



We can never forget the mission

Rabbi Elan Mazer
National Director, Mizrachi Canada

Yom Ha'atzmaut is a very meaningful day for Jewish communities across Canada as it is a day to celebrate our hopes and dreams for all of Am Yisrael. Zionism and the State of Israel are constant themes for many of us, but nonetheless, it is imperative that we approach Yom Ha'atzmaut as an opportunity to review and sharpen our understanding and devotion to our ideals.

At the end of Masechet Brachot (63a-b) there is a powerful story. Chananiah, a Rabbi from Israel, left to the diaspora. After he arrived at one of the communities there, he began sanctifying the months (declaring when Rosh Chodesh will be). The Beit Din in Eretz Yisrael did not approve of these actions, as generally this was something that only they had the authority to do, and so they sent two representatives

to the community where Chananiah was living. Upon arrival, the emissaries started making trouble for Chananiah; they contradicted every ruling that he made, and gave the opposite ruling to the community. Chananiah was obviously very bothered by this, so he approached the rabbis and asked them what this was all about. They explained that because he was sanctifying the months in Chutz La'aretz, they were sent down by the Beit Din of Israel to tell him to stop, and that if he does not listen to them he will be excommunicated. They then went to the community and told them that if they continue to follow in Chananiah's ways, then they should gather on the top of a mountain as a community and declare that they have no connection to the God of Israel.

This all seems quite harsh; why is it such a big deal that Chananiah

sanctified the months outside of Israel? Why should it mean that he and his community "have no connection to the God of Israel"? The Gemara asks this question, and answers by quoting a famous pasuk from Yeshayahu: **כי מציון תצא תורה ודבר ה' מירושלים**, "For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem". The Gemara is emphasizing to us that no matter where we live, we must never disconnect ourselves from the land of Israel. However, we must still ask: why should this disconnect from the land be viewed as a disconnect from "The God of Israel" as well?

Rav Kook explains that the Land of Israel is our national homeland; it the physical place where our nation can develop and reach its full and grand potential, and therefore, the sanctity of the months – the sanctity of time – must ►

► come forth from Zion. If we detach ourselves from this greater picture, from the importance of being a nation-state in our land, then the Torah and the Mitzvot are left to be only an individual's religious pursuit. This is not to diminish the power of the Torah to refine each person; the Torah remains our guide to life. However the achievement of individuals is not the end goal – Hashem gave the Torah to us not as individuals but as a nation so that we – as a unit – may become a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, a light unto the world. The Torah is not

just our personal guide but our national mission as well. It is our responsibility as a people to make the world into a more refined, holy, and divine place, and we cannot afford to detach ourselves from this. Empowered by this great sense of our divine mission as a sovereign people – this is our connection to the God of Israel.

Hashem has given all of us today the incredible opportunity to live during a time when we can bring the national mission into fruition in so many concrete and physical ways, and even with all the

complexities that arise from rebuilding a nation, we must be grateful for the time that we live in.

On Yom Ha'atzmaut we give thanks to Hashem for giving us the most magnificent of opportunities – to live in a time when we are building our national homeland as well as internalizing the great responsibility that arises, and when our connection to the God of Israel can again be expressed through our connection to the land.

Moadim LeSimcha LiGeulah Shleima! 🌟



The bitter and the sweet

Jonny Lipczer
Shaliach, Bnei Akiva of Toronto

*For the honey and the sting,
For the bitter and the sweet,
Grant your protection, dear God.
Bring me back and I shall return
To the good land.*

— Naomi Shemer

The Midrash (Tehillim 20:2) tells the story of a long journey taken by a father and his son. The son asked his father how they will know when they are close to the end of their journey. The father replied: "You will know that a city is near when you see a cemetery at the outskirts."

The cemeteries of Auschwitz, Majdanek and Treblinka underline the historical connection between the horrors of the Holocaust and the joy of our independence a mere three years later.

On these days between Yom HaShoah and Yom Ha'atzmaut, I think about those individuals not only who perished in the Holocaust, but who also gave future generations faith in mankind through the way in which they lived.

Janusz Korczak was one such person. He was a children's author and educator,

and the head of a Jewish orphanage in Warsaw. He envisioned a world in which children structured their own world and became experts in their own matters. He believed in trusting them and giving them responsibility, getting them to produce their own newspaper, the first children's paper in Poland.

At the beginning of August 1942, German soldiers rounded up the almost 200 orphans to take them to the extermination camp at Treblinka. As always, even in this terrible situation, Korczak had arranged things so that a child rather than an adult would be the leader of other children. He walked immediately behind this leader, holding the hands of the two smallest children, and behind them marched all the other children.

When the group finally reached the deportation point – from where the Jews were taken to the death camps – an SS officer recognised Korczak as the author of one of his favourite children's books and offered to help him escape. As he had done many times before, Korczak refused. He boarded the train with the

children and was never heard from again.

This evacuation is recorded in Wladyslaw Szpilman's book, *The Pianist*: "He told the orphans they were going out into the country, so they ought to be cheerful... He told them to wear their best clothes, and so they came out nicely dressed and in a happy mood... I am sure that, even in the gas chamber, he must have whispered with one last effort, 'it's all right, children, it will be all right', so that at least he could spare his little charges the fear of passing from life to death."

"במקום שאין אנשים השתדל להיות איש – "In a place where there are no worthy people, strive to be worthy" (Pirkei Avot 2:6). One of the most influential Jewish leaders of the twentieth century, Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook, died before the outbreak of the Second World War. But the way in which he understood this passage could hardly be more pertinent for how Janusz Korczak lived his life. This is what he said: Where there is no leader fitting for an educational task, and you are far loftier than what the task demands, lower yourself. This is what Korczak did to the very end. 🌟



All we need is Yitzchak

Rav Yair Halevi
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As a young child, my brother asked me: "Yair, if you could live in any time in history, what time would you choose?" Immediately I answered: "1948".

There is something so special and powerful about the 5th of Iyar, 68 years ago. We all have watched the videos, heard the sounds and seen the pictures. It is clear, looking into the new immigrants eyes, that they had clarity and conviction that the lands existence was up to them. They were making a difference.

It is 68 years later. Our conviction has changed, the inspiration has lessened, and the glamor of those days seems to have drifted away. Do we know what we are celebrating 68 years later? The inspiration of those days is gone but we might have something that they didn't. What is the educational value of these days in our generation?

My answer begins from when I stood under the chuppah with my wife in Yerushalayim and heard the words: עוד ישמע קול ששון וקול שמחה, "More voices of brides and grooms should be heard in the cities of Yehuda."

These words were always a powerful message for me, but this time they sounded different. It was my own wedding – why were we singing about other people's weddings?! Why, at the greatest moment of my personal life, my own chuppah, can't I just focus on our voices being heard in the cities of Yehudah?

Though it took some time, it is through Yitzchak Avinu that I started to understand the deeper message of this sentence. Yitzchak never left the land; the secret to the Land is taught through him.

Rabbi Dr. Yoni Grossman pointed

out that in the part of sefer Bereishit that deals with our Patriarchs' lives, the stories of Avraham, Yaakov and Yosef are developed and focused on. Yitzchak's story, however, is omitted. Presumably, this is because he is a passive character who doesn't have much effect on the Bereishit narrative, his background is less relevant. While this seems to be true, is it consistent with the greater Jewish story?

A Gemara in Masechet Succah (26b) continues on this note: והקימונו עליו שבעה רועים: מאן נינהו שבעה רועים? דוד באמצע, אדם שת ומתושלח מימינו, אברהם יעקב ומשה בשמאלו.

The Gemara speaks about seven shepherds: David was in the centre, on his right were "world leaders" and on his left were "Jewish leaders". The Jewish leaders seem to be correlated to the forefathers. Avraham and Yaakov, but instead of Yitzchak it says Moshe! Seemingly, Yitzchak is irrelevant and forgotten!

Rashi asks: Where did Yitzchak go? He went to Gehenom to save the lost Jewish children. Yitzchak wasn't forgotten but decided to be forgotten. There are great leaders that lead from the front, but there are many lost on the way, so Yitzchak positions himself in the back to be a "quiet leader". He knows who Avraham was and that for "Abba's message to last," he must create a way to continue Avraham's ways.

In Bereishit 26 we can see Yitzchak's character in its entirety. His story begins with Avraham: אלה תולדות יצחק אברהם הוליד: את יצחק. His story is that he is the "son of Avraham". This is how Yitzchak chose to be remembered. Although what we know about Yitzchak is minimal, the ideas behind his story are important. The only story about him is a story of digging wells, which, at first glance, appears to be unimportant.

What is the importance of Yitzchak's story?

Yitzchak is described as digging wells. His character is being defined through this description of digging wells. It is a simple idea: a well is something that holds and contains. It has the ability to contain the waters that are coming from heaven. Water is like Torah. It absorbs and makes room for "great ideas" to last for longer.

The guiding word in Yitzchak's story is the word "Avraham". Yitzchak's *only* story is linked continuously to the story of his father. Yitzchak doesn't want to change things, or to write a new story – he wants only to continue it. Yitzchak was named for his parents laughter, which in itself is a continuation of them. He chooses to continue the heritage of those before him. He wants to be the one to pass the torch, not the one to light it.

The Gemara in Masechet Brachot (26b) relates each of the three Tefillot to one of the three forefathers. Yitzchak's Tefilla is Mincha. If Shacharit is the beginning of day and Maariv is the beginning of night, then Mincha is just the continuation of the day.

So, who was Yitzchak? Yitzchak was a leader who realized that leadership is more than leading, it's knowing when to continue what has been started.

So, 10 years ago, standing under my own chuppah, I realized that the greatest song to sing is "May other brides and grooms, let the cities of Yehuda hear the sounds of their weddings" – the secret isn't can you sing today, but can the song continue. עוד ישמע – the sounds need to continue.

I think, that 68 years after that great moment in the square in Tel Aviv, we have the unique opportunity to make a Yitzchak decision. A decision to realize how to continue the inspiration is greater than moments of inspiration. The secret of the land of Israel, through its main character Yitzchak, is asking us: can we see the beauty in being the link that brings the past greatness into the future dream? 🌟



The World of Rav Kook: The Living Torah

From Orot, L'Mahalach Ha'ideyot B'Yisrael

למלואה של שאיפה זו צריך דוקא, שצבור זה יהיה בעל
מדינה פוליטית וסוציאלית
וכסא ממלכה לאומית, ברום התרבות האנושית
"עם חכם ונבון וגוי גדול"
והאידיאה האלהית המוחלטת מושלת שמה
ומחיה את העם ואת הארץ במאור חייה.
למען דעת, שלא רק יחידים חכמים מצוינים,
חסידים ונזירים ואנשי קדש, חיים באור האידיאה האלהית,
כי גם עמים שלמים, מתקנים ומשוכללים בכל תקוני
התרבות והישוב המדיני;
עמים שלמים, הכוללים בתוכם את כל השדרות האנושיות
השונות, מן רום האינטליגנציה האמנותית, הפרושית,
המשכלת והקדושה, עד המערכות הרחבות, הסוציאליות,
הפוליטיות והאקנומיות, ועד הפרולטריון לכל פלגותיו,
אפילו היותר נמוך ומגושם.
אור האידיאה האלהית, העולה ומזדקק בקרב עם כזה
ומטביע בו את חייו הלאומיים...
ופעולה זו תביא לידי ההכרה הבטוחה, שהחיים המדיניים,
אפילו הסוציאליים במובן היותר רחב, יקבלו רק אז את
איתנותם ואת ערכם האמתי, דוקא בהיותם יונקים מטל
החיים העליון של האידיאה האלהית המוחלטת, המכשרת
את כל המציאות כולה,
ההולכת, ומתגברת בנחלה בלי מצרים.

To accomplish this aspiration, it is needed for this
assembly to be a social and political state.

To have a national throne at the height of human culture
"A wise and intelligent nation, and a great people".

The absolute divine ideal will reign there and it will
sustain the nation and its land, in its light.

This will demonstrate, that not only, exceptional and wise
individuals, the pious, monks or holy people, can live in
the light of the divine ideal.

But also fully developed and civilized nations, with all
aspects of culture and state.

Full nations, that incorporate within them, all classes of
humanity, from the heightened intelligentsia of faith, the
isolated and holy, the broad systems of society, politics
and economics, to all groups of the proletariat, even the
lowliest and most materialistic.

The light of the Divine Ideal, that arises and is refined
within such a nation; when it completely defines its
national life...

This effect will lead to a clear understanding that state
life, even the most societal aspects of it, attain their
greatness and true value, only when they are nurtured by
the heavenly dew of life, from the absolute divine ideal.

This enables all of reality to grow and develops with no
bounds.

Our unique message to the world is not only an individual
message, but also a national one. If the Torah was solely
a guide book for individual self-improvement then one might
assume that spirituality is only reached by rejecting normative
life and through personal asceticism. The Torah though, is a
national covenant and therefore it must be relevant to all parts
of national life, from spirituality and religion, to economics and
military, to politics, art, and culture. The Torah was given to Am
Yisrael as a nation to demonstrate that the divine is not

something beyond us, rather is something that permeates
every part of our daily lives. By forming a nation-state that is
founded on divine principles we not only show that a normative
life is *compatible* with spirituality, but rather that *only* a life
based on spirituality and God can reach its true potential. Am
Yisrael is destined to be a light amongst the nations that can
demonstrate to the whole world not how to reject life, but
rather how to invigorate it with vitality and purpose that will
create abundance, development, and meaning. 🌟

KOLOT HAMIZRACH

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