

# BS"D Parashat Aikev 5783

## Lest we forget

Devarim 6,12:

וְיִשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׁמְרוּ אֶת הַשְּׁמָרָה אֲשֶׁר צִוְּיָם יְיָ לֵאמֹר לֵאמֹר

*Be heedful lest you forget HaShem...*

Lord G-d of Hosts, be with us yet, Lest we forget – lest we forget! (from Rudyard Kipling's poem "Recessional")

## Tu B'Av

This week, we commemorate the 15th of Av – Tu B'Av. The Mishna in Tractate Ta'anit states: "There were no happier days (yamim tovim) than Yom Kippur and the 15th of Av."

The reason Yom Kippur is a yom tov is obvious. For on this day, our sins are eradicated. However, what transpired on the 15th of Av to elevate it to the level of happiness of Yom Kippur?

The Gemara explains that, on this day, Hoshea ben Ela, king of the northern tribes of Israel, rescinded the edict prohibiting Jews from going up to Yerushalayim. In order to fully appreciate what this meant, we have to go back three hundred years prior to the time of Hoshea ben Ela.

The arch-evil Yeravam ben Nevat incited the people of the northern tribes to secede from the union that had begun with

King Shaul, followed by King David, King Shlomo and the-then King Rehavam, King Shlomo's son.

In order to complete the secession, Yeravam began interpreting the Torah in his own way and, thereby, created the first reform movement. The formal act of secession was accomplished by closing the roads to Yerushalayim. He created two substitute spiritual centers in Bet El and Dan, in the north.

He knew that as long as the connection to Yerushalayim existed, his breakaway nation would not endure. Yeravam imposed a harsh prohibition against going up to Yerushalayim by placing guards along the entire border.

This situation continued for over three hundred years, during which time the Jews of the northern tribes were cut off from Yerushalayim and the Holy Temple. Upon ascending the throne, Hoshea ben Ela withdrew the border guards and opened the way to Yerushalayim – this happened on the 15th of Av. Indeed, this was a day to parallel Yom Kippur, for now the Jews would be able to offer korbanot in the Mikdash and achieve atonement for their sins.

After this explanation in the Jerusalem Talmud, Rav Kahana asks the question: If Hoshea was such a great man, why then did Shalmanetzer, King of Assyria, invade the northern tribes and exile all the Jews in Hoshea's time (722 BCE) and not in the reign of his predecessor? The Talmud answers that Hoshea ben Ela opened the way to Yerushalayim – BUT NO ONE CAME. Hoshea ben Ela was punished, because he did not use his authority to prod or encourage the people to renew their covenant with the Holy City, and most did not go up to Yerushalayim.

The Gemara explains that in the three hundred years when pilgrimage to the Holy City was prohibited by the evil kings, the Heavenly Court could not accuse the people of the North of neglecting their responsibilities to Yerushalayim. However, now that the government permitted the movement of people to

the Holy City, there was no longer an excuse for not going. It was as if HaShem were saying, "You did not come to My house, so I will eject you from your houses."

## Food for thought

Are the rabbinic leaders in the galut repeating the failure of Hoshea ben Ela by not utilizing their authority and influence on their congregations to leave the galut and return home?

When was the last time your rabbi stood at the pulpit and banged his fist on the lectern demanding that the congregation go up to the Land just as he and his family would be doing very shortly?

When did your Rosh Yeshiva ever lead his students in saying Hallel on the fifth of Iyar – Israel's Independence Day (Yom Ha'Atzma'ut), when for the first time in 2000 years the gates of Eretz Yisrael were thrown open for the "children" to return. Or on the 28th of Iyar when HaShem restored Yerushalayim and Har Habayit to the sons and daughters of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov?

How many galut religious leaders have never stepped foot on the holy soil of Eretz Yisrael?

The punishment meted out to King Hoshea ben Ela and his ten tribes for not reuniting with Yerushalayim and the southern tribes was banishment from Eretz Yisrael to the galut.

Question: What is the fate of Jews today who are already in the galut and refuse to reunite with Yerushalayim and Eretz Yisrael?

Answer: Their fate will be to forget that they are in the galut. They will perceive their gentile neighbors to be good people and the land they live in to be their land. They or

their children will vanish, fade away and assimilate as have done many Jews before them.

Lord G-d of Hosts, be with us yet, lest we forget – lest we forget!

Shabbat Shalom

Nachman Kahana

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