

The Religious Nature of Yom Ha'atzmaut

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"The fundamental turning point that has occurred by the declaration of our independence in Eretz Yisrael, with Hashem's mercy upon us to save us and redeem our nefesh, obligates us to establish and accept upon us for all future generations the date of the declaration of Medinat Yisrael, the 5th of Iyar annually, as a day of happiness (celebration) of the 'atchalta d'geula' [beginning of the redemption] of Klal Yisrael..."²⁶

In the year ה'תש"ט (1949), with these words, the Chief Rabbinate of *Medinat Yisrael* led by Rav Herzog zt"l and Rav Uziel zt"l, established the very first Yom Ha'atzmaut. In coming to celebrate this very special day, we must ask ourselves what is meant to be the nature of the celebration? Addressing this question compels us to relate to the two components which exist in every other one of our *chagim* (holidays). Firstly, the more passive element, we must understand the religious significance of the historical background. Furthermore, each *chag* in our calendar presents us with its own "avoda", its own active manner of connecting to Hashem. What is the "avoda" of Yom Ha'atzmaut?

The Search for a Precedent

A search for a precedent naturally brings us to the two annual holidays which are not of biblical origin, rather are of rabbinic nature: Purim and Chanukah. Which one of these two would serve as a more appropriate model on which to base Yom Ha'atzmaut?

The *Levush* formulates a fundamental distinction between these two Rabbinic holidays in an attempt to explain the different manners in which we celebrate the two days. The *Shulchan Aruch* (O.C. 670:2) rules regarding Chanukah that "The abundance of banquets that we add are optional, as the days were not established for "mishte v'simcha" (banquets and happiness), [rather "l'hallel u'lihodot" (to praise and give thanks)]."²⁷ The question arises as to why we are

²⁶ Israeli National Archive 8562/651, translated from the Hebrew:

"המפנה היסודי שחל בחמלת ה' עלינו להצלתנו ולפדות נפשנו עם הכרזת עצמאותנו בארץ, מחייב אותנו לקיים ולקבל עלינו לדורות את יום הכרזת מדינת ישראל, הוא יום ה' באייר שבכל שנה, ליום שמחה של אתחלתא דגאולה לכלל ישראל, ולהוציא את היום שבו נעשה הנס הגדול הזה מכלל מנהגי האבילות של ימי ספירת העומר, עם מתן הוראות לתפילת הודיה ודרשות מעין המאורע בבת הכנסת..."

²⁷ to praise and give thanks, is added by the *Mishna Berurah*, 670:6.

obligated in “*mishte v’simcha*” on Purim, yet not on Chanukah? The *Levush*²⁸ answers that the difference lies in the source of the celebration. In the story of Purim the danger was a physical threat, to eradicate the Jewish nation physically. Accordingly, the celebration reflects this nature by displaying our gratitude to Hashem through a *chag* of physical celebration of “*mishte v’simcha*”. On the other hand, Chanukah commemorates being rescued from a spiritual threat, decrees against living our lives according to Torah and mitzvot. There was no inherent physical threat, as if the Jews would have accepted Hellenism and left the Torah, the persecution would have ceased. Consequently, the nature of the celebration is not “*mishte v’simcha*” but rather “*hallel v’hodaya*”, precisely what they attempted to stop us from doing. Returning to our question, which *chag* is the more appropriate archetype for Yom Ha’atzmaut?

As Purim: Physical Salvation

Most certainly, like Purim, Yom Ha’atzmaut is a day which commemorates physical salvation. In the week preceding Yom Ha’atzmaut, *Am Yisrael* commemorates the Holocaust on *Yom Hashoah*. *Medinat Yisrael* was founded on the ashes of Auschwitz, on the devastating destruction of European Jewry. Our new country opened (and continues to open) its door to all Jews wherever in the world they may be. With the founding of *Medinat Yisrael*, there is now a natural home for each and every Jew. With the founding of *Medinat Yisrael*, there is now the I.D.F. to protect our land and our nation. Appropriately, there is certainly the component of “*mishte v’simcha*” in our celebration of Yom Ha’atzmaut. In fact the “*mitzvat hayom*” (mitzvah of the day) in Israel on Yom Ha’atzmaut is the “*mangal*”, a.k.a. BBQ. Not simply in jest, but a true *seudat mitzvah*. The unity at this *seuda*, which is traditionally eaten in large festive gatherings of family and friends, reflects the nationalistic aspect of the day. Just as on Purim, it is our obligation to express our *hakarat hatov*, gratitude, to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, for the physical salvation He blessed us with in *Medinat Yisrael*.

As Chanukah: Spiritual Salvation

Undoubtedly, Yom Ha’atzmaut is not merely a replica of the Purim model, rather much more. In *Perek 37* of *Sefer Yechezkel*, we learn of the *chazon ha’atzamot ha’yiveshot*, the prophecy of the dry bones. Hashem places Yechezkel into a valley full of dry bones, and instructs him to speak to the bones telling them that they will return to life.²⁹ Hashem then reveals to Yechezkel that the image symbolizes *Bnei Yisrael*’s returning to life after the period of the *galut*, exile.

Then he said to me, Son of man, these bones are the entire house of Yisrael; behold they say, ‘our bones are dried, our hope is lost, we are cut off.’ Therefore prophesy and say to

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי בֶּן אָדָם הֲעֵצָמוֹת הָאֵלֶּה כֹּל
בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל הִמָּה הִנֵּה אֲמָרִים יִבְשׁוּ
עֵצָמוֹתֵינוּ וְאֶבְדָּה תִקְוַתֵנוּ נִגְזַרְנוּ לָנוּ: לָכֵן

²⁸ Quoted in the *Mishna Berurah* 670:6.

²⁹ “The hand of the L-rd was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the L-rd, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones ... Thus says the L-rd G-d to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and I will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the L-rd ... So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up on their feet, an exceeding great army.” (Yechezkel 37:1,5,6,10, translation: The Jerusalem Bible)

them, Thus says the L-rd G-d 'behold, I will open your graves, and elevate you from your graves, my nation, and bring you into the land of Yisrael'.

Yechezkel 37:11-12

הִנְבֵּא וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵיהֶם כֹּה אָמַר ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם
הִנֵּה אֲנִי פֹתֵחַ אֶת קְבֻרֹתֵיכֶם וְהֵעֵלִיתִי
אֶתְכֶם מִקְבְּרֹתֵיכֶם עִמִּי וְהִבֵּאתִי אֶתְכֶם
אֶל אֶדְמַת יִשְׂרָאֵל:
יְחֻזְקָא לִזִּיא-יב

Expounding on this idea, the Vilna Gaon (Gr"a) writes:

As Yechezkel said metaphorically, as he lived in chutz la'aretz at the end of the [period of the] Beit [Hamikdash]... Since from the time the Beit [Hamikdash] was destroyed, our spirit, the crown of our heads, has left us, and we remained alone a corpse without a nefesh. Exiting to chutz la'aretz, is [going to] the grave surrounded by maggots; we do not have the ability to protect ourselves from the idol worshipers who eat our flesh -- nevertheless, there were groups and great yeshivot -- to the extent that our flesh was rotted and our bones scattered, scattering after scattering. -- However there were still some bones intact, namely the talmidei chachamim of Yisrael who enable the body [of Yisrael] to stand. [This continued] until the bones were rotted, and all that was left of us was a 'scoop of decay'³⁰ which became dust, dust on which our nefesh is prostrated.³¹ And we can only hope for tchiyat ha'metim (resurrection of the dead) to be 'shaken from our dust' etc. (Yishayahu 52), as [Hashem] will pour [His] spirit upon us from above.

Likutei HaGr"a, Sefer D'tzniuta

כי יחזקאל אמר בדרך חידה שהיה בח"ל ובסוף הבית... כי מעת שחרב הבית יצאה רוחנו עטרת ראשנו ונשארו רק אנחנו הוא גוף שלה בלא נפש. ויצאה לח"ל הוא הקבר והרימה מסובבת עלינו ואין בידינו להציל הן העובדי הכוכבים האוכלים את בשרינו, ומ"מ היו חבורות וישיבות גדולות עד שנרקב הבשר והעצמות נפזרו פיזור אחר פיזור. ומ"מ היו עדיין העצמות קיימות שהן הת"ח שבישראל מעמיד הגוף עד שנרקבו העצמות ולא נשאר אלא תרווד רקב מאתנו ונעשה עפר שחה לעפר נפשנו. ואנחנו מקוין עתה לתחיית המתים התנערי מעפר קומי כו' (ישעיהו נב) ויערה רוח ממרום עלינו.
ליקוטי הגר"א, סוף ספר
דצניעותא

At first glance the Gr"a's words are extremely puzzling. How could close to 2000 years of Jewish history be considered a "cemetery"? What about all of the achievements in the developing of Torah which were accomplished in the *galut* (including the Talmud Bavli!)? What about all of the *gedolim* – the *Geonim*, Rashi, Rambam, Ramban, the Vilna Gaon himself? Rather, certainly the Gr"a was not referring to individuals. Individual Jews lived throughout the generations, and there were those amongst them who flourished, those who reached tremendous peaks in religious growth and production. The Gr"a was referring to the *klal*, to *Knesset Yisrael*. *Knesset Yisrael* was "in the grave" for close to two thousand years. The "*tchiyat ha'metim*" which we were *zoche* to, is not merely literally, physically, but also spiritually.

Rebbi Chiya bar Ami says in the name of Ula, from the day that the Beit Hamikdash was destroyed, the only thing Hakadosh

דאמר רבי חייא בר אמי משמיה
דעולא מיום שחרב בית המקדש
אין לו להקדוש ברוך הוא

³⁰ Scoop of decay, or scoop of dust of decomposed corpse, is used as the *shiur* (measurement) which defines *tumah* in general (see *Chulin* 125b, 126b) and in regards to a *nazir* (see *Nazir* 50b, 51b).

³¹ See *Tehillim* 44:26.

Baruch Hu has (left) in his world is the “four amot of halacha”.

Brachot 8a

בעולמו אלא ד' אמות של הלכה
ברכות ה.

The “four amot of halacha” could loosely be translated as the four walls of the *beit midrash*; according to *Ula*, this is where Hashem could be found. Rav Kook zt”l explains that this was *b’dieved* (ex post facto), true specifically in the *galut*, inferred from *Ula*’s formulation “from the day the Beit Hamikdash was destroyed.” On the contrary, the *l’chatchila* (*ab initio*) situation is one where Hakadosh Baruch Hu is not confined to the borders of halacha, to the four walls of the *beit midrash*, but rather is allowed to enter into anywhere and everywhere in His world. The ideal is for Hashem’s *kedusha* to penetrate into everything and by doing so to sanctify the world, “*litaken olan b’malchut shakai*”. This idea could only be accomplished on the level of the *klal*, and therefore is only possible with *Am Yisrael*’s return to Eretz Yisrael.³² Accordingly, the characteristic and essence of this most special day is, similar to Chanukah, one of spiritual salvation.

The Spiritual Value Of The State: Am Yisrael, Torah, and Eretz Yisrael

A further and deeper understanding of the spiritual contribution of *Medinat Yisrael* is demonstrated by the following story.³³ In the year ה'תש"ו (1946, two years before the founding of the state) Rav Tzvi Yehuda Kook zt”l was asked the following question: “Are we religious Jews permitted to support the demand for a Jewish state?” The doubt of the questioner was based on the political leadership’s secular nature. Rav Tzvi Yehuda Kook responded: “Not only are we permitted to, but we are obligated to, for three reasons: 1) For *Am Yisrael*, 2) For the Torah, 3) For Eretz Yisrael.”

AM YISRAEL: *Am Yisrael*’s national potential could only be reached in Eretz Yisrael.³⁴ From the very founding of our nation, our destiny was bound with Eretz Yisrael. The promises and covenants that Hashem made with our *Avot* all revolved around two points: “*zarah*” - offspring, a nation, and “*aretz*” - the land of Eretz Yisrael. Hashem also told each of the *Avot* that their *bracha* was not just for our nation, but through our nation the entire world will be blessed.³⁵ For example, Hashem tells Yitzchak Avinu: “I will multiply your offspring (“*zera*”) like the stars of the heavens, and I will give to your offspring all of these lands (“*aretz*”), and through your offspring all of the nations of the earth will be blessed.” (Beraishit 26:4) Hashem chose us to be

³² This provides an additional answer to the question raised above on the G”ra. Yes there were religious accomplishments over the close to 2000 year of *galut*, but they were all within the *beit midrash*, and not in terms of spreading Hashem in the world.

³³ Told over by his student Rav Yaakov Filber in his book *Ayelet HaShachar* (Jerusalem 5751), pp. 225.

³⁴ In that particular episode, Rav Tzvi Yehuda Kook referred to the physical salvation. Yet on many other occasions he related to this more essential significance *Medinat Yisrael* contributes to *Am Yisrael*.

³⁵ To Avraham Avinu: Beraishit 12:2-3,7; 13:15-16; 15:5,18; 17:6-8; 18:18; To Yitzchak Avinu: Beraishit 26:3-4; To Yaakov Avinu: Beraishit 28:13-14; 35:11-12.

His “*Or l’goyim*”³⁶, light to the nations. At *Matan Torah*, he tells us “and you should be for me a “*mamlechet kohanim v’goy kadosh*”³⁷ – a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. We are a nation with a mission. Our mission is to continue the way of Avraham Avinu of propagating throughout the world: monotheism (“*vayikra b’shem Hashem*”), the remaining “*sheva mitzvot bnei noach*”, and Hashem’s morals, ethics, and values (“*tzedek u’mishpat*”). As Yishayahu (43:21) writes, “This nation which I have created will recount my praise”. This is a mission that can only be accomplished as a nation living in Eretz Yisrael, and therefore the two *brachot* always come in tandem. We could only be a model nation to the rest of the world, after we set up our own political state, in Eretz Yisrael.^{38,39} Accordingly, *Medinat Yisrael* allows *Am Yisrael* to manifest itself in its necessary form to achieve its purpose in the world.

TORAH: On several levels, the Torah itself is more whole in Eretz Yisrael. Most basically, there is an entire category of mitzvot, “*mitzvot ha’tluyot ba’aretz*” (mitzvot which our bound to the land [of Eretz Yisrael]) which are not relevant in *chutz la’artez*. Moreover, there is a Midrash that teaches us that all of the mitzvot are more complete and significant when preformed in Eretz Yisrael. “Even though I am exiling you from The Land to *chutz la’artez*, “adorn” yourselves with mitzvot so that when you return they should not be new to you.”⁴⁰ Developing this Midrash, the Ramban⁴¹ understands that the performance of mitzvot in *chutz la’artez* is considered “practice”, *b’dieved*. In the Ramban’s words:

The main-point of all mitzvot are for those settling in the Land of Hashem.

Ramban, Vayikra 18:25

עיקר כל המצוות ליושבים בארץ ה'.
רמב"ן, ויקרא יח:כה

However, this alone could be accomplished by fulfilling *mitzvot* in Eretz Yisrael even in the absence of an autonomous state. The contribution of establishing a state towards the Torah is twofold. Firstly, only with a Jewish state in Eretz Yisrael can we fulfill national mitzvot such as having a king, *Sanhedrin*, army, and building the Beit Hamikdash.⁴² More broadly, relating to the

³⁶ See Yishayahu 42:6; 60:3. David Ben Gurion frequently used this expression in discussing the purpose of the State of Israel.

³⁷ Shmot 19:5,6; and see *Sforno*.

³⁸ This idea appears in numerous places in *Nevi'im Achronim*. A prime such example is in Yishayahu 2:2-3. Historically we reached our peak as an “*Or l’goyim*” during the reign of Shlomo Hamelech. See Melachim Aleph 5:11-15; 10:1-10, 23-25. It’s not by chance that we find the *Nevi'im Achronim* linking the *nevuot* regarding the “*acharit hayamim*” to the *Navi’s* descriptions of the era of Shlomo. See Micha 4:1-4, who combines Yishayahu’s vision (2:1-4) with the description in Melachim Aleph 5:5.

³⁹ For an elaboration of this idea see Rav AY Kook, “*L’mahalach ha’Ideoyt b’Yisrael*” (Chapter 2) in his book *Orot*.

⁴⁰ *Sifrei Ekev* (7) based on the *posuk* in Yirmiyahu (31:20) “*hatzivi lach tziyunim*”, quoted in Rashi (Devarim 11:18).

⁴¹ The Ramban develops this idea in several places throughout his commentary on chumash. See his commentary to Beraishit 48:7, 26:5; Vayikra 25:18; and Devarim 11:18. See also *Kuzari* (2:20) who refers to Eretz Yisrael as “*Eretz ha’Torah*”.

⁴² Granted, many of these *mitzvot* are still not applicable until the time (we should merit speedily in our days) that the state is run according to halacha and Torah. The significance of the state, currently, is that we are now in the infant stages of what - through our *hishtadlut* (effort) and *siyaata deshmaya* (Divine assistance) - will develop into such a state. In other words, right now we are building the foundations, the structure, the building blocks, the

whole picture, only via a Jewish state in Eretz Yisrael can the Torah reach its full potential. Not merely because all of its details can be fulfilled, rather by virtue of it functioning in its true capacity as a “*Torat chayim*” (living Torah). The Torah is the blueprint for *Am Yisrael* to achieve Hashem’s master-plan for the world.⁴³ This “*Torat chayim*” is one which is not restricted to the “four *amot* of halacha”⁴⁴, but one which penetrates all spheres of life: the political system, the judicial system, the legislative system, the military, hospitals, postal service, business norms, cultural events, etc. This global manifestation of the Torah was not possible in the *galut*. Perhaps this is the true meaning of the *Gemara* “Since *Bnei Yisrael* was exiled from their place, there has been no greater *bitul Torah* (lapse of Torah study)” (*Chagiga* 5b) - not simply due to the impediment on Jewish learning that is generated by the trials and tribulations of the *galut*, but as the complete uprooting of the ideal of “*Torat chayim*”. Only now, with the founding of *Medinat Yisrael* do we have the possibility of establishing a political state based on Torah and *kedusha*. Only now can the Torah begin to reach its truest most complete destiny.

ERETZ YISRAEL: The land of Eretz Yisrael itself is inherently connected to both the Torah and to *Am Yisrael*. Regarding the Land’s connection to the Torah, we find the expression “*mishpat e-lokei ha’aretz*”, “the law of the G-d of the Land”.⁴⁵ The Torah itself is attributed to the Land, which manifests itself in several places where the Land, as it were, takes issue with, and is not willing to tolerate, those who do not follow the Torah.⁴⁶ Additionally, we find that from the very beginning, Hashem designated Eretz Yisrael for *Am Yisrael* and vice versa.⁴⁷ Eretz Yisrael, as a land, doesn’t reach its potential without *Am Yisrael* settled upon her. This can be proven in regards to the agricultural fertility of the Land. The Ramban comments on the *posuk* in the *tochacha* which states “I will leave the Land desolate [to the extent that] it will remain desolate for the nations who [attempt to] settle her.” (Vayikra 26:32) The Ramban claims that this is in fact “good news that during all of the exiles our land will never accept our enemies.” He then goes on to point out that historically this has proven to be true, as since we were exiled, the Land

earliest of stages of what *beirat Hashem* will develop into the state of the *Mashiach*. The position of Prime Minister will be replaced by the *Melech HaMashiach*, the Knesset will develop into the *Sanhedrin*, etc. With this, we differ with those who opine that Hashem will build the state of *Mashiach* from scratch, only after wiping the slate clean of all that exists today.

⁴³ As discussed above in the previous section “AM YISRAEL” page 24.

⁴⁴ See above, Rav Kook’s inference on the *Gemara* in *Brachot* 8a, page 24.

⁴⁵ *Melachim* Bet 17:26, 27. The *goyim* who are exiled into Eretz Yisrael by the king of Ashur are punished for not keeping the law of the land. They aren’t living any differently than they were living in their homelands, but here the “Land” won’t tolerate it.

⁴⁶ See the previous footnote. Additionally, regarding the Land not tolerating *Bnei Yisrael*’s sinning in the Land: see Vayikra 18:28, 20:22 in reference to *avoda zara*, Bamidbar 35:33-34 in reference to murder, and Vayikra 26:34-35 in reference to *shmita*. In many places when relating to “*schar v’onesh*” the Torah describes the punishment being dealt out by the Land itself, which may not be purely poetic. For example see *kriyat shema* (Devarim 11:17), and the *tochacha* (Vayikra 26:20). Along these lines, the Ramban (*Beraishit* 19:5) explains the reason that the people of *Sdom* were judged so harshly was due to the “level of Eretz Yisrael... which does not tolerate abominable people and spits them out”.

⁴⁷ For example see the first Rashi on *chumash* (*Beraishit* 1:1), *Yalkut Shimoni*, *Chababkuk* 3:563, *Bamidbar Raba* 23:7,11.

has laid desolate, despite all the attempts of the nations who lived there. The mirror image is found in the *Gemara* which says that the sign of the coming of the *geula* is the agricultural productivity in Eretz Yisrael:

And *Rebbi Abba* stated there is no more revealed signal of the “end” [*geula*] than the [fulfillment of the] *posuk* ‘and you mountains of Yisrael, your branches will give forth and bear your fruit for my nation, Yisrael’.^{48,49}

Sanhedrin 98a

ואמר רבי אבא אין לך קץ מגולה מזה
שנאמר ואתם הרי ישראל ענפכם תתנו
ופריכם תשאז לעמי ישראל וגו'
סנהדרין צת.

All of the above explains the seemingly peculiar *nevuah* which *Yechezkel* is commanded to prophesy to the Land itself: “So says Hashem to the mountains, to the hills, to the streams, to the valleys, to the desolate ruins... I will turn my attention to you and you will be worked and sown. I will multiply people upon you... the cities will be settled and the ruins rebuilt... and you will know that I am G-d.”⁵⁰ *Am Yisrael*’s return to Eretz Yisrael is not only a *geula* for the nation, but is also a *geula* for the Land.

This dual essence of both spiritual and physical salvation which we have seen above, is reflected in Rav Herzog’s formulation “*The fundamental turning point that has occurred by the declaration of our independence in Eretz Yisrael, with Hashem’s mercy upon us to save us and redeem our nefesh...* ” - to “save us” i.e. physically, to “redeem our *nefesh*” i.e. spiritually. Rav Herzog continues and reemphasizes the spiritual aspect: “*and to remove this day on which this great miracle was done, from the minhagim of avelut of sefirat ha’omer, by giving order for tfillat hodaya (thanks) and drashot on the topic of the special occasion in shuls...* ”.

L’hodot: Kiddush Shem Shamayim

Rav Herzog mentioned “*tfillat hodaya*” (prayer of thanks), just as the nature of Chanuka is “*l’hallel u’lihodot*”. We are all familiar with “*Hallel*”⁵¹; however what is the *avoda* of “*l’hodot*”?

The issue of “*hoda’ah*” touches upon our very essence, the inherent definition of being a Jew. We are “*Yehudim*”, derived from the language of “*l’hodot*”. On the most basic level “*l’hodot*” is to say thank you, to express our gratitude for something that was done for us. This alone is very

⁴⁸ See *Rashi* (s.v. *miguleh mzeh*) who writes “When Eretz Yisrael gives its fruits generously, then the “end” is nearing, and there is no clearer signal.” The *Gemara* in *Megilla* 17b uses the same *posuk* to explain the order of the “*Shmoneh Esreh*”, namely the juxtaposition of “*Birchat Hashanim*” in which we *daven* for rain and “*Birchat Kibutz Galuyot*” in which we *daven* for the gathering of the exiles.

⁴⁹ In fact when the return of Jews to Eretz Yisrael in the 1800’s was accompanied with success in agriculture, it was accepted almost unanimously across the board (including the *Gr”a*, many *Chassidic Admor”im*, the *Chafetz Chaim*, the *Netzi”v*, *Rabbi Akiva Eger*, the *Chatam Sofer*, and the *Or Sameach*) as the “*atchalta d’geula*”. For a thorough survey see Rav M. Kashar, *HaTkufa HaGedula*, particularly Chap. 9, pp. 181-251.

⁵⁰ *Yechezkel* 36:4,9-11. The *posuk* quoted in *Sanhedrin* 98a recorded above (*Yechezkel* 36:8) is also part of this *nevuah*.

⁵¹ The discussion regarding the obligation/permission/prohibition to recite *hallel* on Yom Ha’atzmaut, is beyond the scope of this work. One point worth mentioning is that the *machloket* doesn’t necessarily exclusively revolve around the *hashkafic* issue, but also is dependent on the *halachic* criteria for reciting *hallel*.

important; it is part of having well rounded good *midot*, true for *bein adam lchavero* (mitzvot between man and his fellow man) and certainly so for *bein adam lamakom* (mitzvot between man and G-d). However, true thanks is not mere lip service. Sincere thanks is based on admission⁵² and recognition, as to the source of the matter which one benefited from. Only after such admission, can one thank with a full heart. On Yom Ha'atzmaut, our *avodah* is "*l'hodot*", to recognize the *chessed* which Hashem has done, is doing, and *b'ezrat Hashem*, will continue to do for us, and thank Him for it.

On a more universal plane, the nature of Yom Ha'atzmaut as a day of "*hodaya*", reaches beyond *Am Yisrael* and is relevant to the entire world. Sometimes within a broader *machloket* (dispute), one side will admit to the other. For example, if there is a general *machloket* between the *Chachamim* and Rebbi Meir, in a particular *halacha* or circumstance, "*mode R' Meir l'Chachamim*" (*Kritut* 12b) - Rebbi Meir admits to the *Chachaim*. Often in our world which we live in, we find a big *machloket* between the world and Hakadosh Baruch Hu. The objective truth is that Hashem can be found in everything, yet our world hides Hashem. Hence, our world is called "*olam*" derived from "*l'ha'alim*" - to hide.

During the dark years of the Holocaust, Rav Soloveitchik zt"l was found grieving. On being prompted by his *talmidim* as to his thoughts he replied: It's not just the horrific murder of millions of innocent Jews, nor merely the *batei medrash* and entire communities going up in smoke. He went on to recount to them a repeating conversation which he had with random ministers and missionaries who happened across him. They would say "What do you say now? Who is right? You see, G-d has abandoned you, completely abandoned you. He has allowed the complete destruction of the Jewish people. Otherwise, why does He tolerate the Holocaust?"⁵³ In other words the Holocaust was seen as the indisputable proof that they were right all along, that (*chalila*) G-d left the Jewish people. Rav Soloveitchik exclaimed, "since the destruction of the *Beit Hamikdash* there has been no greater *chillul Hashem!*" ... Approximately half a decade later, *The Ribono Shel Olam* directed history to provide him with an answer to all those ministers. Regarding the founding of *Medinat Yisrael*, *midah kneged midah*, Rav Soloveitchik proclaimed "Since the days of the *Beit Hamikdash*, there has been no greater *Kiddush Hashem!*"

The *simcha* of Yom Ha'atzmaut is not only over the *geula* of *Am Yisrael*, the *geula* of *Eretz Yisrael*, and the *geula* of the Torah. The *simcha* of Yom Ha'atzmaut is also over the *geula* of Hashem's name in the world. This aspect is one that even the *goyim* of the world are coming to recognize. This aspect is one which increases with each and every Yom Ha'atzmaut that passes, with each time we express genuine *hodaya*.

Initially, this *hodaya* was easier; there was the excitement of the beginning, the "*chidush*", which was coupled with enormous spiritual expectations and anticipations. The challenge is that

⁵² In Hebrew להודות has two definitions to thank and to admit. The two are inherently connected as one must admit that the party he is thanking is the source of his benefit, before thanking him.

⁵³ This quote is found in R.J.J. Schacter (ed.), *The Lord is Righteous in All His Ways*, pp 158-60, in the midst of a very similar story.

afterwards, sixty-four years later, it is so easy to forget. This is natural, as each time Hashem's name is revealed in the world, the "*sitra achra*"⁵⁴ attempts to cover it up again, to distract us from the good, to show us the bad. People begin discussing all the deficiencies, "why this isn't right", and "why that isn't good enough".⁵⁵ We quickly forget how much good we have to be thankful for. Along comes Yom Ha'atzmaut, and we are reminded to take a step back with proper historical perspective, and thank Hashem for the gift of *Medinat Yisrael* which He gave us. Our mission is to recognize - "כי עין בעין יראו בשוב ה' ציון" – "An eye in an eye will see Hashem's return to *Tzion*." (Yishayahu 52:8) What is the intention of the double language "an eye in an eye"? Rav Tzvi Yehuda Kook zt"l teaches us that only one who knows how to align his little finite earthly eye, with Hashem's big eye (as it were) which directs history from above through His *hashgacha*, will be *zoche* to see Hashem's return to *Tzion*.⁵⁶ Hashem has returned; it is incumbent upon us to open our eyes to see. There are eras which are complete *geula* and eras which are complete *galut*. When matters are black and white, they are easily identified; yet when we are presented with shades of grey, it is challenging for us to define. We live in a "grey" era, a process of "*tchiyat ha'metim*" which is a process, "*kima kima*"⁵⁷, slowly but surely. Things are complex: on one hand we are living in the "*atchalta d'geula*" on the other hand it's a long windy road. It is true that there is much lacking, but we cannot forget and ignore the big picture; we are living the beginning of the *geula*.

Bezrat Hashem we should be *zoche* to see all the *chessed* that Hashem has showered upon us, and be *zoche* to "*l'hodot*" not only on the "*atchalta d'geula*", nor only on the middle of the *geula*, but on the *geula shleima* (complete redemption), the coming of *Mashiach tzidkeinu*, and the building of the Beit Hamikdash, *beit tifarteinu*, *b'miheiarah b'yameinu* AMEN!

⁵⁴ Kabbalistic term referring to the source of all evil in the world, *yetzer harah*, and the *malach hamavet*, lit. "the other side".

⁵⁵ We should not be in denial of the problems, rather we should discuss them. Yet, not discussions about what "they" are doing wrong, removing ourselves from historical responsibility, rather as part of the "we", what we could do to improve matters.

⁵⁶ Rav TY Kook brings support for his explanation from the *posuk* "Hashem spoke with Moshe *panim el panim* (face to face), Shmot 33:11. When two people are speaking with one another, sitting across from one another in alignment enables more productive communication. So too, the alignment of "eye in an eye" enables more productive and accurate vision and perspective.

⁵⁷ *Yerushalmi Brachot* 4b.