

**Aikev 5779**

BS"D Parashat Aikev 5779

## Rabbi Nachman Kahana

# Return from the Land of the Enemy

Our mother Rachel waits impatiently for all her children to leave the galut and return to the holy land, as recorded by the prophet Yirmiyahu (31,14-16):

*15 Thus said the Lord: "A voice is heard in Ramah, mourning and great weeping, Rachel weeps for her children refusing to be comforted, because they are not here".*

**16** *Thus said the Lord: "Restrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears, for your work will be rewarded," declares the Lord, "They will return from the land of the enemy".*

17 “*There is hope for your descendants,*” declares the Lord, “*Your sons (and daughters) will return to their borders (of their own land)*”.

HaShem informed Rachel Emainu (our mother) that there will be two cycles of Jews who would eventually return home: 1- "They will return from the land of the enemy," 2- "Your sons will return to their borders".

What is the difference between the returnees in HaShem's message to Rachel?

The difference is awesome, immense and contained in just one word in verse 17: סֶנֶּה – sons.

In verse 16 which speaks of the returnees from the "lands of their enemies", the word "sons" does not appear. Whereas, in verse 17 the returnees to their borders not from enemy lands are referred to as "sons".

The distinction is critical; one is running away, the other is running towards. The runner towards home is a son.

From the day HaShem commanded the newly emancipated Jewish nation to cross the Jordan River and enter the land with Yehoshua Bin Nun, the mitzva of residing in the land has been an exquisite mitzva; just as an exquisite gem is appreciated only by the few who understand gemology.

At the time of Moshe Rabbeinu, an entire generation of males between the ages of 20 and 60 refused to enter the land.

When Ezra the Scribe returned under a charter issued in 538 BCE by King Cyrus of Persia, permitting and even encouraging the Jews to return, Ezra succeeded in bringing with him only 42,360 slim!

During the 2000-year exile, a modest number of Jews were always present in the land, and a trickle of others came to either die here in their old age or were gripped with yearning for the land.

Even in 1917 after publication of the Balfour Declaration, recognizing the right of the Jewish nation to establish a "Jewish National Home" in Eretz Yisrael, the number of Jews who came on aliyah was dismally small. The years between 1919-1923 called the Third Aliyah, saw a total of only 40,000 Jews come home.

In the 71 years since the establishment of the Medina, the vast majority of olim came from Arab countries and the Soviet Union; and for no fault of their own were not in the category of "Your sons will return to their own land". The most they could have wished for was the verse "They will return from the land of the enemy" where "sons" are not mentioned.

The privilege to be "sons" was provided by HaShem to the Jews in the free lands of Western Europe and the Americas. However, during that window of 71 years very few took the opportunity to come as "sons" and daughters, but now the tide is changing.

Anti-Semitism is on the rise, and the curtain of history is slowly but surely coming down on the verse where aliyah by choice will be substituted by fear-motivated aliyah.

For tens of years I have lectured and written on the basic mitzva of living in Eretz Yisrael. It was and is my belief that to bring an oleh home is tantamount to saving his, and his future descendants', spiritual and physical lives. It is an uphill battle, but tens of families have informed me through the years that my articles were critical in their decision to making aliyah.

But now the emphasis on aliyah is turning away from lecturers and lectures from rabbis and teachers. The battles will be fought out on the streets and in local Jewish institutions under attack. What people like myself and others could not accomplish, the anti-Semites in Europe and in the United States are "doing it better".

The privilege to be called "sons" will soon become irrelevant

as the Jews now in galut will be under the umbrella of "They will return from the land of the enemy".

Shabbat Shalom,

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