



Torah Thoughts from the YIGC Community

This month's divrei Torah were originally delivered during Shavuot learning at YIGC. We thank Rabbi Kroll and Rabbi Klavan for taking the extra time to write them up for the benefit of those who were unable to make it to hear them in person.

The Music of Jewish Unity

Rabbi Yitzchak Kroll

The Midrash in Bereishis Rabbah breaks down the following pasuk from Yishayahu:

בְּנִעֲמָקָי יִצְיָלוּ קְבוּצוֹתָי וְאֵת-כָּל־מִשְׁאָרֵיהֶם יִקַּח-הַגָּבֹל וְהַחֹסֶה כִּי יִנְחַל-אֶרֶץ וְיִרְשׁ הָרִקְדָּשִׁי: (ישעיה נב, יג)
כְּתִיב "בְּנִעֲמָקָי יִצְיָלוּ קְבוּצוֹתָי" - תְּנִי: כְּנוֹסוּ וְכְנוּס בְּנֵי הַצִּיּוֹן מִיַּד עֲשׂוֹ.
"וְאֵת כָּל־מִשְׁאָרֵיהֶם יִקַּח הַגָּבֹל" - זֶה עֲשׂוֹ וְאֵלּוּפָיו. (בראשית רבה פד:א)

It is written "In your crying out, your gatherings will rescue you"; It was taught: The assembling of [Yaakov] and his sons [in prayer] saved him from Esau's hand. "The wind will carry them all away, nothingness will take them"- This refers to Esau and his chieftains.

The Bais Halevi on Parshas Vayeshev explains why the Navi chose the word "קִיבוּצִיךָ" (gathering), instead of the word "רַבִּים" (many), to describe the group with the power to merit rescue. He explains that while the military strategy of the nations of the world focuses on numbers, that of the Jews focuses on gatherings. Standard military strategy dictates that there be a large army, "רַבִּים," but not that the entire army be gathered in one place. A larger army has a greater chance of defeating the enemy because it is able to fight effectively on several fronts at once. Concentrating all the soldiers on one battlefield is in fact counterproductive, for by doing so other strategic areas are abandoned. To wage a successful war, their army must be numerous but not gathered.

The Jews, however, find their strength not in numbers per se, but in gathering. Our strategy is the gathering together of Jews who direct their hearts to Hashem and beseech His assistance. It is not the multitude of individuals that is most effective, but the joining, through unity of purpose, of the many into one. This type of "gathering" transcends location, and it can bring victory on the battlefield of war as well as on the battlefields of life.

The Seforno in Parshas Behaaloscha (Bamidbar 8:2-4) explains the mitzvah of lighting the menorah as representing unity of purpose in all facets of life. The menorah had six branches, three on the right and three on the left, and the lights of each separate branch had to be directed "אל מול פני המנורה," towards the

center flame. Like the menorah, Seforno explains, there are different sides, or perspectives, among Yisrael. Each has its place, but the end result is the same: everyone is working towards the middle light that ascends שְׁמַיִם, for the honor of Heaven. He goes on to point out the significance of the plural language used in the Jews' acceptance of the Torah: "כָּל אֲשֶׁר-דִּבֶּר ה' - נַעֲשֶׂה" - "everything Hashem said, we will do - meaning, between all of us, we will fulfill His intent."

This is also the meaning of "גִּדְלוּ לַה' אִיתִי וּנְרוֹמְמָה שְׁמוֹ יַחְדוּ": declare Hashem's greatness with me and we will elevate His Name together (Tehilim 34:4). Every Jew, from his respective, individualized position, contributes towards elevating the Name of God, because they are all facing Hashem at the center.

People think that unity is when everyone is doing the same thing. However that is חֶבֶל, a shame, for the world. Each person has his or her purpose in life. The Vilna Gaon explains that the word אִתִּי is different from the word עִמִּי, though they are both translated as "with me": עִמִּי means "with me" in the sense of doing exactly the same thing, while אִתִּי means "with me" but from a different perspective. (Kol Eliyahu on Parshas Balak)

At Har Sinai, everyone was together - כָּאִישׁ אֶחָד בְּלֵב אֶחָד, like one person with one heart (Rashi Shemos 19:2). But as Seforno points out, it was a unity of individuals, a plural "we will do." Everyone together was doing exactly what they were supposed to be doing, differently from each other. This is the shelaymus of the Jewish people. Not by doing the same thing, but each doing what they are supposed to do to bring kavod Shamayim. כָּאִישׁ אֶחָד, with the common goal of kavod Shamayim

We can compare this type of unity to an orchestra. There are many musicians, each playing different instruments. Everyone is needed to make it sound beautiful. But most important, they must follow the conductor; each must be directed, like the branches of the menorah, towards the common goal at the center of their efforts.

This is an important lesson for all of us. We all are one kibbutz, one gathering, united by our shared goal of kavod Shamayim. We all have different outlooks and different perspectives, and are all needed. This is true achdus, true unity.

Guns in Halacha

Avi Klavan

One never knows exactly what the future may bring, but the Neviim have told us that a third World War (called *Milchemes Gog U'Magog*) is to occur, in which all the nations of the world will band together to do battle against Eretz Yisrael (see *Zechariah* 14). As a possible prequel to this great war, anti-Semitism has risen dramatically the world over, which gives pragmatic people an incentive to reexamine the issues regarding gun ownership.

The first issue to address is the *hashkafic* viewpoint of owning a gun. Should one purchase a gun and learn to use it for self-defense, or should he rely on Hashem to save him? The Gemara (Chulin 7b) states that a person does not even stub his finger in this world without it being decreed in Heaven. However the Gemara also rules (*Rosh Hashanah* 22A) that a witness who must travel on Shabbos is allowed to take things that he will need on the trip, including a weapon for safety. We see that a person's safety is not to be left up to the hands of Hashem; although it is decreed in Heaven, it is part of one's obligation of *hishtadlus* to be responsible for his own safety. This is the case even though he is on the way to do a *mitzvah*, for one is not permitted to rely on a miracle. (*Pesachim* 8b)

Certainly, extensive background checks must be done before selling a weapon, to weed out possible criminals accessing these weapons, for the *halachah* is that one is forbidden to sell a weapon to someone with suspected criminal motives (A.Z. 15b and *Shu" A* 151:5). According to this Gemara it would be forbidden to sell anything that can be used as a weapon to a known criminal or to one with criminal intentions.

One would be required to know how to use the guns responsibly, as well as to keep the guns safe and out of the hands of children or others who may misuse the weapon. The *Shulchan Aruch* (Ch.M. 409:3, 427 whole *siman*) rules at length that it is forbidden to leave a dangerous object around (such as a wild dog) or allow for a dangerous situation, such as an open roof without a fence etc. where people can get injured. Therefore, if one does obtain a gun he must keep it secured in a place where it can cause no unintended damage.

Whether a gun is to be considered *muktzeh* on Shabbos depends on the owner's need for the weapon. Obviously, if it is a life and death situation, no restrictions apply and any necessary action may be taken. If the gun is usually kept in a safe in the house for the unlikely event of a home invasion, then it has the status of '*chisron kis*' (*muktzeh* due to fragility or great value), the full restrictions of *muktzeh* apply, and it would be forbidden to move

around unless there is an immediate life-threatening emergency. If one carries the gun on a regular basis to instill fear in those around him (the most common reason to wear a gun), the *Orchos Shabbos* (19:62) rules that it either has the status of a non- *muktzeh* utensil and there are no restrictions at all (i.e. it may be moved even to protect it from damage), or it is *muktzeh* but may be used and handled in the normal fashion (though not to protect it from damage), for such use is permitted for a *muktzeh* utensil.

However, a gun may not be carried on Shabbos where there is no *Eruv* unless there is a life-threatening situation which requires a show of force to control (i.e. patrolling a city in an extremely dangerous area, or someone with known lethal enemies). This applies even if the gun is 'worn' in a holster, and is part of one's normal wardrobe (see *Koveitz Teshuvos* 3:51 and O.S. 28:188).

A woman carrying a gun has the additional concern of violating the prohibition of '*Lo Silbash*,' the *lav* of a woman wearing items designated for a man (*Shu" A* 182:5). Rav Moshe (*Ig" M*, O.C. 4 75:3) discusses at length this prohibition and its applications. To briefly summarize his main points, it emerges that if the gun is being worn purely for style (as an accessory to an outfit, and not to look strong) it would be permitted for her to wear it. If her intention is to look 'manly,' it would be forbidden, yet if there is a genuine necessity for her to wear the gun for her safety, she would be allowed to carry it.

Bringing a gun into a *shul* (or *davening* even at home while armed) is to be avoided unless it is difficult to leave the weapon outside. This ruling is based on the *halachah* that one shouldn't bring a weapon into a *shul*, for *tefillah* lengthens a person's life and weapons shorten life (*Shu" A* 151:6). The *Tzitz Eliezer* (10:18) rules that if one is unable to leave the gun outside he may bring it in unloaded. If it is difficult to unload/load the weapon for each *tefillah*, one may bring it in if it is worn in a concealed, inconspicuous fashion. The *Sefer Tzedakah U'Mishpat* disagrees and rules (12:fn 42) that it is better to *daven* privately in one's house than to enter a *shul* armed. Obviously, these *halachos* apply when there is no immediate need for the weapon. Different *halachos* may apply to soldiers in this regard (see *Revevos Efraim*, 2:66).

May we all be saved from ever being in a situation which even causes us to think of this topic, and may we be spared the travails of the *Milchemes Gog U'Magog*! Hopefully, we will instead merit an immediate redemption *bemeheirah beyomeinu*.

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