches that for every thousand fighting soldiers, there are a thousand people who are praying. In another place, Chazal mention a thousand people learning Torah. This underscores the importance of learning at times of war, as we believe that Torah is the key for victory. We learn this from the interaction of the angel who came to rebuke Yehoshua in the war (מגילה ג, א).

In the passage from Yehoshua (ה, יג-יד) it is written: "When Yehoshua was by Yericho he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man stood over against him with his sword drawn in his hand. And Yehoshua went over to him and said to him: Are you for us, or for our adversaries? And he answered, No, but I am captain of the host of Hashem, I have come now. And Yehoshua fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down."

According to the gmarah the angel said to Yehoshua: "Yesterday, i.e., during the afternoon, you neglected the afternoon daily

offering due to the impending battle, and now, at night, you have neglected Torah study, and I have come to rebuke you." Yehoshua asked him: "For which of these sins have you come?" He said to him: "I have come now (the latter)," indicating that neglecting Torah study is more severe than neglecting to sacrifice the daily offering.

We learn that even on the battlefield, during times when the soldiers rest, they should engage in Torah study. The mefarshim ask why it was necessary to rebuke Yehoshua at this particular time, and they explain that the key to victory is the merit of Torah study. Therefore, it's crucial to encourage Yehoshua to learn at this very moment.

This is how Chazal (תהלים קכב, א) explained the pasuk (מכות י, א): "Our feet were standing on the gates of Yerushalayim." What caused our feet to withstand the enemies in war? It is the gates of Jerusalem, where they were engaged in Torah study.

In another Gemara (סנהדרין מט, א), the reason given for "Yoav was victorious with the army" is because "David executed judgment and justice to all his people." Were it not for David, who studied Torah, Yoav would not have been able to wage war successfully. Rashi explains that the merit of David's learning stood for Yoav at the war to win.

Do the Righteous Fight?

One might question this by considering that scholars did indeed go to wars. This is evident from how Chazal defined those who are exempt from fighting in war; the pasuk says whoever is afraid is exempt, and they explained it means they are afraid of their sins. An example of these sins includes talking at places where one isn't allowed to talk, such as in between wrapping the tefillin of the hand and head. We see that only the very righteous went to fight in wars, those who wouldn't even commit such a small sin as talking at those sacred moments.

There are two ways to explain this. Firstly, of course, those who are righteous go to war, but not necessarily those who were learning Torah all day; rather, it may be those righteous men who were working. Secondly, this opinion does not align with halacha, as halacha (פ"ז מהל' מלכים ה"ט) sides with the opinion that a person who is afraid means fear of the war itself, for example, from seeing a sword.

Working Out the Contradiction: Torah Students in Times of War.

Let's revisit the contradiction we are dealing with regarding whether the students or the Levites, who are compared to them, should join the army in fighting a war. The simple answer is that there are two types of wars: a mitzvah war, where the Kohanim go out to fight, and a voluntary war where they do not (כג, כ).

Another answer comes from Rav Chaim Kanievsky (דרך אמונה הל' שמיטה) who states that Torah students and Shevet Levi are not obligated to fight but may join the fighting if they wish. Therefore, there is no contradiction, as the sources saying they don't fight mean they aren't obligated to do so.

Another approach is from the Netziv (פרשת מטות) who writes that Torah students didn't engage in the actual fighting of the war but rather served the army by preparing, watching the weapons, and providing other necessary support for the military.

Harav Kook (שבת הארץ ח"ג הל' שמיטה ויובל פרק יג הי"ב) wrote that for a private war, such as a tribe going to conquer land, Torah students didn't join the fight. However, when it's a war for the nation, everyone is obligated to fight. He even adds that since it's a mitzvah to fight for the nation, therefore the Kohanim were more obligated to fight, as their role as Kohanim obligates them more than others in mitzvot.

EYE IN THE KITCHEN: MONITORING KASHRUT IN THE KITCHEN

Last week we discussed the monetary concerns of employing a cleaning lady to clean before Pesach, such as snatching a cleaning lady from her place of employment or dealing with her directly, avoiding the cleaning agency that sent her.

Today we would like to address kashrut issues. Let's start with the question of leaving the lady home alone. When we leave her alone in the house, there are concerns, referred to as **בשר שנתעלם מן העין** - "eat that was covered from the eye".

Chazal prohibited us from leaving the food around the non-Jewish person without supervision, as they might have exchanged our meat, chicken, fish, etc., with non-kosher ones. In the event it was left unattended, the food becomes forbidden (**וי"ד סימן קיח**).

There are other concerns, such as she might have cooked with our utensils, rendering them not kosher, or opened the wine bottles, making them unkosher (**קיח סעיף יב**).

Chazal also prohibited eating goy's cooking, even if the food is kosher food. This decree is known as "bishul akum." The reason Chazal didn't allow it is to distance us from the goyim so we don't intermarry with them. Not only does the food become not kosher, but also the utensils used become treif. Thus, when we leave a cleaning lady alone at home, we are concerned that she might have gotten hungry and cooked something to eat or boiled herself an egg, thereby rendering the utensils treif.

She might also have used our oven, toaster, or microwave to heat her food. This is true even if we are certain she didn't bring any food with her.

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (**אג"מ יו"ד ח"א סימן סא**) warned about this and said that one should not leave her alone. But in the event one didn't know and left her alone in the house, the utensils don't require kashering. However, one should wait 24 hours before using them, as after 24 hours if she cooked in them, it becomes rabbinically prohibited. Since it's doubtful if she cooked in them, it's a doubt in rabbinical law. Rabbi Moshe adds that even if the cleaning lady was hired only for cleaning and not for cooking, we are still concerned.

On the other hand, Shevet Hakehati (**ח"ו סימן רפא**) argues against this and says that the concern is only if she was hired to cook as well. Otherwise, we aren't worried that if she was only supposed to clean, she'll also cook.

Another concern is that she'll cook meat and dairy together or cook meat in a dairy pot or vice versa.



In the event one must leave his house and can't be around, there are some ways to permit leaving her there. One way is to enter the house every once in a while unexpectedly (**הוא היתר לכתחילה ראה**) (כ"ף החיים ס"ק קכג). One should enter the house for no longer than 18 minutes (**גר"א סימן קכט סק"ב**) and make sure the house isn't locked unless he has the keys (**ש"ע סימן קיח ס"י**).

This way, she'll be worried about being seen doing something she isn't allowed and potentially be fired. Even if one can't come every once in a while, he should tell her he'll be back shortly, thus creating the same sense of fear (**סימן קיח ס"י**).

Of course, when hiring her, we should make sure to inform and warn her that she isn't allowed to cook or warm any food in the kitchen. Otherwise, she might cook without realizing she isn't allowed to do so.

The practice of entering once in a while also addresses the issue of "meat that was not seen" and the problem of wine that was left alone with her.

A more updated solution is to install a camera in the kitchen. When doing that, we should either put the camera in a visible place that she can see it so she'll know she's being observed, or inform her that there is a camera (**שו"ת עמק התשובה ח"ט סימן פו**).

Another way to permit leaving her alone in the house is either locking the food in a closet and hiding the keys, or sealing the food in packages so that if she opens them, the seal will break and we will know. This reassures us that the food wasn't handled.

In the event one didn't follow this halacha and left her alone without entering once in a while, the food becomes restricted only if we suspect that she has a gain by changing the meat, fish, etc., for example if we think she changed it with something of lesser quality (**סימן קיח ס"ו**). Since today it's very unlikely she will have lesser quality meat and change it, we are therefore lenient to permit the food (**שו"ת נא מנחת אשר ח"ב סימן נא**).

Leaving the non-Jewish person in the house with an open bottle of uncooked wine is not permitted, as we are concerned that she might shake the bottle as a form of worshiping avoda zara. However, we can permit this if we enter the house often as explained before.

In the event we forgot we had such a bottle in the house and left for the day, Rav Elyashiv permits it since we don't suspect that the lady would do two things: first, open the bottle, and then shake it.

Shaare Ezra is a one of a kind, multi-faceted organization that's there for the community. Under the leadership of HaRav Shay Tahan שליט"א. Shaare Ezra feels that proper Halachic guidance should be accessible to everyone, therefore we offer the community the opportunity to call, text, WhatsApp, or e-mail any halachic questions they may have, through the Bet Horaah, where qualified, trained and ordained Rabbis are available to answer your questions in English, Hebrew and Russian. Shaare Ezra is from the community—for the community.

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