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# Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim

IN THE HEART OF THE OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM

## **Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner on...**

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3 Menachem Av 5768

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### Will we Return to Gush Katif?

[Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah – Parashat Masei 5768 – translated by R. Blumberg]

Certainly, we will return to every settlement. That's more certain than anything, because we are now in an age of rebirth. We are returning to our land, to its entire expanse, and even if there are setbacks, we shall prevail. This is the most marvelous period of our history during the past two thousand years. Just as the birth of an infant is wonderful, so is the pregnancy, the birth process and the infant itself.

We were already born once in Egypt, and now we are being born again. We survived the exile, and that, too, was a miracle. And now we are rising to rebirth. Obviously, it isn't easy. Birth isn't easy either. It's worth it, however. Even the national vision of the dry bones presents a gradual process: the rebuilding of the Land, the ingathering of the exiles, the State, the army, the Torah. Yet everything is progressing. It's moving forward!

Sometimes you've got to go slow, as our forefather Jacob said, "I will move along slowly [Hebrew 'le'iti']" (Bereshit 33:14), which Rashi interprets to mean, "at my slow pace,' a term denoting gentleness." Don't reject something just because it goes

slowly: "This people has rejected the waters of the Shiloah that flow gently, but rejoice in Rezin and the son of Remaliah" (Yeshayahu 8:6). Rezin was the King of Aram, and Pekah ben Remaliah was the King of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, who committed a heinous deed, joyfully forging a covenant with our enemy, Aram, in order to attack his brethren from the Southern Kingdom of Judah (see Sanhedrin 94b). That is what happens when people want quick fixes.

Patience, my friend. There won't be any third destruction. Crises, however, are possible. Don't be broken and don't despair. Remember that a person grows by developing his ability to adapt to harsh, changing conditions. In Kohelet, chapter three, appears the famous poem about appropriate times. You can't always choose the time that is convenient for you. Sometimes it chooses you. You do whatever you can, because everything is in G-d's hands, and good things happen through good people and bad things through bad people. Learn to conduct yourself and to make decisions under conditions of uncertainty, and to be a vessel for G-d's mission in all circumstances.

Whatever you can change, change. Whatever you cannot change, accept as is, and know how to distinguish between them. Don't get bogged down in anger and despair, bitterness and frustration. Don't destroy yourself. Don't destroy others. Don't destroy the young generation waiting in line. Don't put ideas into their heads which will prevent them from taking the lead when the time comes. True, Darwin argued that in a cruel world such as ours, the fittest survive. Yet he did not know how to explain how the gentle birds are still here. Later on some came up with an answer: even if the individual disappears, the aggregate survives. At least in the long term, gentleness wins out. So be cured of your lameness and don't scratch painful sores. Don't hate – not even for the sake of heaven.

We are the nation that knows how to wait and not to despair. At the Pesach Seder we proclaim, "Next year – in Jerusalem!" "Next year – we shall be free!" Other peoples did not know how to wait, and they perished. We are the nation of patience and faith, "shining ever brighter until the day is full" (Mishlei 4:18). Don't be a zealot. True, Pinchas was zealous for G-d, but he didn't burst forward of his own accord

without first asking Moses, who sent him (Sanhedrin 82a). When all was said and done, Pinchas was a man of peace who received a covenant of peace, and the grandson of Aaron the Kohen Gadol, who loved peace and pursued it. Even spiritual titans like Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai and his son Rabbi Eliezer were castigated. G-d said to them, "Have you left your cave [after twelve years] to destroy My world? Go back inside!" (Shabbat 33b, see Ein Aya there). You have to realize that despite all the setbacks, we are still living on miracles – open miracles.

The first miracle is this. 150 years ago this land was desolate. Today it is functioning, green and flourishing, a land flowing with milk and honey.

The second miracle. 150 years ago, there were 12,000 thousand Jews here. In 1948 there were 600,000, and now there are five million, like the sand of the sea and the stars of the heavens.

The third miracle. For 2,000 years we were subjugated to the nations, and now we are free. We possess political independence, a strong state with a fine economy, scientific know-how and an advanced society.

The fourth miracle. In the exile, the nations rose up against us to destroy us, and now we have the I.D.F., the Israel Defense Force, which brings us miraculous victories. Our wars are hard, like all wars, but they are miraculous all the same. True, not everything is perfect, but let us not forget that over the course of 150 years, the same number of Jews died in war and terror as died in one day of the Holocaust. Things aren't 100 % perfect, only 99, and regarding the one percent remaining, we'll have to make an effort.

The fifth miracle. the Torah is returning to its abode, and to various degrees, to the entire nation. "A new heart and a new spirit" (Yechezkel 36:26) is taking up residence amongst us, without publicity or fanfare.

We are marching forward! True, there are crises, but we must avoid the psychological shock that would result from pushing the process forward. Observe

the godly wind blowing through the Land. Observe Zionism, with its holy content, even if its language is secular. Accustom yourself to talking the language of the people (Orot, Orot HaTechiyah 46).

Don't say, "Everyone hates settlers." That's nothing more than a pointless persecution complex. Don't say, "They're not Zionists". That's just a lack of humility on your part. And don't say, "They're Bolsheviks!" Sharansky warned, "I know what Bolsheviks are. You don't!" Don't shout "Nazi!" If you do you're dangerously deluded. Don't say, "We". You're forgetting that you're a minority, or, more precisely, you're forgetting that you're part of the Jewish People. All the miracles and wonders that have occurred in our country were performed by the people and not by a small group. The main thing is – stop fighting with everybody. Be humble! You are a precious, important part of things, but you aren't everything. You're allowed to argue with others, and sometimes it's a mitzvah for you to argue, but all must be based on love. Remember the words of the Sfat Emet. "There is certainly room for the differences of opinion that exist within the Jewish People. As our sages said, 'Just as their faces are not the same, neither are their views.' "The underlying principle was explained by my mentor, my grandfather, of blessed memory regarding the Mishnah, 'If I am not for myself" (Avot 1:14). "Every individual is created to rectify some specific point that no one else can rectify, and at every moment, a different rectification is called for. All the same, 'If I am only for myself, what am I?' Everyone must nullify his private interest for the sake of the aggregate." "It is true that arguments are necessary so that everyone can express his view, but full unity must result, as it says, 'In the end, love' [our Sages' rendering of Bamidbar 21:14]. Such is the sincere battle for the sake of heaven, starting with division but ending with unity. Then is fulfilled 'He makes peace in His heights' (Iyov 25:2)" (Sfat Emet, Korach, Year: 5647 (1887).