



Parashat Bemidbar 5772 - #234

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On the Haftarah... Eternal Covenant

[Hoshea 2:1-22]

In the midst of his great despair over the Nation's unethical behavior, the prophet Hoshea underwent an incredible experience. Only after this does he understand that the Nation will return to Hashem.

"The number of the Children of Israel will be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or counted, and instead of saying to them: 'You are **not** My Nation,' say: 'You are the sons of the living G-d'" (Hoshea 2:10).

Surprisingly enough, the one who says "You are not My Nation" is actually the prophet Hoshea. He lived during one of the darkest periods in our history, and it was difficult for him to grasp our Nation's pure nature while we were mired in the filth of unethical behavior. The prophet therefore lost hope in the Nation's purification.

Our Sages relate (Pesachim 87a) that when Hashem turned to Hoshea and said: "Your children sinned" - Hoshea should have answered: "They are Your children, descendants of Your dear ones, Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov!" But instead he said: "Master of the Universe - the entire world is Yours - exchange them for another nation!" Hashem then commanded him: "Go, take a wife from the prostitutes and children of the prostitutes, for the Land has committed great prostitution, departing from Hashem" (ibid. 2:1).

This extremely perplexing command was followed by the prophet, even though it was surely contrary to his nature. After his wife had given birth to two sons and two daughters, Hoshea was commanded to separate from her, since he was a prophet - just as Moshe Rabbenu had been commanded to separate from his wife.

It was obviously very difficult for Hosea to accept the command to separate from his wife - for he was bound to her through the children she had borne him. Hashem said to him: "You

cannot leave your prostitute wife and her children, even though you cannot be sure that the children are even yours! All the more so I cannot exchange another nation for Israel, My sons, the sons of those I tested, the sons of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov." Hoshea thus realized that he had sinned and asked Hashem to forgive him. Hashem said: Before you ask Me to forgive you, ask forgiveness for Israel... So Hoshea asked forgiveness for Israel, and Hashem annulled the decrees against them" (Pesachim ibid.).

"You are son to Hashem, Your G-d" (Devarim 14:1). Is this expression, which is the most exalted of the Nation of Israel, dependent on our merits? According to Rabbi Meir, we are "Children to Hashem" regardless of our behavior, as it says: "They are foolish children" (Yirmiyahu 4:22). From this verse, we learn that even when they are acting foolishly, they are still called children. It is also written: "Children, they are not trustworthy" (Devarim 32:20). From here we learn that even when they are acting in an untrustworthy way, they are called children. And it says: "Evil seed, children that act corruptly" (Yeshayahu 1:4). Furthermore, even if they are evil, they are still called children. In order to emphasize that we are "Children to Hashem" without condition or change, Hoshea clearly states: "Instead of saying to them: 'You are not My Nation,' say: 'You are the sons of the living G-d'" (Hoshea 2:10).

The deep anger and despair of the prophet dissipated. He finally realized that these problems may exist in the present, but in the future the Nation will repent. They will not repent by force but out of love: "She will pursue her lovers, but she will not reach them. She will seek them, but she will not find them, then she will say: I will go and return to my first husband for it was better for me then than now" (ibid. v. 9). The Nation of Israel will come to understand that the foreign cultures which attracted it are nothing but deceit, all of the pleasures are fleeing vanities, and true happiness is loyalty to Hashem. This verse has in fact been used by our Sages as a paradigm for proper education: True education is gentle, with understanding and convincing, and not by pressure. The Gemara in Berachot (7a) says: "One chastisement in the heart of man is better than many lashes." Maran Ha-Rav Kook explained that this insight of our Rabbis, that education need be through love and pleasantness as opposed to by the stick, has only recently been understood (Ain Aya, Berachot chap. 1 #70).

The love between Hashem and His Nation will return. "I will betroth you to Me for eternity, and I will betroth you to Me with righteousness, justice, kindness and mercy. I will betroth you to Me with fidelity, and you will know Hashem" (Hoshea 2:21-22). These three expressions of betrothal are said by a Jew each morning while putting on Tefillin, as he winds the straps around his finger, similar to three wedding bands.

Rav Aviner on...

Rabbenu Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Kook

[Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah – Bechukotai 5772 – translated by R. Blumberg]

Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto, in his book "Da'at Tevunot", writes that every person has a task in G-d's world. Even the most insignificant person was not created in vain. There's no person who has no place. In his commentary on the prayer book, regarding the end of the Yom Kippur service, Maran Ha-Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaCohain Kook wrote that when a

person is born, it is a sign that the world needs him. All the more so regarding the great men of every generation. This applies to all generations, but especially to the most recent one, the generation of redemption, as the Vilna Gaon wrote at the end of his work, “Even Shleima”.

Ours is a new generation, one in which the nation is being reborn. Throughout the ages we have known that the Exile is temporary, that the Diaspora is a cemetery, and that ultimately the graves would be opened, as the Prophet Yechezkel wrote. We knew that the Exile constitutes awful decay, national decay, and that ultimately G-d would arouse His spirit upon us from On High, as the Vilna Gaon wrote in his commentary on Sifra De-Tzniuta.

That time is now. So Rabbenu Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Kook teaches us. He didn't make this up. Nor was he quoting some kabbalistic source. He was quoting a simple Talmudic text, clear and explicit: “Rabbi Abba said: You have no more clear sign of the end of days than that of the verse: “But you, O mountains of Israel, shall yield your produce and bear your fruit for My people Israel, for their return is near” (Yechezkel 36:8). Rashi explains: “When the Land of Israel yields its fruit bountifully, then the end of days will be near. You have no more clear sign of the end of days than that.” And indeed, the Land is yielding its fruit in bountiful quantities.

Thus, Rabbenu Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah, a special emissary of G-d, was sent to us to teach the nation the meaning of rebirth, the meaning of a nation living independently in its Land, according to its Torah. He came to remind us of things we had forgotten, and he taught this via five different themes – five that are all one.

1. **Rebuilding the Land.** This itself constitutes the revealed end of days. As Ramban wrote in his Addendum 4 to Rambam's Sefer Ha-Mitzvot, we are commanded not to abandon the Land to desolation. Its full expanse must be settled, and no area in it may be left vacant. This is a great Mitzvah: the Mitzvah of settling the Land.

2. **The Return to Zion.** It is a great Mitzvah for every Jew to live in our land, and not in any foreign country. Every Jew in the Diaspora must make the move to Israel. This, too, Ramban mentions there, but the Torah itself – from start to finish - expresses this theme. Now that the Land is yielding its fruits, the Jewish People are returning to it from all four corners of the earth, including a massive Aliyah from Russia, something which Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah was absolutely certain would occur, at a time when many viewed it as a distant dream. He spoke much about the Aliyah to Israel of all world Jewry, in all its different shades and stripes, opinions and worldviews. This is the Mitzvah of settling the Land.

3. **The Establishment of the Jewish State.** It is a great mitzvah to establish a Jewish State. This, as well, is from that same Ramban source: “We mustn't leave the Land under the control of any other nation.” “A Land under the control of a Nation” is what constitutes a political state. Creating such a Jewish state is a mitzvah, and we have a divine promise by the prophets that we would once more conquer the Land. Sovereignty must be applied to the entire Land.

When Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah was asked, “Is this the political state that our prophets envisioned?” he would answer: “Precisely so! Obviously it isn't perfect. We must arm ourselves with patience, we must toil together, and we will raise up our level, together with the state itself. This state is an enormous sanctification of G-d's name, and even if G-d's name is also profaned here, His Name is sanctified much more.” This is the Mitzvah of conquering the Land.

4. **The Army.** Protecting the country obviously requires an army. There are numerous enemies from without and from within. It is a great mitzvah to go to the army, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah wrote in his article “Mitzvat Ha'aretz” before the War of Independence. He said this included Yeshiva students, and he said no one was exempt from this. This mitzvah can be divided into three parts, like everything else in the Tzahal: saving the Jewish People, saving the Land and sanctifying G-d's Name.

5. **The Unity of the Nation.** The backbone of the Nation's rebirth is its unity. We are a Nation and not a collection of individuals. “I shall make you a great nation” (Bereshit 12:2), “Who is like your people, Israel, a single nation in the Land” (Shmuel 2 7:23). The Mitzvah of loving one's fellow Jew means loving every single Jew without exception. “Love your

neighbor as yourself” (Vayikra 19:18). You must love him, without casuistry, without twisted logic. Public struggles, as well, wrote Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah in his major article addressed to the public at large, “Et Achai Anochi Mevakesh” (I am searching for my brothers), must be conducted in an atmosphere of love, without raising one’s fists, without humiliating others, without rancor. In other words, love must reign in our behavior, our speech and our thoughts. All these themes Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah taught relentlessly throughout his life - in his lectures and personal guidance, in his books and in the works of Maran Ha-Rav Avraham Yitzchak Ha-Cohain Kook that he edited and published.

And, as stated, none of this is new it is all very old. But it has been forgotten due to the Exile. Now, with the Nation’s rebirth, these portions of the Torah are likewise experiencing a rebirth. At first, Maran Ha-Rav Kook was alone in his generation, and his son, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah after him, father and son being as one. Slowly, disciples gathered to them, and more and more people came and listened, until there were dozens, then hundreds, then thousands and hundreds of thousands. Now the Nation is full of them.

Our teacher’s thought has penetrated many hearts and minds, both of the religious and of the secular, of the Charedim and of the Zionists. His thoughts and his views, which are not his own, but just part of the Torah, hover in the air over the Jewish Nation, consciously or unconsciously, as they build their lives exalting and putting things straight. Obviously there is a great difference between one who proceeds through life doing something knowingly and one who does so unknowingly. This is especially so when we face difficult, complex situations, that require, in our teacher’s words, “nerves of steel”.

Therefore, we call upon every Jew, young or old, working people, men of letters, to study the writings of Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehuda Kook. Delve deeply into them. Analyze them as much as you can, for they include everything. They are a life source. In them is hidden the soul of the great rebirth of the Nation returning to life in its land, according to its Torah.

Stories of Rabbenu –

Our Rabbi, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook

Shavuot

On the night of Shavuot he would teach the Sefer Ha-Mizvot in order, and the following year he would continue from the place at which he stopped the previous year (Gadol Shimusha p. 121).

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