

The Shabbat of Vision

Haftorat Devarim

Yesha'yahu 1-1:1-27

I feel that Yesha'ahu is speaking straight to us today, to feel remorse for the ruin of our people, and to strengthen our vision in a future of a united thriving Torah community infused with justice, morality and righteousness in the heart of our Holy Land.

A Vision of the Ruin of our People

Rosh Chodesh Av – Yesha'yahu had a vision:

“The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Yehudah and Yerushalayimm, in the days of Uzziahu, Yotam, Achaz, [and] Chezkiyahu, kings of Judah” (*Yesha'yahu* 1:1). On *Rosh Chodesh Av* in the sadness of our time, I cry: Yesha'yahu had a vision concerning Gush Katif, and Jerusalem in the days of Rice and Baker, Bibi, and the dormant dog. “Your land is desolate; your cities burnt with fire. As for your land, strangers devour it, in your presence, and it is desolate, as turned over to strangers” (*Yesha'yahu* 1:7). “Your land is desolate” –The thriving greenhouses, farms, schools, community centers, synagogues and homes of the Gush Katif communities were made into dust and sand by no other than Israeli forces. 9,000 Jews from Gush Katif and northern Shomron were expelled by their brothers. Their homes, communities and trees were uprooted. “Your cities burnt with fire” – Their holy synagogues were burnt down to ashes by life hating Arabs. “As for your land, strangers devour it in your presence” – It was taken over by Hamas to become a stronghold for firing Kassam rockets at the face of Israel. Thousands of rockets began bombarding Israeli towns. Six years after, with my Land in tears, there has still not been “A solution for every settler,” as promised. I cry for my disillusioned sisters and brothers. “From the sole of the foot until the head there is no soundness, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores; they have not sprinkled, neither have they been bandaged, nor softened with oil” (*Yesha'yahu* 1:6). Only 9 percent of the expelled families have completed construction on their permanent homes. Some 85 percent continue to live in temporary makeshift homes, while they wait for their sites to be prepared. “The daughter of Tzion is left like a hut in a vineyard... (*Yesha'yahu* 1:8). How long will the building freeze last? How long will they poison the daughters of Tzion with anger, spite, violence, immodesty and hatred?

How did the Daughter of Tzion Sink into Such Deep Mud?

I cry with Yesha'yahu about how low the daughter of Tzion has fallen. Echoed in the Book of *Lamentation*, “*Eicha?*” (How?), Yesha'yahu laments the downfall of the Jewish woman. How can it be, that from the people destined to be “A light to the Nations” (*Yesha'yahu* 42:6), women have succumbed to the worst kind of immorality harlotry and murder? “How has the faithful city become a harlot! Justice and righteousness would lodge in it, but now murderers” (*Yesha'yahu* 1:21). Six years after, with my Land in tears, where were the outcries, when in June 2010, Tali Atar z”l, 34, was brutally murdered by another woman? Is there anything more unbelievably tragic than an eight month pregnant single mother being stabbed to death by her downstairs neighbor, because she spilled coffee on her laundry? The woman pulled out a knife, striking in the abdomen, neck and chest so severely, that the doctors in Kaplan Hospital could save neither her life nor the life of her unborn baby. Can you

imagine a more horrific vision than that of Tali's three children, 12, 10 and 6 who heard her screams and witnessed the horror of seeing their mother lying in a pool of blood fighting for her life? Who cried in the city of Ashdod, so close to the tragic expulsion six years ago, where Tali Atar died of her massive stab wounds? Police admit that they are astounded that a mother took the life of another mother, one who was eight months pregnant, over a spilled cup of coffee. During the '70s, '80s & up to the mid-'90s violence was a rarity back then in Israel. Murders were extremely rare, and if one occurred, it got the attention of the whole country for a long time. I remember even as a teenager, violence of the current type was unheard of. Murder and attempted murder in Israel rose from 107 and 90 in 1990 to 134 and 312 in 2007. That means that attempted murder rose 300% while the rate of murder rose "only" 30%. Oy! What has become of us?

From the Depth of the Abyss Hashem Calls Us Back

Once we have hit rock bottom, there is no other way than return. Women are awakening from the abyss of drugs, immodesty, and abuse, returning to the faith of our mothers – every descent leads to a greater ascent. Rabbi Yochanan said, "The son of David comes only to a generation who is either entirely pure or entirely guilty" (*Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 98a*). Within Yesha'yahu's horrendous vision, the spark of the greatest hope is kindled. "Come now, and let us reason together, says Hashem, though your sins be like scarlet, they shall be white as snow..." (*Yesha'yahu 1:18*). Even when the behavior of the Jewish people is truly abhorrent, it only represents the external layers of our heart. From within our inner dimension, our true source of existence, Hashem calls us to return and be cleansed and brightened like glistening snowflakes.

Even when the daughter of Tzion has fallen into the most inconceivable immoral behavior, Hashem – the heart and pulse of the Jewish nation – remains connected to His people. Even when our actions are totally corrupt, Hashem calls us back, and reveals (draws out) the purity of our inner dimension.

Shabbat Chazon – Visualizing our Temple Within

This Shabbat is called Shabbat *Chazon* – "The Shabbat of Vision." According to Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev, every year, on the Shabbat prior to *Tish'ah B'Av*, we are shown a vision of our world as a Divine home – a place where all G-d's creatures will experience His presence. This vision evokes a profound response in us, even if we are not consciously aware of the cause of our sudden inspiration. Even if we do not see, our souls do see. I'd like to encourage all of us to take advantage of this special Shabbat to consciously visualize our own Temple within. I'd like to call on all our readers to take a few minutes, any time during this upcoming Shabbat, to close your eyes and imagine the splendor of the Feminine In-dwelling Presence returning to the world. What colors do you see? What landscapes, people, flowers, sparks of light and shapes comes to mind? What is your vision for yourself, how do you imagine yourself growing in righteous accomplishment? "Tzion shall be redeemed through justice and her returners through *tzedaka* (righteousness/charity)" (*Yesha'yahu 1:27*).