

Behar 5774

**BS"D Parashat Behar – Yom Hazikaron and Yom Ha'atzma'ut
(Memorial Day and the Day of Independence)**

On the Sidelines

There are days and events whose essence is the unity and uniqueness of the Jewish people, like Yamim Nora'im (the days of Awe – Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur), the days of fasting or the death of an illustrious personality. However, there are days which should unite the Jewish nation, but unfortunately rip asunder the ties which bind us, revealing the ugly side of our divisive nature. They are Yom Hazikaron, where one cannot but notice that an important religious segment of our nation in the Holy Land are simply not present in any of the many military cemeteries, and Yom Ha'atzma'ut when that segment disregards the miraculous essence of the day.

Yom Hazikaron

Our youngest son, who is a senior officer in the IDF, will be busy travelling today. But unlike other public occasions where he is the central figure, he will be standing on the sidelines, wherever he goes.

Because, He like many other officers will be attending memorial services at our nation's military cemeteries. His "itinerary" will include the resting places of comrades in arms who left this world while he was holding them in his arms battling to keep their neshamaot with us.

He will attempt to bring solace of sorts to bereaved families whose loved ones will no longer give them "nachat," except in the knowledge that they have offered up the ultimate sacrifice for the Jewish nation and are now at rest in the highest

realms of olam haba.

Our son will be standing on the sidelines because, in addition to all else, he is a Kohen, and the Almighty has commanded Kohanim to distance themselves from the tuma of death, as an eternal sign that kedusha (sanctity) is more omnipotent and eternal than death.

Responsibility

The Jewish nation suffers from an uneven distribution of historic responsibility, where too much is placed on the shoulders of too few, while the many stand on the sidelines reaping the fruits of their brothers' blood, sweat and tears.

The Jews who reside in chutz la'aretz are standing on the periphery of history – on the sidelines. But unlike the Kohen who stands on the “sidelines” for reasons of sanctity, the Jews in chutz la'aretz stand on the sidelines of the onset of the new age of HaShem's redemption of His people for reasons diametrically opposite to sanctity.

Our rabbis declared all the planet's land surface and airspace outside of Eretz Yisrael to be tamai, limiting a Kohen's freedom to leave the Holy Land at the time when the Bet Hamikdash was standing (whether the decree is in effect in our time is a matter of dispute between halachic authorities).

In the eyes of Chazal, to be in chutz la'aretz is similar to residing in a cemetery, from the point of view of tuma and tahara.

Yom Ha'Atzmaut

The word Dor in Ivrit means a generation, similar in sound to door in English (tier in Yiddish) and they complement each other in our times. For we are a generation for whom the Almighty has opened up a door for us to return home. Today we

mourn for the sons, daughters, husbands, fathers and mothers who gave their lives so that we can live ours in Eretz Yisrael. But tonight after the sirens will cease, we will make a mental switch and begin celebrating Yom Ha'Atzmaut.

With every passing year, there is so much more to offer thanks to HaShem for His love and salvation of His children in the Land.

Yerushalayim is more beautiful by the week, with astounding structures rising in all the neighborhoods.

The Negev, once the backyard of the Medina, is being turned into the most exciting area of development. It will soon be the most concentrated area of technology in the country, with very many military bases going south manned by the tens of thousands of military men and their families.

The birth rate of the Jews in the Holy Land is among the highest of any country in the world. Our economy grows by the day. One can walk among the shops and see the best and the finest from the west and from the east, not to mention our locally produced products.

The stalls in the cities' markets are a kaleidoscope of colored fruits and vegetables grown in the holy soil of our land.

By the grace of our Father in Heaven, our sworn enemies are eating each other alive while we gain height in every area.

- In 1948 we numbered 650,000 people, today we are over 6 million Jews.
- 176,000 children were born last year.
- 75% of the Jews here were born in the land.
- 16,884 new olim arrived in 2013.
- There are over 10,000 batei kneset, with an estimated one and a half million daily "daveners".
- In 1948, only Tel Aviv was home to 100,000 people, today

14 cities have reached that number with 6 of them over 200,000 people.

The numbers which reveal what the few have accomplished here in the last 66 years can be seen by linking into the statistics of Israel.

The religious implications are overwhelming. We have crossed the 50% mark of world Jewry here in Eretz Yisrael, which will change many halachot from rabbinic to Torah status.

But the best is yet to come.

It will happen when Kohanim will no longer be side-lined. They will be invited to enter the sacred precincts of the Bet Hamikdash to reconnect the Jewish people with our Father in Heaven in forgiveness and renewed eternal love.

Chag Ha'atzma'ut samai'ach!

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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