

# YOM HA'ATZMAUT

*by Rabbi Yehudah Prero*

One of the key elements to our proper service of Hashem is the recognition of the role that Hashem plays in our lives. As we mentioned in the first YOMTOV posting on Sefira, Hashem provides us, as well as the rest of the world, with sustenance. Hashem is the one who crafted the puzzle-pieces of our lives, and who then guides our hand as the puzzle is assembled. Events occur which we do not understand. Some events seem to be mere coincidence. What is important for us to understand is that there is no event in our lives which is without meaning, there are no coincidences. A person must realize the role that Hashem plays in our lives.

Rabeinu Bachya ibn Pakuda, in his work Chovas HaLevavos, writes that many people would point to the events surrounding our departure from Egypt as the most outstanding example of how Hashem plays a role in our destiny. Miracles happened, events occurred that were against the laws of nature. Hashem saved us from a fate that to those enslaved in Egypt seemed endless. Clearly, the Divine hand of Hashem was seen as being the cause of our departure. Therefore, it appears that this would be the clearest and most obvious display of how Hashem plays a role in our destiny.

However, R' Bachya writes, this is NOT the most obvious display. What is the most obvious display of Hashem's role in our destiny is the fact that the Jewish people have survived as a nation. Throughout all the persecutions, exiles, wars, pogroms, and holocausts, the Jewish people still remain just that, a people. If THIS is the clearest display of how Hashem has controlled our destiny, then why, R' Bachya asks, do people not view it as such? The answer, R' Bachya says, is because the process of our salvation and survival was a slow one. The miracles of Egypt and the Red Sea were wondrous, sudden, and held many in awe. However, the fact that Hashem has allowed the Jewish people to survive all travails it has faced is difficult for many to see, especially when living in times when persecution has just occurred, or is still continuing. Yet, the truth is that the fact that a Jewish people remains is unbelievable, also against the laws of "nature," a political nature. The nations that have persecuted us have risen and then fallen, yet we still remain. The ONLY reason for this is because of the divine hand guiding our destinies. The fact that we have survived as a nation has caused many to take pause, and reflect on how unusual such an existence is. When reflecting on this, the author Mark Twain questioned "What is the secret of his (the Jews') immortality?"

We, unlike Mr. Twain know the answer to that question. If it was not for the fact that we have seen the hand of Hashem in our daily lives, and therefore we served Hashem in appreciation and thanks and in hope for continued assistance, we would not be "immortal." If it was not for the fact that we

have served Hashem, and recognized the role Hashem plays in our lives as an individual and as a nation, we would not be here. If we forget Hashem and the role that Hashem plays in our lives, our existence is for naught.

We have merited to see the day when the Jewish people have a land that they can feel safe in. Eretz Yisroel, the land of Israel, has always been the "home" of the Jews, and hopefully it will soon be the actual home of all Jews. The events surrounding the birth of the state of Israel were not the result of political maneuvering. The fact that Israel was victorious in the wars it has fought was not the result of a superior air force or strategic military planning. What has allowed us to presently have the land of Israel to live in, something that Moshe did not merit? There is only one answer: the hand of Hashem. How many journalists and ballistics experts gave reasons upon reasons for why the Scud missiles did not take more lives when they hit the Holy Land? We know the reason: the hand of Hashem.

On the day that the birth of the state of Israel is celebrated, it is not only fitting to take pause and reflect on how this came to be, but it is mandatory, not only on this day, but on every day. If we, as a people, want to continue as a nation, a nation which is privileged to live in the land of our forefathers, free to act as a nation, we must recognize the role that Hashem played in our coming to have this opportunity. Yes, we must express our thanks to those who acted and who gave of their lives for our benefit, to achieve this goal. However, the one who must ultimately be recognized for His role in these events is Hashem.

(This post is based on the thoughts of R' M. Dov Harris, rosh yeshiva of Yeshivas Ma'arava, Moshav Matisyahu)

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