

The Month of Iyar:

Yom Yerushalayim – A Milestone of Redemption

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Praising Hashem for His Miracles

This coming Tuesday evening we celebrate Yom Yerushalayim – a holiday that has gained great significance in my life. This is in contrast to my early *ba'al teshuva* days when I was surrounded by people who didn't make much out of Yom Ha'atzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim. It seems to me that politics has taken over and blurred the desire for truth. We, Jews, are polarized into those who are for, and those who are against. Rather than striving to find the Torah way of celebrating these great events, it became a question of which group do you identify with. Those belonging to the Zionist camp celebrate according to the Rabbinate of Israel. Those in the *Chareidi* box, although they learn Torah day and night and endeavor to mold their every step to the will of G-d, identify themselves as being against anything the Rabbinate of Israel decides, including the celebration of Yom Ha'atzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim. Did anyone ever ask Rabbi Moshe Feinstein a *sha'alah* whether to say *hallel* on these days or not? Since the importance of praising Hashem for His miracles is well known, we cannot take this question lightly. "Had Chezkiyahu recited song at the downfall of Sancheriv, he would have become the King Mashiach..."¹

In my search for the true Torah perspective on celebrating these miraculous events of our modern history, I came upon a book by Rabbi Menachem Kasher written right after the Six Day War, called "*Hatekufah HaGedolah*" (The Great Period.) He quotes the *Meiri*² who writes, "Every individual who was saved from tragedy is permitted to say *hallel* for himself on this day every year, but he doesn't recite the blessing. This is the law for every community, and thus it was established by the prophets to say *hallel* when redeemed from any distress." How much more so, should we celebrate in song, when we witness with our own eyes the prophecies of redemption being fulfilled! The *chesed* of Hashem has caused us to emerge victorious against the enemies who plotted our annihilation, and caused us to be reunited with our Holy City – Jerusalem. May we see the rebuilding of its glorious Temple speedily in our days! Our *haftarah* culminates with a prayer for healing. "Heal me, O Hashem, then I shall be healed; help me, then I shall be helped, for You are my praise!"³

May Hashem heal the rift between the different camps of Israel so that we can praise Him together in complete unity!

¹ *Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 94a.*

² *The Meiri on Pesachim 117.*

³ *Yirmeyahu 17:14.*



Torah Learning Versus Army Service

The recent demonstration against compulsory army service has widened the rift between the fragments of our people. If only we could learn the necessity and importance of both Torah learning and protecting our country. Our people consist of different tribes each with their unique characteristic and contribution. The recent holidays of Iyar allude to how both Torah learning and defending Israel from our enemies are interdependent and vital for the survival of our people. There are two tribes linked to the month of Iyar: Yosef and Yissachar. According to the order of the flags the month of Iyar is associated with the tribe of Yissaschar.⁴ This tribe is known to represent Torah as it states, “*Yissachar is a strong-boned ass.*”⁵ He bears the yoke of the Torah like a strong ass upon which may be placed a heavy load.⁶ The month of Iyar is also connected with Yosef, because its astrological sign is the Taurus (bull), and Yosef is compared to a bull.⁷ Yosef is connected with fighting the wars of Israel as it states, “He has horns like the horns of the wild ox, with them he gores the ends of the earth...”⁸ For this reason the war against Amalek which took place during the month of Iyar was spearheaded by Yehoshua from the tribe of Ephraim (Yosef).⁹ According to Seder Olam Rabah, the war against Amalek in the wilderness occurred during the last week of Iyar.¹⁰ Three thousand years later, descendants of those same Jewish warriors regained sovereignty over large territories of Israel including the heart of Israel: Yerushalayim, the Temple Mount and the Western Wall of the Temple. Actually, it is possible that the war with Amalek happened exactly on the 28th of Iyar – the selfsame day as Yom Yerushalayim!¹¹

Victory through Uniting the Power of Yissaschar and Yosef

Yissaschar and Yosef are interconnected. Only through the power of both is Ya’acov able to conquer Esav and Amalek. This is alluded to by Ya’acov’s assertion as he faces Esav: “*I have oxen and asses ...*”¹² “*Oxen – this refers to Yosef... Asses – this refers to Yissaschar.*”¹³ Yosef, specifically, has the power to overcome Amalek whose reason d’etre is to make us believe that everything happens by chance without G-d’s supervision.¹⁴ Yosef, the power of the ox, involved in the physical world, teaches us how to recognize Hashem within the physical, even within seemingly natural occurrences that could be attributed to chance. Therefore, it is specifically the descendants of Yosef who will overcome Amalek.¹⁵ The tribe of Yissaschar was unique amongst all the tribes by being blessed with special aptitude for Torah learning as it states, “the sons of Yissachar, knowers of understanding.”¹⁶ The Land of Israel is only conquered by the power of the Torah as it states, “*Our feet are standing within your gates, Yerushalayim.*”¹⁷ “*Who caused our feet*

⁴ *B’nei Yissaschar, Articles on the Month of Iyar*, 1:9.

⁵ *Bereishit* 49:14.

⁶ Rashi, *Bereishit* 49:14

⁷ *Bereishit* 49: 22, *Devarim* 33:17.

⁸ *Devarim* 33:17.

⁹ *B’nei Yissaschar, Articles on the Month of Iyar*, 1:7.

¹⁰ *Braitah Seder Olam*

¹¹ <http://he.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D7%9B%22%D7%97_%D7%91%D7%90%D7%99%D7%99%D7%A8>

¹² *Bereishit* 32:6.

¹³ *Midrash Bereshit Rabbah*, 75:12.

¹⁴ See Rashi, *Devarim* 25:18.

¹⁵ *Ovadiah* 1:18, *Yalkut Shimoni, Bereishit*, Chapter 32, Continuation of Allusion 130.

¹⁶ *I Divrei HaYamim* 12: 33.

¹⁷ *Tehillim* 122:2.



to remain steadfast in war? The gates of Jerusalem, where Torah was studied.”¹⁸ From this we learn that in order to be victorious over Esav, Ya’acov needs to be armed with both the physical power of war (Yosef), and the spiritual power of Torah (Yissaschar). It is thus both through the quality of Yissaschar, the study of Torah and through the power of Yosef, the power of war that have we managed to achieve such great military successes in the wars that occurred throughout the millennia during the month of Iyar. When the different segments of our people will stand in unison against our various enemies, by respecting one another and recognizing the unique contribution of each of our tribes, then the Temple will arise in our midst.

Yom Yerushalayim – The Revelation of Hashem’s Miracles in Our Time

On the twenty-eighth day of the month of Iyar, we celebrate one of the major highlights of redemption: Hashem’s miraculous deliverance of Israel from all of its surrounding enemies, and the conquest of its ancient Land including all of Jerusalem with the *Kotel* (Western Wall) in its midst. For two thousand years, we have been praying for the rebuilding of Yerushalayim, daily. In 1967, this prayer became fulfilled to a great degree. The Jewish people and our Holy City were finally reunited. After 1884 years of separation, it is a great *zechut* (merit) to witness that Jerusalem with its Holy Temple Mount is again in Jewish hands. In 1967, I lived in Denmark and was only seven years old, but I still remember the great event, because it deeply touched me. I remember the excitement and enthusiastic spirit in the air, and the television reports, which had interviews with soldiers and songs. We played Naomi Shemer’s: “*Yerushalayim shel Zahav*” over and over. There was no doubt in anyone’s mind (even the most secular) that a great miracle had taken place. All of the armies of Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Iraq, with nearly two hundred thousand troops, supplied by Russia with an arsenal of mighty weapons had arrogantly declared to the whole world: “We are set upon destroying the Jewish State and murdering its inhabitants! We shall drown them in the sea!” In spite of this, through Hashem’s great miracle, the Israeli army, which was greatly outnumbered, landed an amazing victory. Even gentile authors wrote about this wonder which they compared to the victory of the little David against Goliath the giant. With all these feelings and excitement, we must ask ourselves about the spiritual significance of the miracles which took place in the Six Day War.

The Connection between the Haftorah and Yom Yerushalayim

This week’s haftorah gives a clue, as it emphasizes the importance of trusting in Hashem, and realizing that all victory and salvation comes only from G-d. So the prophet proclaims: “Hashem is my power, my strength and my refuge in the day of trouble...”¹⁹ Even the nations of the world will ultimately recognize the power of the G-d of Israel, and realize how they had been mistaken all along as it states, “...to You nations will come from the ends of the earth and say, only lies have our fathers handed down to us, emptiness in which there is nothing of any avail!... Therefore, behold I let them know. At this time, I will let them know My power and My might, and they shall know that My Name is Hashem”²⁰ World recognition of Hashem’s power is a direct result of the

¹⁸ *Midrash Tehillim, Mizmor 122.*

¹⁹ *Yirmeyahu 16:19.*

²⁰ *Ibid. 16:19-21.*

miracles that He performs for Israel. The haftorah, therefore, connects perfectly with the amazing miracles that took place during this time. We find several prophecies that allude to the division and reunification of Yerushalayim. “In the time of the war of Gog and Magog, the kingdom of Hashem will be revealed in Mt. Tzion and Yerushalayim. The nations will capture half of the city, but Hashem will go out and fight them. Then, all who remain from all of the nations will realize that to Hashem is the true King.²¹ Likewise, Zechariah prophesied “...Half of the city shall go into exile... then shall Hashem go out and fight against those nations...”²² The only period when half of Yerushalayim was exiled was in the years between the years of 1948-1967.

The Sequence of the Holidays between Pesach and Shavuot

It is not incidental that both Yom Ha’atzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim fall in the period between Pesach and Shavuot. Rabbi Loevenstein, the *masgiach* of Ponovitz Yeshiva, explains that experiencing Hashem’s miracles is a preparation for receiving the Torah. It was only through recognizing the miracle of Purim that the Jewish people reached the level of accepting the Torah through love. Similarly, through recognizing the miracles that Hashem did for us on Yom Yerushalayim, which occurs on the calendar exactly a week prior to Shavuot, we become worthy of receiving the Torah. Moreover, only when the Jewish people are united in our Holy Land, can the Torah of Israel be totally revealed in the world.

“כִּי מִצִּיּוֹן תֵּצֵא תּוֹרָה וְדִבַּר הַשֵּׁם מִיְרוּשָׁלַם...” (ספר ישעיה פרק ב:ג) – “For from Tzion goes out Torah and the word of Hashem from Yerushalayim.”²³

Trust in Hashem and Prepare for the Final Redemption

Rabbi Loevenstein writes in his diary: “The first thing at this time is to realize that what happened (in the Six Day War) is the hand of Hashem and not by chance. We should know that our entire fate is in His hand. No other cause has any influence. Everything is *hasgacha pratit*, (individual providence) and therefore we must trust in Hashem.” These words reflect the message of our haftorah which emphasizes how we must trust in Hashem alone. “Cursed is the man who trusts in man and relies on mortal flesh for his strength, and whose heart turns away from G-d... Blessed is the man who trusts in the G-d, to whom G-d will be his trust. For he shall be like a tree planted by the water, and which spreads its roots out into a stream...”²⁴ On Yom Yerushalayim, people’s belief in G-d became awakened through the great wonders which they saw with their own eyes. They danced in the streets, and many returned to G-d and His Torah. Soldiers testified that they actually saw the hand of Hashem in the battle field, and ran to purchase books of *Tehillim* (psalms). Everyone was talking about the miracles, which became a sign to await and prepare for the final redemption. It is no wonder that the *Ba’al Teshuvah* movement emerged at this very time. Both Israeli and Jews from all over the world returned to Torah, inspired by the uplifted spirit which followed the Six Day War.

²¹ Radak’s commentary on *Yesha’yahu* 24:13.

²² *Zechariah* 14:2.

²³ *Yesha’yahu* 2:3.

²⁴ *Yirmeyahu* 17:5-8.

Integrating the Miracles We Experience

However, it takes a conscious effort to relive the experience of the miracles. It is a natural phenomenon to forget the great wonders which Hashem wrought for us and their messages. After the years have passed, we all tend to forget “that which our eyes saw.” Thus explains Rabbi Simcha Bunim in his book *Kol Simcha*, “All the plagues and the splitting of the sea were miraculous, but when Israel sinned, the world returned to the way of nature. They forgot the experience of the miracles. Only a vague remembrance remained. The Chafetz Chaim held that our time is without any doubt the time of the footsteps of Mashiach. The signs which *chazal* (our sages) gave us are all being fulfilled. However, revealed miracles only happen to those who take them to heart. The manna which Israel ate in the wilderness had many different tastes according to the imagination of each person at the time of eating.²⁵ Yet, how did the manna taste to someone who didn’t contemplate anything while eating it? The Chafetz Chaim explains that this person wouldn’t taste anything at all when he ate the bread of Heaven. The value of any spiritual lesson is only recognized by those who contemplate upon it. This principle also applies to the coming of Mashiach. The experience of how the whole world will be filled with the revelation of the *Shechinah* and with knowledge of Hashem, is dependent on how much we contemplate and open our heart. If we don’t think about the coming of Mashiach, we won’t feel it at all.

Yom Yerushalayim and Shemuel the Prophet

The *Shulchan Aruch* mentions the 28th of Iyar is among the dates where it is proper to fast because of the calamities happened to Israel then. On this day Shmuel the prophet passed away.²⁶

The *Shulchan Aruch* concludes the section with the statement that “*in the future, G-d will transform these days into days of rejoicing and happiness.*”²⁷ How amazing it is to have witnessed this “future” in our days during the end of the six-day war! Shmuel the Prophet is connected with Jerusalem and the Temple through his anointing of King David. Together they prepared the plans of the Temple, the heart of Jerusalem. In addition Shemuel requested that King Shaul would not die during his life time. Since the time for King David’s reign had arrived Hashem had to cause Shemuel to die young.²⁸ Thus Shemuel’s death was brought about with the express purpose of accelerating the Kingdom of David. Therefore, the 28th Day of Iyar, the day upon which The city of Jerusalem, David’s capital, was returned to the Jewish Nation, is clearly a great milestone in the final stages of our final Redemption.²⁹

²⁵ *Babylonian Talmud, Yoma 75a.*

²⁶ *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim, 580:1-2.*

²⁷ *Ibid.* 3.

²⁸ *Babylonian Talmud, Ta’anit 5b.*

²⁹ See Rabbi Avraham Weiss’s amazing article <<http://jwatch.wordpress.com/the-jewish-thought-series/the-meaning-of-the-month-of-iyar/>>