

Geulas Yisrael 148

Yom Ha'atzmaut and Yom Hazikaron Under the Shadow of October 7<sup>th</sup>

Moshe Taragin

The Pesach *hagaddah* cites a well-known debate regarding the mitzvah of mentioning *Yetziat Mitzrayim*. Daily, we relive the genesis of Jewish history and our epic liberation from a “house of slaves”. Will this mitzvah endure even during the Messianic era? Presumably the miracles of the end of days and our triumphant final return to Yerushalayim will each be so impressive that they will overpower the miracles of *Mitzrayim* and of *keriyas yam suf*. Perhaps we will no longer be required to recall ancient events as they become eclipsed by newer and more redemptive victories.

In fact, a *pasuk* in Yirmiyahu (23) even implies that memories of *Mitzrayim* will fade during the era of *Mashiach*:

בְּיָמֵי הַבָּיְתָה יָבִיאוּ בָּאִים בְּאֵם יְהוָה וְלֹא יֹאמְרוּ עוֹד חַי־יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר הֶעֱלָה אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם:

-“future days will arrive and we will no longer refer to Hashem as our Savior from Egypt”. Perhaps the messianic miracles will be so overwhelming that they will obscure *Yetziat Mitzrayim*.

Of course, as the *hagaddah* itself reports, the mainstream opinion of the Chachamim asserts that we will still recall *Yetziat Mitzrayim* even during the messianic era. By writing בל ימי חיך, the Torah demands that we relive *Yetziat Mitzrayim* even after our final *geulah*. Old miracles aren't forgotten in light of newer and more dramatic ones.

### Distinct Elements of *Mitzrayim*

Historical memory demands that we recall each national triumph and each moment of divine revelation and supernatural miracles. Though *Mashiach* may be more dramatic than *Yetziat Mitzrayim*, inevitably, there are redemptive aspects of *Yetziat Mitzrayim* which *Mashiach* will not, and cannot duplicate. For example, Yirmiyahu refers to the innocence of our initial faith or *נסד נעוריר* during *Yetziat*

*Mitzrayim*. At that early stage of history, we had little exposure to Hashem and little religious momentum. Suddenly Hashem appeared to redeem us, and we followed him blindly into an arid and dangerous desert. *Mashiach* will occur at the terminus of history after a long odyssey of Jewish history and after many fluctuations in our national experience. “*Chesed Ne’urayich*” is just one element of *Yetziat Mitzrayim* which *yemos Hamashiach* will not feature. We relive *Mitzrayim* even after *Mashiach* to celebrate distinctive redemptive aspects which will not recur during final *geulah*.

### The Trail of Jewish History

Additionally, recalling miracles of *Mitzrayim* even after *Mashiach* casts Jewish history as one long trail. During *Yetziat Mitzrayim* we were selected as Hashem’s people and for thousands of years we have remained faithful to that selection and to our fearsome mission. Final redemption will be an evolution of a long process begin in Egypt but snakes its way through almost every continent of this planet. Without recalling *Yetziat Mitzrayim* our view of final *geulah* becomes myopic.

New redemptions, even when dramatic, do not erase older redemptions. Jewish history is one long trail.

What is true about reliving past miracles is also true about reliving past tragedies. This year we face this precise challenge. We are still living under the dark clouds of October 7<sup>th</sup>. The war is still raging, our people are still being held hostage, and our nation is still suffering on many, many levels. There has yet to be a clear and decisive resolution to our horrible tragedy. The wound remains open. We face Yom Hazikaron and Yom Ha’atzmaut while still reeling from October 7<sup>th</sup>.

In many ways it is easier to mark Yom Ha’atzmaut under the shadow of October 7<sup>th</sup>. Yom Ha’atzmaut provides hope and meaning to our current struggle. Though October 7<sup>th</sup> felt eerily similar to previous pogroms of Jewish history, it was very different. This was the first pogrom in Jewish history followed by a war. In previous periods we were defenseless and ended one pogrom with anticipation of the next inevitable attack. We now have an army, a country, and great hopes for our future. Without whitewashing our suffering, this year we will savor Jewish independence and Jewish sovereignty more deeply than in the past, when we may

have taken it for granted. October 7<sup>th</sup> demonstrated how vulnerable we continue to be and how vital Israel is to our future security and survival. Of course, our Yom Ha'atzmaut experience this year will be muted and our expressions of joy restrained. If anything, though, October 7<sup>th</sup> lends this year's Yom Ha'atzmaut more profound meaning.

Navigating Yom Hazikaron in the shadow of October 7<sup>th</sup> is more challenging. We have been attending funerals all winter long, while crying alongside families of heroic fallen soldiers. For months we have commiserated, as best we can, with the suffering of the families of hostages. We have seen the faces and heard the stories of innocent people who were massacred during that malicious attack. It feels as if we have just lived through a six-month Yom Hazikaron. We have been constantly preoccupied with the memory of those who fell during this horrible day. As we should be.

However it is crucial that on this Yom Hazikaron we stretch our imaginations to recall past tragedies and memorialize heroes from past struggles rather than streaming our entire Yom Hazikaron exclusively through October 7<sup>th</sup>. Modern miracles do not make ancient ones obsolete. Likewise recent tragedies, as horrible as they were, do not erase the tragedies and the heroism of the past.

### Each Hero Deserves Honor

On Yom Hazikaron we recall fallen soldiers of past wars because they each deserve honor and deserve not to be forgotten. Additionally, we recall their sacrifice because they faced conditions very different from ours, and fought in battles while facing uncertainties we do not confront.

The soldiers of 1948 fought valiantly in the aftermath of the Holocaust. Many soldiers were themselves Holocaust survivors and even those who didn't endure the Holocaust fought under its demoralizing influence. Additionally, in its infant stage, our state had little infrastructure, was only moderately armed, and faced an attack from six armies.

In 1967 we faced an existential threat and feared for the survival of our nation. The 19 years since the inception of Israel were years of economic deprivation and diplomatic isolation. We stood alone, facing a hostile world. In retrospect, of

course, we witnessed spectacular divine miracles, but the soldiers who battled and fell during 1967 didn't know its eventual outcome.

The surprise attacks of 1973 spread widespread shock and disbelief within Israel. As on October 7<sup>th</sup>, we were trapped in outdated conceptions and in military complacency, relying heavily upon false strategic assumptions. Initial heavy casualties caused immense grief and sorrow. Without the heroism of our army in reversing the tide of the war the outcome of 1973 would have been even more devastating.

Each soldier who fell in defense of our country and each victim of terror deserves our attention and our honor. They should not be forgotten.

### The Long Road Home

Additionally, on Yom Hazikaron we remember the past to better frame October 7<sup>th</sup> within the long trail of Jewish history. Just as redemptive moments stem from previous experiences of *geulah*, similarly, our tragedies and struggles all merge into one trail.

Some refer to the post-October 7<sup>th</sup> war as a continuation of the War of Independence of 1948. From a political perspective this is absolutely correct. We still face existential threats. The world has still not endorsed our return to our ancient homeland. The spurious and ignorant claims that we are colonialists signal that much of this world has still not read the first Rashi in the Torah which announces that Hashem created all reality and that He earmarked His land for His people. Seventy-five years after Independence, we are still fighting to solidify our borders, our security, and our international standing.

However, from a broader historical perspective our struggle didn't begin in 1948, but thousands of years earlier. Our settlement of Israel wasn't meant to be this arduous. Initially, we were meant to stride into Israel a few months after *Yetziat Mitzrayim*, defeat 31 warlords, launch Jewish monarchy, build a *Mikdash*, and usher in an era of widespread knowledge of Hashem and universal prosperity. On the doorstep of this utopia, we flinched. Our repeated betrayals of Hashem doomed us to exile and condemned us to a more challenging historical mission.

From the moment we were expelled from Yerushalayim in 70 CE, we have been struggling to return to Israel. For much of our history our efforts weren't political or military. All we could do was quietly hope and pray while steadfastly maintaining our faith and our traditions. Living in foreign lands and conducting a godlike lifestyle, we suffered hatred and violence. Though it wasn't evident or apparent, our faith and commitment were helping us gradually crawl our way back into history.

In 1948 we were afforded the opportunity to become more proactively involved in our return. We no longer crawled, but sprinted. However, as during the past two thousand years, our return to Yerushalayim continues to be difficult and painful. The rerouting of Jewish history and our painfully challenging return to Israel didn't begin on October 7<sup>th</sup>. It didn't begin in 1948. It began thousands of years ago. It could have been different.

So, on Yom Hazikaron while reliving October 7<sup>th</sup>, don't focus solely upon that dark day and its victims. There will be opportunities in the future- especially on the days after *Simchat Torah* earmarked for October 7<sup>th</sup> memorials- to relive that sorrow. On Yom Hazikaron stretch your imagination to relive the ongoing struggle of the past 75 years and to honor each and every hero who sacrificed their life during this transformative period of Jewish history.

Broadening our vision beyond October 7<sup>th</sup> helps us better frame this day within the long trail of Jewish history and the long road home.