

Acharei-Kedoshim 5773

BS"D Parshiot Acharei-Kedoshim – Yom Ha'atzma'ot 5773

This week we celebrated the 65th anniversary of the establishment of the third Jewish Commonwealth in God's Holy Land.

Sixty five is the age in our society when one slowly retires from being an active participant in life and begins to assume more and more the role of saba (grandfather) and spectator of life. It is the time when a person can look back and evaluate his successes and failures; the things he is proud of and the things he wishes he could change.

On our 65th anniversary many people will be assessing the changes our Medina has undergone since the first day of independence when five standing Arab armies invaded in order to destroy every man, woman and child here. From 600,000 Jews we have grown to over six million. We have created a Torah empire non-existent for over 2000 years. Our Medina is on the cutting edge of all the major sciences. Our inventions and developments are contributing to humanity far more than countries with populations many times larger than ours.

As I sit and contemplate my 51 years in Eretz Yisrael, I am overwhelmed by the sheer number of mind-boggling experiences here in which I could never have participated in the land of my birth.

And then my mind begins to wander from what "is" to what could have been "if".

The following is one of the "ifs".

For the tradition minded, the name "Yosef" arouses an immediate association with Yosef, son of Ya'akov, and the name "David" brings to mind David, son of Yishai.

However, when the two names "Yosef" and "David" are linked together, the traditionalist will think of Yosef, the Jewish Viceroy of Egypt, and David, the progenitor of the Davidic dynasty from the tribe of Yehuda.

Others might associate Yosef with Jewish influence, power and success in chutz la'aretz (outside the Holy Land), and David with Jewish sovereignty in Eretz Yisrael.

Others might associate the two names with the secession of the northern tribes, led by Yeravam ben Navat of the tribe Yosef (Efrayim), from the south under the monarchy of the House of David.

In our times, the name Yosef brings to my mind the orthodox Jewish presence in Chutz La'aretz, whereas David represents the independent Jewish State in Eretz Yisrael.

The undisputed rabbinic leader of the largest orthodox community in the galut of America was Hagaon Harav Yosef (Dov) Soloveitchik, Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Yitzchak Elchanan (Yeshiva University), and head of the religious Zionist Mizrachi organization. Harav Yosef Soloveichik was a Talmudic scholar and teacher, philosopher, orator par excellence and leader of men.

David Ben-Gurion will forever be associated with the establishment of Medinat Yisrael. Indeed, Yosef and David – Jewish presence in chutz la'aretz and Jewish independence in Eretz Yisrael.

Last week marked the 20th yahrtzeit of Rav Soloveitchik. The Jerusalem Post dedicated a large part of the paper to the intellectual achievements of this great rabbi, together with many articles written by his students and followers attesting to the influence the Rav had on the American orthodox community.

In one of the pages there was a photo of Rav Soloveitchik and

next to him David Ben-Gurion.

Without being judgmental, I thought about how either one of these giants could have – with one sentence – changed the path of Jewish history in a way not done since the times of Moshe Rabbeinu or Ezra Hasofer.

Had Rav Yosef Soloveitchik in 1948, or after the Six Day War, stood up and proclaimed before the Jews of America, “The time has arrived. Let us all ascend to Zion” and had indeed ascended to Zion, he would have been followed by thousands of educated, inspired and enterprising orthodox families, and our country would be today a land where the Torah would reign both in word and spirit.

Had David Ben-Gurion, after seeing the miracles wrought by HaShem for the Medina, stood up and proclaimed, “There is no God but the God of Israel, and we are His children”, the vast majority of the people in Eretz Yisrael would today be Torah observant.

I cannot know what went on in the minds of these two great people, but the facts speak for themselves. Each one held the scales of Jewish history in his hands, but each one left us with the struggle of returning the Jewish nation to our Father in Heaven.

One may ask: Is it not naive to think that Hashem would place the destiny of all Am Yisrael in the hands of one man?

Not at all! In our parasha of Acharei Mot, the Torah places upon the shoulders of the individual Kohen Gadol the responsibility for the entire nation one day in the year. On Yom Kippur, the entire Temple service is performed only by the Kohen Gadol, and he enters alone into the Holy of Holies to beg HaShem to forgive the sins of the entire nation.

To return to the matter of the Rav and the Prime Minister.

One can say that it is the will of HaShem to refrain from shortcuts in the evolution of a people leaving the galut and finding their way back to Torah from Sinai. And who could argue? But we were so close that it makes one cry at the lost opportunity.

While standing at the threshold to the 66th year of the Medina, there is much to pray for.

Victory over our Amalek enemies. The return of many more millions of Jews to Eretz Yisrael. The resettlement of Jews in the Biblical lands now under our control. The continued economic and financial success of the Medina, and certainly a meeting of the minds between the many diverse factions within our society.

And the mother of all prayers: Rebuilding of the Holy Temple, restoration of the Kohanic service, the re-establishment of the Davidic dynasty, and the return of the Sanhedrin.

Yom Huledet samayach to Medinat Yisrael & Shabbat Shalom!

Nachman Kahana

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