



Parashat Ha-Azinu-Sukkot - #251

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On the Haftarah...

Haftarah for Sukkot

The Universal Nation [Zechariah 14:1-21]

The revival of the Nation of Israel in the Land of its Forefathers was in no way a "wholesome" process. Zechariah warned us against this idea: "I will gather all of the nations to Jerusalem to wage war, the city will be conquered, the homes plundered" (Zechariah 14:2). When we read these worrisome words of Zechariah, we can only hope that this prophecy is behind us, that it refers to our War of Independence, and that there is no need to fear such events occurring again. However, it is incumbent upon us to be certain that in the end, universal peace will reign, "For Torah will come forth from Zion" (Yeshayahu 2:3) for all of humanity: "It will be on that day that living water will flow from Jerusalem...On that day Hashem will be One and His Name will be One" (Zechariah 14:8-9).

After the storm, the sun will shine. "And it will happen that all who will be left from among all the nations that come upon Jerusalem, they will ascend every year to prostrate themselves before the King, Hashem, Master of Armies, and to celebrate the holiday of Sukkot" (ibid. v. 16). The holiday of Sukkot will be transformed into a universal holiday, which it actually has always been, as our Sages point out: seventy bulls are sacrificed on the altar in the Temple of Jerusalem for the benefit of the seventy nations of the world (Sukkah 55b).

The notion of the Nation of Israel's uniqueness Israel has never contradicted our deep aspiration for the physical and spiritual perfection of humanity. We have never possessed the concept of proselytizing and missionizing in the Christian style, which aspires to convert every human being to their religion. And even less so the concept of Islam, whose goal is to force their complete control over the nations of the world. As is known, the World to Come is not solely designated for the Nation of Israel: Righteous Gentiles also have a place in this exalted future (Tosefta Sanhedrin 13. Rambam, Hilchot Teshuvah 3:5).

Our goal is to be a blessing to all of the nations. We must respect their natural strengths, and purify and exalt them. This was exactly the mission of Avraham Avinu: "And I will make you a great Nation...And all of the families of the world will be blessed through you" (Bereshit 12:2-3). This is the reason that the Nation of Israel is defined by Yeshayahu as "A light unto the nations" (Yeshayahu 42:6, 44:6). To a certain extent, this aspiration actually found fulfillment during the period of King Shlomo. Then all of the kings of the world, and especially Queen Sheba, could not deny the Kingship of Hashem, which was part and parcel of the kingship of King David's son (Rambam, Hilchot Melachim 1:10). This vision will come to fruition in the future hope: "For My house will be called a house of prayer for all of the nations" (Yeshayahu 56:7). And even further: "At that time they will call Jerusalem the throne of Hashem, and all the nations will be gathered to it, to the name of Hashem, to Jerusalem, and they will no longer follow after the stubbornness of their evil heart" (Yirmiyahu 3:17).

Despite all of the prophetic promises, we are still occasionally subject to the media's message that "Jerusalem is holy to all the religions," and it must therefore be internationalized. No! While all of humanity may absorb its holiness, Jerusalem is ours, only ours, eternally. After all, we are a universal Nation. Every Jew finishes his daily prayers with "Aleinu," in which he pleads with the Creator to return all humans to the proper path and repair the world.

The Messiah is not a narrow chauvinist, but the bringer of peace for all nations. "He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore" (Yeshayahu 2:4).

All of humanity will then see in the Nation of Israel the source of its joys and the instrument of its success. If the nations of the world would recognize this truth, they would help us instead of opposing us. Regardless, this vision will materialize in the end, both for our Nation and for a perfected humanity. Yeshayahu had the merit to reveal this to us in his prophetic vision: "In the last days, the mountain of Hashem's Temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many nations will come and say: 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of Hashem, to the house of the G-d of Yaakov. He will teach us His ways, so that we may walk in His paths.' In the end, universal peace will reign, "For Torah will come forth from Zion, and the word of Hashem from Jerusalem" (Yeshayahu 2:2-3).

Rav Aviner in the News...

Time to Change Religious MKs

<http://www.theyeshivaworld.com/news/General+News/140485/Rabbi-Shlomo-Aviner-%E2%80%93-Time-to-Change-Religious-MKs.html>

Rosh Yeshivat Ateret Kohanim and Mora De-Atra of the municipality of Beit El, Rabbi Shlomo Aviner, Shlita, has released a statement addressing the need to replace the Shomer Shabbos MKs in Knesset. Rav Aviner is viewed as a leading Posek in the Dati Leumi community in Eretz Yisrael.

The Rav's remarks were made to Talmidim of Yeshivat Bnei David in Yishuv Eli, before Rosh Hashanah, and reported in Makor Rishon. He was referring to the politicians who represent the Dati Leumi camp.

He explained that a party of three or four is ineffective, and while they may speak well, they lack the ability to make a change – and making a change is what is necessary. The Rav expressed his support for fresh new people who can actualize change, since the current leadership has not been successful. When seeking to describe the call of the hour, he explains that “we are trying to save the Nation,” and it is crucial to have the best possible political representatives.

“Before every election, the Kipot Srugot Rabbonim announce that one must vote for a Dati Leumi party, citing the names. And yet our public simply does as it wishes, because the public lacks trust in that party. They are unwilling to trust them and that's a fact.”

Rav Aviner on...

Children -- Only Holiness

[Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah – Vayeilech 5773 – translated by R. Blumberg]

Question: What is better for our dear children: Torah learning and secular studies together, or just Torah learning?

Answer: Just Torah learning! Such is Rambam's ruling, that a small child should learn only Torah (Hilchot Talmud Torah, Chapter 2), and we find the same in Yoreh Deah 245. Such has been the ruling down through our people's long history that children learn only Torah and nothing else. It is by virtue of this that the Jewish People have survived with all their greatness, reverence, Torah learning, purity and holiness intact.

And why not secular learning? Does it not include some very nice features? Certainly, very nice features indeed, very important and very essential. These features are interesting, they broaden the mind, expand the intellect, increase one's understanding of the world and even one's understanding of Torah. They are also a means of earning a living and a necessary vehicle for upholding the State. Our country needs physicians, engineers, soldiers and all kinds of professions. Secular knowledge is essential for enabling one to earn a living so that he does not become a parasite, and all the more so for enabling him to support and strengthen the Jewish State, which is great Mitzvah.

All this is very important, but not for children. Not every burden has to be laid upon children. It is very important to get married, and even so, the secrets of married life are not a topic for children. The time will come to teach them everything, but first comes the main thing, and afterwards the additions. The main thing is not broadening the mind with general knowledge, or acquiring a profession for the sake of earning a living. Rather, the main thing is good character, fear of G-d, goodness and integrity, and keeping Torah and Mitzvot (Igrat Ha-Re'iyah, Igeret #170). All the rest constitute tools, tools towards there being a world, a Jewish State, towards a person's surviving and succeeding. What could be better? Yet why

does a person want to succeed? Why is he alive? To serve G-d. Obviously, without people there can be no one to serve G-d, but the main thing is serving G-d, knowing G-d, fearing G-d, having good character, amassing Torah knowledge, doing Mitzvot relating to G-d and to one's fellow man. That is the essence of life, and that is what a child must be taught.

Afterwards we can add on the less essential matters, and then they, too, can serve as an auxiliary to what is really important. General knowledge can join together with one's Torah knowledge, and a profession can help one to win life's battles on behalf of what is important. The main thing, however, is to start out with what is important. Here is not the place to deliberate on how long childhood lasts -- until thirteen, fifteen or eighteen. This is something that changes with each generation. Nowadays, maturity is considered not to come until age twenty or twenty-two. Yeshiva students are called "Tinokot Shel Bet Rabban," - "The children of our master's school."

We are not against secular studies. We are in favor of them. Yet yeshiva elementary school and high school should be devoted to G-d alone. Secular studies are not what children are about. Holiness is. Good character, a good heart, fear and love and devotion for G-d.

Afterwards, whatever secular studies a person learns, whether for his general knowledge or for his livelihood, will bring a blessing.

If the opposite happens, however, and a person ends up with neither good character nor a good heart, why should we develop his talents? What benefit will there be from talented people who lack a conscience? As the philosopher Rabelais said, "Knowledge without a conscience is the soul's destruction."

Of what use is a talented university student who breaks into the University computer system, changes his grades and erases the files of others? He is learned and knowledgeable, yet he is barbaric. One thinker called this the "techno-barbarian culture." The wild man armed with technological knowledge is more dangerous than the primitive barbarian, because he holds in his hands the means and the tools to destroy.

We want good, ethical, upright children, and that is what we have to concentrate on.

Later on we can broaden our ambitions. With G-d's help, life lasts a long time. We should let our children and our youth study Torah without distractions, in the Talmud Torah, the Yeshiva Ketana and the post-high school Yeshiva. Afterwards, if they wish, they can study Torah their whole lives and become rabbis, and if they wish, they can choose a different profession.

One might ask: At age twenty-five one should start studying secular professions? So suddenly? This is an appropriate remark in relation to anyone who has never learned anything, and his brain is rusty. Yet we are talking about people who have studied the Talmud, which is the profoundest field of knowledge there is, more so than any secular field.

For such people, secular fields are child's play. Look around and see for yourself. At Machon Lev (The Jerusalem College of Technology) they opened a preparatory "Mechinah" for youths who have studied in Yeshivot Ketanot and have never touched secular studies. In one year, studying secular studies only half a day, they all passed their matriculation exams.

These youth have good study habits and are able to pace themselves. It is important for a person to know how to study on his own, to progress and to toil, to make an effort, to use learning tools and strategies, and not just to sit in class passively for hours and hours. That such students can be rapidly trained for a profession has been confirmed empirically. There are numerous examples of Yeshiva students successfully being integrated into various study programs.

When a boy is young, however, he should be allowed to learn Torah, so that he can grow up good and upright. Mathematics and Physics do not make a person good and upright, neither do they make him evil. They are irrelevant on this point.

Some people quote our Sages' various utterances, that a man has to teach his son a trade (Kiddushin 29a); that many conducted themselves like Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, studying only Torah, and were unsuccessful (Berachot 35b); that astronomy is our science in the eyes of the nations (Shabbat 75a), etc. Yet Rambam knew all these sources and they have no connection to the rules of educating children. The two issues must not be confused.

Should our Sages' utterances about the Mitzvah of being fruitful and multiplying make us marry off our children in early adolescence?

All of our Sages' utterances regarding the value of secular knowledge are well-known and correct. Rambam, as well, knew these sources, and he incorporated them in various places in his works. Our children, however, should be left in peace. There's no rush. It can wait. When they are young, what is important for them is to gain as much Torah and holiness as they can. That way they can become Torah-true, not half secular and half Torah-oriented, but totally of G-d. G-d alone is exalted.

I am not invalidating national-religious education or the Yeshiva high schools. I am not invalidating anything. Everyone must do what is best for him, on condition that he maintain holiness and purity. By the same token, we must not foster intolerance towards those who wish their children to study according to the pattern recorded in the Talmud, Rambam and the Shulchan Aruch, a pattern that was practiced down through the generations. After all, it was from that pattern that Torah luminaries and reputable children sprang forth. Don't spread your wings over everyone, saying, "You all have to be like us."

Quite the contrary, the child's environment has to be one of holiness. The Torah must be his life, and he should love the Torah and be excited by it. It should be his whole world.

In Jerusalem there are several hundred Yeshivot Ketanot belonging to various streams, and in each of them are dozens of children studying with pleasure and enthusiasm. For the National-Religious population, there are almost none like this. This demonstrates an enormous lack of understanding. This has no connection to arguments about Eretz Yisrael and the Redemption. During the time of the Redemption, is there no need to fill ourselves with Torah and the fear of G-d? Quite the contrary, we need it all the more! We need still more Torah and fear of G-d, more Torah and Mitzvot than in the exile! Because of Zionism we have to weaken the Torah? We have to strengthen it more. In order to build a single individual you need a lot of Torah, and in order to build a state, which is so complicated a task, you need even more!

Over time, general knowledge can be introduced in limited doses to the main objective, which is Torah and serving G-d, for that is why we are on this earth. That is the revolution that lies before us now: to establish Yeshivot Ketanot. From these, real Torah scholars will emerge, both those for whom the Torah is their trade all their lives, and those who will choose a different profession in time. Through both will be fulfilled, "All your children shall be taught of Hashem" (Yeshayahu 54:13).

Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law

Laws of Mourning

Why do we mourn?

Q: Why do we mourn if everything which Hashem does is for the best?

A: When someone dies, we mourn even though we know that it is for the best. But what is the meaning of "for the best"? It means that good will come from this event, but it is not good at this moment. When something bad occurs to a person from which good will come, should he recite the blessing of "Dayan Ha-Emet" which is recited upon hearing bad news or "Shehechyanu" which is recited upon hearing good news? The Gemara in Berachot (60a) discusses the case of one's land which was flooded and his crops destroyed, but the flood deposited mud, which will help fertilize the field and give even more produce in the future. Which blessing should he recite: "Dayan Ha-Emet" or "Shehechyanu"? Answer: since there is destruction now, he recites "Dayan Ha-Emet," and in the future, when there is abundant produce, he recites "Shehechyanu." This means that these blessings are said in consonance with one's

current feelings and not for the future outcome. Therefore, if someone's loved one dies, this is sad and he recites "Dayan Ha-Emet." Furthermore, we know that death is beneficial for us in the end - it creates a separation between the body and soul, it purifies the body and soul, and it prepares a person for the Resurrection of the Dead. Thus, at the time of the Resurrection of the Dead, we will recite another blessing. Rashi asks a similar question: The end of Parashat Bereshit (6:6) says, "And Hashem repented that He had made man on the earth, and it saddened Him in His heart." Rashi quotes the words of our Sages that a heretic once asked Rabbi Yehoshua ben Karcha: "Don't you agree that Hashem sees the future?"

He said: "Yes."

The heretic said: "But it says, 'and it saddened Him in His heart?'"

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Karcha answered: "Do you have a son?"

"Yes."

"What did you do when he was born?"

"We had a party."

"Didn't you know that he would eventually die?"

"Yes."

"Then why did you have a party?"

The heretic responded: "We are joyous at times of joy, and mourn at times of mourning."

Thus, the question is also correct from the opposite angle: why are we glad when a baby is born when we know that he will eventually die? We are happy now and when he dies after 120 years, we will be sad. And the opposite: when he dies we are sad and when he rises at the time of the Resurrection of the Dead, we will be happy.

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