

Ki Tisa and Purim 5772

BS"D Parashat Ki Tisa and Purim 5772

Part A:

How does one know that he is a real Israeli, in body and soul?

While citizenship, serving in the army, having an identity card, and making your living in Israel are meaningful indicators, there is one indicator that, for me, tells it all.

When the dry months of summer have passed and you strain your Eretz Yisraeli eyes trying to discern the first appearance of nimbostratus or cumulonimbus clouds in the sky, and then the first rains of autumn begin to fall and you feel a spontaneous, uncontrolled feeling of rejoicing and thanks to HaShem – you are an Israeli.

When you see the waters cascading over the terraces of Yehuda and Shomron, the river beds swollen with water rushing towards the Kinneret and Yam Hamelech and into the aquifers of the coast and mountain areas, and you humbly offer thanks to HaShem – you are an Israeli.

The last six years in Eretz Yisrael have been years of drought, and the long-range forecast issued last fall was for another year of minimal rainfall. Preparations were made for water rationing in industry and in homes, and a prohibition was announced on watering gardens.

Lake Kinneret was well under the red line, spelling potential disaster for the lake; because if it would become salinated, it could never revert to being a sweet-water lake.

And as we prepared ourselves emotionally and otherwise, the rains and snow began to fall in abundance not experienced in many years. The streams are flush with rushing waters. Mount Hermon is covered with deep layers of snow. The Jordan River

has come alive. The land is covered with vegetation including rare and beautiful flowers, even in the Negev desert.

Lake Kinneret has risen so far by nearly 2 meters, with each centimeter equaling 1,750,000 cubic meters of water, accounting for an increase of 350,000,000 cubic meters of water. If the lake rises another 2.5 meters it will reach the level of the city of Tiberias, and the flood gates will be opened to release the excess water into the Jordan and the Dead Sea. And the snow has yet to melt on Mount Hermon, when all that water will enter the Kinneret.

There is more to the rains in Eretz Yisrael than an abundance of water to irrigate the fields and quench our thirst.

The Torah's borders of Eretz Yisrael are delineated by two major rivers: The Euphrates begins its journey in Eretz Yisrael in what is today Turkey, flowing southeast through what is today's Iraq, and emptying into the Persian Gulf, and the Nile River in the southwest. The tribes of Asher and Naphtali, which make up the majority of what is called Lebanon today, were blessed with the waters of the Litani and Chatzbani rivers. But apart from these, the vast majority of Eretz Yisrael is at HaShem's mercy for rain.

Rain has always been, and until the Mashiach arrives, will be the weather vane of HaShem's relationship with His people in Eretz Yisrael.

We recite twice daily in the second chapter of Kriat Shema that rainfall, which is basic to life in Eretz Yisrael, is conditional on our religious behavior. If we should, God forbid, adopt the ways of idolatry, the rains will not fall; and by necessity, we will have to leave the "good land" that HaShem has given us.

A very long period of drought and an educated prediction based on scientific, foolproof instruments that we would experience another year of devastating drought, were all overturned by

the mercy of HaShem towards His people Yisrael in His holy land.

The blessed rains of this winter arrived just when we were close to desperation. It is a mighty message for HaShem's holy children in Eretz Yisrael that just like many events in the past, when HaShem led the Jewish people to the edge of the abyss only to save us at the last moment, we too can be assured that He will rescue us at this troubled time.

When Nimrod put Avraham to the test of fire and he stood at the abyss, HaShem pulled him back. Yitzchak felt the cold knife at his throat, Ya'akov was in the death clutches of Lavan and Eisav, and Yosef saw the Angel of Death more than once. In every case, HaShem intervened at the last moment to save them in miraculous ways.

Our fathers stood at the abyss when the Egyptians were about to throw them into the sea. Am Yisrael experienced existential dangers at the hands of the Persians in the time of Purim, and would have faced religious extinction by the Greeks if not for the Chashmonaic Kohanim.

Am Yisrael reached the lowest point in its history, when we were turned into soap and smoke by the Germans and their allies. It was then that HaShem breathed new life into the dying nation by opening the gates of Eretz Yisrael for the remnants to come home. HaShem is in the cockpits with our young pilots and in the fox holes with our infantry troops and in our submarines, while we defend ourselves against the murderous intentions of our Amalek-Moslem-Arab enemies.

Last year, the Arab world was sharpening its fangs and waving its sabers at the Jewish State. Enter our Father in Heaven, and today the longstanding fissures, fractures, hatred and animosity in Arab societies have come to the fore – Sunnis vs. Shiites and all against the Alawies, dictators who torture and kill their own people, Arab Moslems vs. non-Arab Moslems,

Turks vs. Iranians and all against the Saudis. The fractured country of Syria has exposed the basic inherent cruelty that runs through the Arab psyche. Libya, Tunisia, Bahrain, Yemen, Egypt – they are all running amuck in the realization of who they really are.

And here in Eretz Yisrael? We are busy developing our holy land, educating our children in Torah and chesed, and every day we are removing another layer of debilitating galut from our minds and bodies.

We are now experiencing the final stages in our nation's 2000 year galut. We in Eretz Yisrael will be witnessing miracles which will diminish, in comparison to, the breathtaking miracles of the Exodus.

This is not an empty expression of hope, but an iron clad promise engraved in concrete, as stated in the Gemara (brachot 12b).

Part B:

From the reactions to last week's message regarding prayers recited in the galut for the people and peace of Eretz Yisrael and Yerushalayim, it seems that I touched a nerve.


Let me explain.

At the end of the day, all prayers arrive in the shamayim, albeit in different ways; as in the anecdote regarding Menachem Begin who told Jimmy Carter that prayers originating in Yerushalyim are local calls, whereas Jimmy Carter's prayers from America are long distance ones.

Yonah's prayers from within the bowels of a whale at the bottom of the sea were heard and answered by HaShem. So too the prayers said in the galut are heard.

My message was directed primarily at the religious leaders in the galut.

Recall what HaShem said to Moshe when the Jews were standing at the water's edge at the Red Sea (Shemot 14:15):

*Why are you calling to me; tell the children of Israel to 
move ahead*

So to the religious leaders in the galut I say: The several minutes that it takes to recite the prayers for the Medina and for the soldiers of Tzahal on Shabbat, must not be the peak of your efforts for Eretz Yisrael, but rather their modest beginnings. Rabbis must use these prayers as a springboard from which to teach their congregants that the ultimate is not just to pray, but to transform the words into actions and move forward to aliya in Eretz Yisrael.

In conclusion:

There is an infinite difference between Jewish life in the galut and our lives in Eretz Yisrael. It was summed up much more dramatically than any way I could, by the great tzaddik "Chesed L'Avraham" from Tzfat.



"When the exiled will return to the land together with the Mashiach, they will find that their brothers in Eretz Yisrael have been transformed into more spiritual beings and have entered into Gan Eden to learn Torah from HaShem. The newly arrived will be deeply pained and will have grievances towards the Mashiach. Why have the Jews in Eretz Yisrael merited to be more spiritual beings and permitted to enter Gan Eden whereas we have not?"

And the Mashiach will reply, that it is well known that HaShem relates to people measure for measure in the way they led their lives. The Jews in Eretz Yisrael sacrificed their material interests and overcame great dangers to live in Eretz Yisrael. You in the galut could have come too, but you

*valued your material possessions over spiritual attainment,
so you do not merit what HaShem has provided for His people
in Eretz Yisrael".*

What is there left to say?

Shabbat Shalom

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