



SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR

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These past many months have been terribly challenging and difficult months for the Jewish People. We have experienced tremendous loss, deep anxiety and on-going concern both for our brethren who remain in harm's way, our gallant soldiers who continue to protect our borders, and for those who remain in captivity, and their dear families. As we begin *Chodesh Iyar*, which contains the days of commemoration and remembrance for those throughout the generations who have helped to build and sustain *Medinat Yisrael*, I'd like to offer a few words of reflection and context.

Just two weeks ago on the *Layl HaSeder*, we recalled- *Baruch Shomeir Havtachato L'Yisrael- Blessed is He who has kept his promise to the Jewish People.*

The saintly Rabbi **Yissacher Shlomo Teichtel, zy'a hy'd**, in his incredible moving work *Eim HaBanim Smeicha*, wrote of the fulfillment of promises that have begun to unfold with the return of the Jewish People to *Eretz Yisrael*.

Rav Abba said. There is no clearer sign of Mashiach, than when the verse (Yechezkel 36:8) is fulfilled: Mountains of Israel will give forth their fruit to My People, Israel. (Sanhedrin 98a) Our Jewish brothers came to the land and built cities, villages, gardens and orchards. They transformed great expanses of disease infested swamps into fertile lush fields. They sacrificed themselves to build the land. This must be the work of Hashem and a sign that our salvation is soon to come! This is without doubt the beginning of redemption...

As we look ahead and begin to prepare to celebrate *Yom HaAtzmaut* in the coming week, I thought it might be meaningful to share an insight from a great Torah personality from the early years of *Medinat Yisrael*.

One of the great religious personalities of the pre-state *Yishuv* and early years of *Medinat Yisrael*, was the **Ohalei Yaakov of Tel Aviv, Rabbi Yaakov Friedman, zt'l, the Admor of Husiyatin zy'a**. The Rebbe of *Husiyatin*, was fortunate to make *aliya* from Poland, just ahead of the Nazi onslaught, settling in Tel Aviv in 1938, where he lived until his passing in 1954. Within the Rebbe's beautiful teachings we not only find depth and inspiration, but are often given a glimpse of this very challenging period in Jewish History.

One particularly poignant message that *Ohalei Yaakov* shared was a sermon for the *Shabbat of Parshat Ki Tavo* in 1952. The *sedra* opens with these words:

V'haya Ki Tavo El Haaretz-And it shall be when you arrive upon the Land...

The *Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh*, in his comments on this verse explains : *V'haya-Lashon Simcha*. Our arrival to the Land of Israel is something to celebrate and rejoice over!

The *Rebbe of Husiyatin*, asked regarding this insight of the *Ohr HaChaim*:

When we look at the reality and spiritual circumstances here in Eretz Yisrael today (in 1952), one can't help but ask-how are we to rejoice? Yes, indeed we have merited to receive the gift of Medinat Yisrael, and for the beginning of the ingathering of the Exiles, but how can we

rejoice when we look at the lack of spirituality which seems rampant among us. I do not wish to pass judgment, Chas V'Shalom, rather our way is always to find merit and see the good. There are three reasons for the spiritual malaise which is so worrisome and a cause for deep concern. 1. A portion of our people have received a poor education 2. A portion of our people live in difficult conditions and circumstances, abject poverty 3. The Shoah which nearly decimated our people, and left so many broken physically and despondent emotionally and spiritually, from which we have yet to recover.

However, there is no room for despair! The Torah has already promised us that indeed the Jewish People will return to the ways of Hakadosh Baruch Hu- V'Shavta Ad Hashem Elokecha.

This Spiritual Renewal will not come from any other place, except for here in Eretz Yisrael. The Spiritual Renewal of Am Yisrael will indeed come forth from this Center of Jewish Life we are building now here in Eretz Yisrael...."

Baruch Hashem, in the seventy two years since the Rebbe shared this powerful message, Torah learning and Jewish commitment, and ritual observance here in Eretz Yisrael has indeed grown exponentially. Baruch Shomeir Havtachato L'Yisrael- Blessed is He who has kept his promise to the Jewish People.

Yehi Ratzon, may we indeed merit to witness the fulfillment of Hashem's promise to the Jewish People, to see continued spiritual transformation taking root here in our sacred Land, and may we experience in the days ahead, the redemption and transformation of the entire world, which will flow forth from Artzeinu HaKedosha....

Moadim L'simcha Legeula Shleima! ■

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