



Parashat Shoftim 5772 - #246

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On the Haftarah...

A New World

[Yeshayahu 51:12-52:12]

The return of the Nation of Israel to its Land, which we are experiencing in our generation, is not an historical anomaly, but a turning point in history.

"And I have put My Words in your mouth, and have covered you in the shadow of My Hand, that I may plant the heavens and lay the foundations of the earth, and say to Zion: 'You are My Nation'" (Yeshayahu 51:16).

Hashem comforts us from the horror of Exile, which crushed us so badly. "I, I am the One who comforts you. Who do you think you are, to fear man who will die, and of the son of Man who will be made as grass?" (ibid. v. 12). Hashem teaches us not to fear even the greatest human power, since it is only relative, and will sooner or later disappear from history's stage. Hashem is the true and sole Director of the world: "And you forgot Hashem who made you, who spreads out the heavens and lays the foundation of the earth, and you were afraid all day of the anger of the [human] oppressor, who was prepared to destroy, but where is the fury of the oppressor?" (ibid. v. 13). In fact, the tyrant disappeared. Nothing remains of him today.

"He that is bent down will soon be released, and he will not go down dying into the pit, neither shall his bread fail" (ibid. v. 14). We will be freed from all of the suffering and oppression of the Exile. "I am Hashem your G-d, who quiets the sea and makes its waves roar, Hashem of Hosts is His Name" (ibid. v. 15). The One who created worlds and rules over the laws of nature will also solve every human problem and save us from all tribulations. But, for us, the Redemption for which we have so yearned is not only about being saved from suffering and problems; we expect much more: A new world! Hashem will lead us to this level: "That I may plant the heavens and lay the foundations of the earth" (ibid. v. 16). Are we discussing a cosmological revolution? No, it is a historical one: The rehabilitation of the Nation of Israel in its Land – "And say to Zion: 'You are My Nation'" (ibid.). The revival of

the Nation of Israel is accompanied by new heavens and earth as the Rambam explained in Moreh Nevuchim (2:29), based on this prophecy of Yeshayahu. There will be a renewal of heaven and earth when the Kingship of Israel returns.

The renewed State of Israel is not temporary, like the last two. This time our return is complete, and nothing can cause a new exile. We are not only discussing the return of individual Jews to Eretz Yisrael, as has occurred over the last few hundreds of years, but the collective return of the Nation of Israel to its Land. The State of Israel is "The new heavens and new earth" about which Yeshayahu prophesied (66:22).

For the Nation of Israel, the State is not just a place in which to absorb individuals, a shelter from the tragedies of the Exile and a location for people to live in quiet and contentment. Our State is much more. It is nothing less than the foundation of the heavenly throne of Hashem on earth (Orot, Orot Yisrael 6, 7). The State of Israel is an ideal in and of itself.

Every one of us, in fact, is not just an individual; we each belong to the collective of humanity. As a result, it is impossible that the Divine light would illuminate an individual's life without also illuminating the life of a nation. The Divine light rises above the individual level, and above the familial level and even above the communal level. The Divine light illuminates the entire Nation in all areas: The Knesset and the government, the army and the police, the agriculture and the economy, society and culture. We want to save the entire world - not just the individual.

This is the reason that we do not reach the height of consolation by being saved from the cruelty of tyrants, the oppression and suffering. The true consolation is "and say to Zion: 'You are My Nation'" (ibid. 51:16).

During the course of two thousand years, there was a huge gap between Zion and the Nation of Israel. The true meaning of Zionism is the revival of the life of the Nation of Israel as a Nation in its Land, and the renewal of the Nation's dormant love of Zion: "Awaken yourself, awaken yourself, get up, Jerusalem" (ibid. v. 17). We sing this verse as part of Kabbalat Shabbat in the song "Lecha Dodi": "Awaken, Awaken, put on your strength, Jerusalem, the Holy City, from now on there will never enter you the uncircumcised and the unclean. Shake off the dust, arise and be seated, Jerusalem, loosen yourself from the bands around your neck, captive daughter of Zion" (ibid. 52:1-2).

We are witnesses today not to some historical process devoid of meaning. We are experiencing the initial return of the Kingship of Hashem to the Land of Israel. These are the signs which announce the coming of the Messiah: "How beautiful on the hills are the feet of the messenger who brings good news, who announces peace, brings word of goodness, announces Salvation, saying to Zion: 'Your G-d has ruled.' The call of your watchmen is heard. They lift up their voices together and sing: 'For they will see, eye to eye, Hashem returning to Zion'" (ibid. v. 7-8).

The Nation of Israel who returns to Zion is accompanied by Hashem Himself: "Break out into joy, sing together, ruins of Jerusalem, for Hashem has comforted His Nation, He has redeemed Jerusalem" (ibid. v. 9). And all of the nations of the world witness this amazing occurrence: "Hashem has revealed His holy arm to the eyes of all the nations, and all

the ends of the earth will see the Salvation of our G-d" (ibid. v. 10). We are not refugees running from the Exile to find shelter, "You will not leave in haste nor in flight, for Hashem goes before you, and the G-d of Israel is the One who gathers you" (ibid. v. 12), but as a Nation returning home.

Rav Aviner on... How to Daven without Bothering Others

[Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah – Re'eh 5772]

If you are the one leading the davening

Do not daven slower or faster than what is acceptable. Do not place "a burden on the congregation." If you daven too slowly you will cause others who have to go to work to leave before the end of the davening, and you will prevent the next minyan from starting on time. If the someone davens too quickly, do not admonish him in the middle of the davening and embarrass him. Talk to him as a friend after davening. If speaking to him gently does not work, do not ask him to lead the davening.

Shul is not an opera house

Use the accepted tunes of the community. Do not use tunes with which the community is not comfortable. This causes discomfort to the community in addition to the halachic question that arises from acting this way. If the person leading the davening acts differently from the accepted practice, please do not embarrass him, as we said above. If you ask your guest to lead the davening, advise him of what is expected of him in order to prevent any unpleasantness.

Shul is not a day care center

Do not bring young children who cannot remain quiet. It is permissible to bring a quiet child. If he begins to make noise please take him out immediately, even in the middle of the Shemoneh Esrei. In fact, especially in the middle of the Shemoneh Esrei.

Shul is not a club house

Please take an urgent conversation outside, and "Hashem, the Beneficent One, will forgive." If you talk inside and disturb others who are davening, however, it is not certain that they will forgive you. If the conversation cannot be delayed and it is impossible to take it outside, please whisper and "Hashem, the Beneficent One, will forgive."

Shul is not a carpenter's workshop

Close chairs and folding shtenders quietly without banging them.

Shul is not a place to create work for others

Please return siddurim to their places. The Gaba'im are not your slaves.

Shul is not a welfare office

Pay your dues and donations, and do not perform Mitzvot with money that does not belong to you.

Shul is not a Chasidic Rebbe's court

Do not make a long "Mi She-beirach" to which no one listens. A blessing will come to someone who is strict to forgo a "Mi She-Beirach." Donate money when you receive an Aliyah, and I promise you that the Master of the Universe will bless you even without the Gabbai's announcement.

Shul is not a "Shteibel"

If you are late, repent. Do not organize a private repetition of the Shemoneh Esrei which prevents others from leaving and places a "burden on the community."

Shul is not an election rally

Do not shout out "Yasher Koach" to people who receive an aliyah or led the davening. They will be happier to receive a personal "Yasher Koach" with a smile.

Shul is not Hyde Park in London

Try, as much as possible, to hang announcements on the bulletin board.

The Netilat Yadayim room is not a club house for Cohanim and Levi'im

Conversation and the "jokes" are usually at the expense of the repetition of the Shemoneh Esrei and others people's ability to concentrate.

The Silent Shemoneh Esrei is exactly that: Silent.

Our Sages said that one should not daven the Shemoneh Esrei out loud in the presence of others, since a person is not permitted to increase his own concentration at the expense of another person's concentration. Do not clap your hand in the middle of the Shemoneh Esrei "to expel external distractions." Ask Mekubalim (mystics) how to attain this result without making noise.

If you see a new face in Shul

Smile at him, extend a handshake and greet him. The usual crowd in shul should also be viewed as a new face.

If you have an obligation to lead the davening, forgo it

The merit of forgoing it will benefit the ascension of the soul of the deceased even more than the merit of prayer.

If you are looking for challenges in Mitzvot between one person and another – come to shul.

If you are looking for challenges in Mitzvot between a person and Hashem, fulfill these Mitzvot between one person and another. They are also the will of Hashem.

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