

Connecting geulah to tefillah: A daily affirmation of the Religious Zionist

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As religious Zionists we look back on the history of the State and appreciate the miracle of its creation, its survival, and its successes. At the same time we hope and pray that the State of Israel represents just the beginning manifestations of the ultimate redemption, and that Hashem in His infinite wisdom is directing us and the world on the path that will lead to Moshiach and the ingathering of exiles.

We differ with some of our colleagues in that secular Zionists do not necessarily see the hand of God in the events of these past 60 some years, and we differ with other colleagues who cannot support the State because they feel there should be no human participation in this Messianic process. We believe that the State of Israel represents an outgrowth of the partnership between God and man in shaping the destiny of the Jewish people and their ultimate connection to the land of Israel. At times we may feel lonely in this blended role as both religious and Zionist. Yet, our traditional sources have long alluded to the very set of issues we face as we both revel in and contend with the realities of an independent democratic Jewish state that thrives in the face of adversity – both the threats from our external enemies and the challenges we face from within our own community.

The Talmud discusses a dispute concerning the Maariv service and the practice of connecting geulah to tefillah. Perhaps it can shed light on our world view as we approach Yom Haatzmaut this year.

Mar said – one should say kriyat shema and then pray [the amida]. This supports [the opinion of] R' Yochanan, who said “who is destined to the world to come? One who connects geulah to the tefilla of Maariv.” R' Yehoshua ben Levi says “Tefillot were established in the middle”.

Berachot 4b

אמר מר: קורא קריאת שמע ומתפלל.
מסייע ליה לרבי יוחנן, דאמר רבי יוחנן:
איזהו בן העולם הבא? - זה הסומך גאולה
לתפלה של ערבית. רבי יהושע בן לוי
אומר: תפלות באמצע תקנום.
מסכת ברכות דף ד:

R' Yochanan says that at both the evening service and the morning service, the berachot of kriyat shema should immediately precede the saying of shemoneh esrei and there should be no interruption between the two. R' Yehoshua ben Levi says that the morning and evening amida

prayers are surrounded by the kriyat shema of shacharit and the kriyat shema of maariv, meaning kriyat shema at night comes after tefilla.

What are they arguing about? ... Possibly about logic, as R' Yochanan holds that geulah also happened at night, though the full geulah wasn't until morning, whereas R' Yehoshua ben Levi holds that since the full geulah didn't happen until morning, it wasn't a full geulah [at night].

במאי קא מפלגי? אי בעית אימא קרא, אי בעית אימא סברא. אי בעית אימא סברא, דרבי יוחנן סבר: גאולה מאורתא נמי הוי, אלא גאולה מעלייתא לא הויא אלא עד צפרא; ורבי יהושע בן לוי סבר: כיון דלא הויא אלא מצפרא, לא הויא גאולה מעלייתא.

There are two approaches to explaining the background of the dispute. If we, for our discussion, set aside the approach that is based on textual support, and instead focus on the attempt to explain their disagreement based on logic, then the dispute between R' Yochanan and R' Yehoshua ben Levi can be understood as a difference in the way they approach the notion of an incomplete geulah, a redemption that is still in process.

R' Yochanan would say that even though the actual exodus from Egypt did not occur until the next morning, the redemption was accomplished already on the night of the 15th of Nisan. R' Yehoshua ben Levi, on the other hand, would say that since the exodus did not occur until the morning, the evening does not constitute a geulah worthy of noting at all.

R' Yehoshua ben Levi believes that only a complete redemption can be considered truly geulah. Only a geulah that is visible in the light of day, when the world is illuminated and bright and clear, only when mankind can sense and feel total redemption, only under such circumstances is it appropriate to juxtapose geulah and tefillah and to praise God for the salvation He has provided. But short of a clear cut, unambiguous, clear as day redemption, there is no compelling reason to link tefillah to such an incomplete stage.

R' Yochanan, on the other hand, believes that even a nighttime geulah, despite its incomplete nature and still to be anticipated reality, despite being shrouded in the murky dark of night, is to be considered geulah and deserves recognition and acknowledgment through our prayer service. In such a circumstance one must be grateful to Hashem for the significance of what has occurred thus far and one should anticipate with thanks to Him His continued kindness and what we hope and expect is still to come.

The Rambam and Tosafot rule according to R' Yochanan, that even a nighttime geulah should be connected to tefillah. But even with that, we should recognize that the nighttime geulah is unique in that it is a prolonged geulah. It is, as we experienced then and are currently experiencing now, a long and drawn out process that can be both confusing and confounding. Even our tefilot suggest this fact, because after we say the bracha of ga'al Yisroel in the evening service, we add after that for Hashem to remove our enemies and the Satan from us, both in front and in back of us. These words should not detract from the bracha that precedes it; rather they should define the nature of the nighttime geulah that is both long and complex, and has its own ups and downs. Even though we can sense the Satan in front of and behind us, and we can sense our enemies with their swords drawn to our right and our left, we must recognize that we

are very much in the midst of the geulah process. It is a natural process of redemption we are experiencing and must be appreciated for what it is, rather than what it is not.

Later, the gemarah goes on to draw an important distinction between geulah, redemption, and yetziyah, freedom.

R' Abba said, everyone agrees that when the Jewish people were redeemed from Egypt, they were redeemed at night, as it says 'Hashem took you out of Egypt at night.' And when they left, they left during the day, as it says 'After the Pesach the Jewish people left with an upright hand.'

Brachot 9a

אמר רבי אבא: הכל מודים, כשנגאלו ישראל ממצרים - לא נגאלו אלא בערב, שנאמר (דברים ט"ז) הוציאך ה' אלהיך ממצרים לילה, וכשיצאו - לא יצאו אלא ביום, שנאמר (במדבר ל"ג) ממחרת הפסח יצאו בני ישראל ביד רמה.
ברכות דף ט.

This statement seems to suggest that the exodus from Egypt occurred in two stages – first, from midnight on, when, according to R' Elazar ben Azarya, the Egyptians were trying to rush the Jews out, and then, second, in the light of day when R' Akiva says the word *chipazon* reflects on the haste of the Jewish people to actually leave the land of Egypt. This distinction is highlighted by the continuation of the gemara:

A supporting beraita: 'Hashem took you out at night' – Did they leave at night? Didn't they leave during the day, as it says 'And after Pesach the Jewish people left with an upright hand'? Rather, it teaches us that the geulah started at night.

תניא נמי הכי: הוציאך ה' אלהיך ממצרים לילה - וכי בלילה יצאו? והלא לא יצאו אלא ביום, שנאמר: ממחרת הפסח יצאו בני ישראל ביד רמה! אלא: מלמד שהתחילה להם גאולה מבערב

Redemption came at night; freedom came the next morning. Nighttime redemption is the first step – necessary but not sufficient; and as a result it is often not appreciated nor recognized. It may not be the ultimate freedom, but it is certainly geulah.

And nighttime redemption, the slow, complex often frustrating process of redemption, according to the gemara, has an advantage over daytime redemption, which is instantaneous and clear cut. For the fact is that the daytime redemption which occurred in Egypt, which occurred with haste, was not a result of the merits of the Jewish people. The miracles and supernatural events that propelled them out of Egypt were not due to their righteousness or their deeds of merit. Rather they resulted because Hashem recognized the moment had come, and further delay could do irreparable harm in the development of the nation and might even forestall their ever leaving Egypt. And so Hashem had to act with miracles and with haste and with clarity. He, as it were, had no choice – He had to act with a strong hand. But from that point on, the redemption could proceed more 'naturally', with an outstretched arm, with Hashem pointing out the way. But while He points out the way, in this next stage of the geulah process, we are to be the actors, the protagonists who propel the action forward.

Nighttime geulah, the sometimes maddeningly slow, frustrating, intricate and complex process, requires our effort – both physical and spiritual – to move the process forward. And yet at the same time, we must remain ever-conscious of the outstretched arm of God that directs us

through the darkness, a darkness that may keep us from seeing His hand in all its glory while keeping us on the path to the ultimate geulah. Back then in the land of Egypt, He acted and we acted and the result was redemption and freedom; in our own time, in the land of Israel, He acted and we acted and the result is and will yet be redemption and freedom.

For those of us who believe that we are currently in the midst of our own geulah process, and are engaged in a partnership with Hakadosh Baruch Hu in the ultimate redemption, we need to ask what role we have individually and collectively in continuing to move the redemptive process further along. As Religious Zionists we recognize His hand in the establishment and continuing existence of the State. We see His hand; but as Religious Zionists we should also be considering what we need to be doing to help Him move the geulah process to the next stage.

For many, this question may imply the dilemma or opportunity of aliyah, but there may well be more for us to consider even before the challenges of aliyah. Consider the following:

Several years ago, on the 17th of Tamuz, I heard Rabbi Zevulun Charlop speak in the Beit Midrash about his daughter who had been a counselor in a summer camp. When she asked the girls in her charge what they thought about upon waking up on the day of the fast, they responded about anticipating being hungry or thinking about what they were going to wear that day or what they were going to do all day. Not one of them woke up that morning thinking about the Beit Hamikdash.

Recently, I listened to a shiur that Rabbi Moshe Lichtenstein gave in which he discussed the unique nature of the city of Jerusalem in that it maintains a unique appeal both to the religious and the secular. He recalled that he once wrote that the famous line from the six day war when the old city of Jerusalem was captured by the IDF, 'Har Habayit is in our hands', some 45 years later should be rephrased to 'Har Habayit is in our hearts'. The hearts of the Jews around the world need to maintain a connection to the city of Jerusalem, its history and its spirituality.

Well before we consider taking on the challenges of aliyah or our role in the land, perhaps the first step is taking on the challenge of the role of the land in our consciousness. For those of us who choose to or need to stay in the Diaspora, do we at least dwell in Israel in our hearts? To paraphrase the old line, are we at least Zionists in our hearts? Have we integrated the kedusha of the land into our consciousness if not our physical presence? And is Yom Haatzmaut the day when we stop for a moment to take stock and assess where we are in this regard and what next steps we need to take both as individuals and as a community?

But we need not wait for Yom Haatzmaut to take stock. Beyond that we have the opportunity to weigh the issue every day. When we fulfill the requirement of connecting geulah to tefillah, we are recognizing and acknowledging His gift of redemption and thanking Him for the miracle of the geulah of our day. And because Chazal had the insight to create the same requirement of connecting geulah to tefilla at the Maariv service, we can take heart in realizing that while the geulah remains incomplete, while it still may be unclear and dark, it is a geulah nonetheless, well worthy of recognition and worthy of connecting to our prayers of thanks to Hashem.

Transforming the Pain of Yom Ha'zikaron Into the Joy and Challenge of Yom Ha'atzmaut

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His name was Chaim; Chaim Avner, a name familiar to me for a long time, but I never really knew who he was, and I never had the chance to meet him, or to meet his very special family, until one Yom Hazikaron. I had seen them before, and even shared some of their most personal moments, but I never felt it was the right time and never wanted to intrude.

Chaim, you see, is close to a very close and old friend of mine. In fact, he is about as close as you can get; his grave lies next to Dani's on Mount Herzl, Israel's National Military Cemetery. Dani Moshitz of blessed memory, is still, and will always be to me, 20 years old, which is how old he was when he was killed in an ambush at the Kasmiyeh bridge in Lebanon, in 1985. He was killed just two days after Chaim of blessed memory, who was 27, doing a 16 day stint of reserve duty in Lebanon when a Hizballah terrorist drove his car bomb into their safari truck, killing him, along with eleven other soldiers on patrol in Southern Lebanon.

Every year, on Israel's national Memorial Day, at Yeshivat Orayta, the thought of staying isolated in our study hall in the Old City of Jerusalem while the entire country gathers in her cemeteries and memorials to remember those who fell in defense of the State of Israel, conflicts with the equally strong desire not to allow such a holy day to pass without the study of Torah, which after all, is the reason we had a home to come back to after 2,000 years. So we study Torah together at the entrance of the Mount Herzl Military Cemetery, after which I and some of the students go up to Dani's grave to pay our respects. At precisely 11:00 am a siren sounds, and the entire State of Israel grinds to a halt for a moment of silence. Radio and television broadcasts are interrupted, traffic stops and people get out of their cars, pedestrians on crowded streets all over Israel stand at attention and bow their heads, and even children stand in silence as an entire Nation takes a moment to remember the price we paid for the privilege of having a State and a homeland to call our own. And as the moment ends, and the siren