

Toldot 5779

BS"D Parashat Toldot 5779

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Jealousy & Slavery

Two conspicuously significant statements in the parasha regarding our father Yitzchak. The first is HaShem's command to Yitzchak never to leave Eretz Yisrael (Bereishiet 26,2):

:וְאַתָּה לֹא תַּעֲלֹם אֶל-אֶgypt וְדַwְּלֵה בְּאֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֶתֶּן לְךָ 'אֲלֹת אֶתֶּן לְךָ (ב)

And HaShem appeared to him and said, 'do not descend to Egypt; dwell in the land which I will tell you.

The other when Avimelech king of the Philistines went to Yitzchak after expelling him from the area under Avimelech's control (Bereishiet 26,28). Yitzchak asks the king why he came? To which Avimelech replied:

....וְאַתָּה 'אֲלֹת אֶתֶּן לְךָ 'אֲלֹת אֶתֶּן לְךָ (ב)

Because we have observed that HaShem was with you"

Two dominant features regarding Yitzchak: HaShem does not permit him to leave Eretz Yisrael and HaShem is with Yitzchak.

The statement that HaShem is with an individual appears again regarding David (Shmuel 1 16:18):

וְאֵלֶּה תְּמִימָה תְּמִימָה תְּמִימָה תְּמִימָה תְּמִימָה
וְאֵלֶּה תְּמִימָה תְּמִימָה תְּמִימָה תְּמִימָה תְּמִימָה

One of the servants (Do'eg the Edomite) answered to King Shaul: "I have seen a son of Jesse of Bethlehem who knows how to play the harp. He is a brave man and a warrior. He speaks well and is a fine-looking man. And the LORD is with him."

Do'eg the Edomite sought to arouse the jealousy of King Shaul towards David by enumerating David's unique qualities, and hence the danger that David might usurp the monarchy from Yehonatan, Shaul's son, after Shaul's demise.

"David has musical aptitude," says Do'eg." Shaul is unimpressed, because Yehonatan has this quality too. That David is "a brave man and a warrior" does not impress Shaul, because Yehonatan is equally brave and a warrior. David is handsome, but so is Yehonatan.

Then Do'eg says to Shaul regarding David: "And HaShem is with him." This impacts upon Shaul, who says that even he, the King, cannot say "the Lord is with me". At that moment, jealousy and hatred fill Shaul's heart towards David.

The obvious meaning is that David is successful in all that he does. The Gemara (Sanhedrin 93:b) explains that in addition to the implicit meaning of the words, the underlying intent is to state that in halachic disputes David's view was always accepted.

After 2000 years of exile, we today in Eretz Yisrael merit the unique quality of "The Lord is with us". When we must fight, our army is victorious. We have, with the help of HaShem, turned the desert into a garden. Our currency is among the strongest in the world and our real estate is real and not a bubble; our scientific achievements continue to make serious

contributions to mankind, in this city of Yerushalayim alone, there is more Torah learning than in all the other parts of the world combined.

And, above all, in the world of Torah when a serious halachic matter arises it is always brought before the rabbis in Medinat Yisrael.

Indeed “HaShem is with us” – the people who have chosen to return to HaShem’s holy land in this world. Regarding the Jews who choose to remain in foreign lands, HaShem watches over them but from afar; for after the establishment of the State of Israel, no one today in the galut can say “HaShem is with us.”

It would be correct to assume that the two pesukim in our parsha – that Yitzchak was prohibited to leave the holy land and that HaShem was with him – are interdependent. HaShem wishes to be with Yitzchak therefore he must remain here. There are 4 other Biblical personalities regarding whom it says that the HaShem was with them: Gideon, David, Shlomo and King Chizkiyahu – all five never left Eretz Yisrael.

That HaShem is with the Jewish nation is a glaring fact compared to other communities that underwent similar slavery experiences. Afro-Americans experienced slavery for about the same number of years that we were slaves in Egypt. Blacks number about 47 million in the US and halachic Jews in the world are about 10 million. According to all human parameters Jews have succeeded in throwing off the slavery stigma and reaching heights in all fields of human endeavor only because HaShem was with us from the day He chose us at Mount Sinai and commanded us with his Torah.

Serious Questions

This past Succot while observing the mass of people crossing the square in front of my home in the Old City, questions passed through my mind that measure the degree to which one has internalized the spirit of Eretz Yisrael.

1. With whom does a normative religious Jew in galut feel a greater affinity – with a scrupulously-religious Jew in Monsey or Lakewood, or with a secular pilot of an Israeli F-16, who twice daily takes to the skies to protect the Jews of Eretz Yisrael?
2. After spending over \$200,000 per child for 12 years of Torah education in the USA, how does a parent feel when visiting Eretz Yisrael and realizing that the Torah knowledge of his 18-year-old yeshiva high school son or daughter is on a par with that of a fifth grader in any decent religious school here?
3. How does one feel, knowing that the Arab of Israel speaks, reads and writes the language of the Torah, while his rabbi can barely create a sentence of three words in the holy tongue?

Serious questions for serious people; my reply:

1. I am quite certain that the average religious Jew in galut feels a greater affinity to his fellow religious Jew there rather than to the pilot of an Israeli F-16. But I state without hesitation that I feel a greater brotherhood and love for the Jew who risks his life in the defense of the Holy Land. I am a brother to the F-16 pilot and the Golani private who are the messengers of HaShem. One who does not feel bound to, and indebted to, the fighters of Israel is one who does not know what freedom is all about.
2. If the realization of the wasted time and hard-earned resources invested in producing a child whose Torah knowledge is so imperfect does not commit the parents to

leave the galut as soon as possible, then they are not dedicated Jewish parents.

3. Language creates associations with other people, with similar cultural forms and national mores. To speak a language is to live it. The Arab clings to the land here, because he feels a part of it and its language. If you don't live the language, you remain on the periphery of the society. That is why our rabbis taught that the Jews of the Egyptian bondage maintained the language of their fathers.

Hashem is with us

The “mother of all ills” affecting the Jews in the galut – including their spiritual leaders – is their uncertainty that HaShem can or will protect and provide for them in Eretz Yisrael.

The prophet Yishayahu (54,17) sees the future Jewish nation in the holy land:

No weapon forged against you will prevail,

And you will refute every tongue that accuses you before the gentile courts.

This is the heritage of the servants of HaShem, and this is their vindication from me, declares HaShem.

We see this happening now before our very eyes in Eretz Yisrael. It is the miraculous protection of HaShem over his loyal children.

It is “HaShem is with us” in all its glory as Am Yisrael

shakes off the shackles of the galut to continue our journey towards the unique destiny that HaShem has determined for us.

Shabbat Shalom,

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