



Parashat Shemot - #264

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On the Haftarah... Sounding the Great Shofar

[Ashkekanzim: Yeshayahu 27:6-28, 29:22-23

Sefardim and Yemenite Jews: Different traditions on which Haftarah to read]

Don't you hear the sounding of the great shofar? All you have to do is open your ears to hear and your eyes to see: "And it will be on that day that a great shofar will be sounded, and those who are lost in the land of Assyria and those exiled in the land of Egypt will come, and they will prostrate themselves to Hashem on the Holy Mountain in Jerusalem" (Yeshayahu 27:13). Isn't this an amazing occurrence – this return of Israel? Is there anything like it in the history of the nations of the world?

The wandering Jew, who was banished to the ends of the earth and who was oppressed so many times and lacked hope in the face of his cruel fate, is no longer a lamb among the seventy wolves: he has become a lion full of strength who treads on his own Land. The lion is not always aware of his status and occasionally acts like a lamb. His enemies then take advantage of this fact, as the saying goes: "Someone who makes himself a sheep – the wolf will eat him" (Minchah Chadash 4, 2).

While it is true that we suffered greatly during the course of our Exile (we paid a great price to atone for our sins), every empire that oppressed us with such cruelty has disappeared. "Has He struck [Israel] as He struck those who struck him, or has He killed him as He killed those who killed him?" (ibid. 27:7). The Egyptians drowned in the sea, Babylonia no longer exists, same with the Persian, Median, Greek and Roman Empires, Spain of the Inquisition – not to mention forced Christian conversions – and even Turkey, which created difficulties for our return to Eretz Yisrael. Even the former Soviet Union is experiencing a difficult period. And all

those who continue to attack, their day will come and we will tread upon their ruins, just as we did to the incredible powers who preceded them.

"You contended with them by banishing them, by exile. With His fierce wind, He expelled them on the day of the east wind" (ibid. verse 8). We were punished, but we survived and now we are reviving, and all of the towers of our enemies' arrogance are removed from the Land. "For the fortified city is isolated, an abandoned habitation, forsaken like the desert. There the young calf grazes, there it lies down and consumes all the vegetation; so their Maker has no compassion on the residents, and their Creator shows them no favor. It will be on that day that Hashem will separate grain from the strongly flowing river to the wadi of Egypt, and you will be gathered up one by one, Children of Israel" (ibid. v. 10-12).

We are returning to our Land one-by-one, slowly but surely. In the face of all types of pessimistic predictions, one Jewish leader responded: "When my grandfather was born, there were 80,000 Jews in Israel. When my father was born, there were 200,000. When I was born - 600,000, and when my son was born – two million. At my grandson's Brit Milah, the present count of Jews in the Land of Israel is five million souls! And people are brazen enough to say that the situation is deteriorating?"

We are living the fulfillment of the prophecy: "Days are coming when Yaakov will take root, Israel will blossom and sprout and fill the world with fruit" (ibid. v. 6). Despite all of those who besmirch us, the great shofar of the ingathering of the exiles is sounding.

The Jerusalem Talmud relates that when Satan hears the Jews sounding the shofar every year on Rosh Hashanah, he is gripped with fear: maybe this is the great shofar of the ingathering of our exiles (brought in Tosafot on Rosh Hashanah 16b). What is heard so loudly is truly the great shofar, which is mentioned in the Shemoeh Esrei: "Sound the great shofar for our freedom, raise the banner to gather our exiles" – the Satan and his accomplices indeed have what to fear.

A chronically stubborn person can still claim that we are only seeing the actualization of the first part of the verse, but not the second part. It is true that we see "And it will be on that day that a great shofar will be sounded, and those who are lost in the land of Assyria and those exiled in the land of Egypt will come," but the verse "and they will prostrate themselves to Hashem on the Holy Mountain in Jerusalem" is still far from reality. And, our antagonist can claim, Israelis tend more to bow to money and pleasures than to Hashem and prefer the small screen to the white pages of our holy books. This time you are mistaken, Mr. Complainer, you are a lowly accuser! Firstly, you do not know the secret of the souls, you have not grasped the depth of the deep-seated nationalism or the hidden treasures which are here. To the inattentive eye, the Nation seems as one who only loves security and the economy – which is obviously

not shameful in and of itself; but the truth is that in each Jewish soul is a deep-seated yearning to reveal the Divine light. Furthermore, the last 120 years were filled with self-sacrifice for our Nation and Land, which continues to this very day.

We must bolster ourselves with patience, since reality does not have wings. The first part of the verse has been actualized, and this is a guarantee that the second part will be fulfilled in its time, and you and all of us will rejoice on that day.

Rav Aviner on...

Modest Garb

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

How marvelous is the modesty of the Jewish woman! What nobility and glory, purity and holiness it demonstrates! What great honor is shown to the soul when we conceal our bodies. That is the essence of man. What great gentleness and humility it demonstrates! (Maharal, Netivot Olam, Netiv HaTzeniyut). What a great blessing it holds! What great spirituality! “All the glory of the king’s daughter is internal. Her raiment is of checkered work, wrought with gold” (Tehilim 45:14). How modest and holy were our mothers down through the generations, in every time and place.

Principles of Modesty

1. Clothing must cover the body. 2. It mustn’t be transparent. 3. It mustn’t be snug. 4. It must be sedate and restrained.

Transparency is measured against the sun or against a bright light, and not inside a house.

Non-snug clothing means clothing that conceals the shape of the body and does not accentuate any body part even briefly. For example, some examine skirt width by lifting a leg up onto a chair. Some weaves are problematic: thick or thin knits, lycra and tricot.

Color: One must avoid the following colors: 1) red 2) skin color 3) bold shades of orange, yellow or green 4) gold, silver or shiny fabric.

One may expose one’s throat but not one’s torso. Therefore, one must cover 1) the sides of the neck, up to the point where the slant of the body ends; 2) the back of the neck, up to the first vertebrae; 3) the front of the neck up to where the bones protrude. Certainly one must close one’s top button in one’s shirt, and all the better to wear a turtleneck.

Sleeves must reach below the elbow under all circumstances. They mustn’t be too wide. Raising the arms or other movements cause the upper arms to be revealed unless the sleeves are snug and close fitting. The best is to wear sleeves to the end of the arm.

Dresses and Skirts. Dresses have to fall ten centimeters below the knee. Some insist on opaque stockings as well, or that the skirt or dress should come all the way down. With opaque stockings, the skirt, as noted, has to be ten centimeters below the knee (the thickness of stockings should be 40 denier, but due to a change in production more is required).

Obviously, the skirt should not be snug or tight. Rather, it should be ten centimeters wider than the body’s circumference at its widest part, and in the area of the knee, 50 centimeters more than the circumference there. Slits below the knee are forbidden as well, because they draw attention. Slits must therefore be closed up using fabric of the same color as the skirt, or otherwise not standing out. One should not wear a skirt closed with buttons, due to various problems (buttons falling off or opening, or exposure through the openings). Rather, skirts should close with a zipper. With shirts, as well, one should be careful regarding spaces between buttons being too large.

Shoes. 1) Shoes should not be in bold or uncommon colors. 2) One should not wear narrow high heels that affect the way one walks. 3) The design should be gentle, and 4) not loud. (see

Isaiah's vision about the Daughters of Zion, who "walk with mincing gate, making a tinkling with their feet" -- Yeshayahu 3:16).

Hairdos for Unmarried Women: Some authorities insist on hair being kept bound in a pony tail and shorter than shoulder length, while others say it needn't be bound that way, but that it still should not be left wild and unkempt. Braids are a fine choice.

Hair Coverings: Some authorities forbid married women to wear a wig, and some permit it, albeit insisting that the wig should be modest and restrained, and not attention-getting.

Some insist on covering all the hair, while some allow revealing a handbreadth, i.e., 4 centimeters, the width of two fingers.

Educating Girls to Be Modest: Some say that such training begins at age three, while others say it begins at about age six (five to seven). (Sources: Sefer Gan Na'ul by the author).

How fortunate we are that the spiritual longing for modesty is on the rise.

Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law

Shut Rabbenu Tam Tefillin

Removing Rabbenu Tam Tefillin First

Q: If someone accidentally takes out Rabbenu Tam Tefillin before Rashi Tefillin, what should he do?

A: He should still put on Rashi Tefillin first, and it is not considered passing over a Mitzvah, since the basic halachah follows Rashi (Mishnah Berurah 34:20).

Different Tefillin at the Same Time

Q: What is the law if one puts on the hand Tefillin of Rashi Tefillin and the head Tefillin of Rabbenu Tam Tefillin, or the opposite?

A: He does not fulfill the Mitzvah (Mishnah Berurah 34:5).

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