



## Praying for the State of Israel

On one of my first visits to the United States, at the end of *Shacharit*, the rabbi declared, “And now we will pray for the safety of our brethren in the Land of Israel.” I heard this with mixed feelings. On the one hand, I was very touched by a rabbi’s sense of involvement and solidarity of this rabbi in a land thousands of miles away from Israel with the people of Israel. On the other hand, it bothered me that the Jews living in a remote community, of which many of the children will probably be assimilated in the next generation, feels he is safe and that he is the one who should pray for his brothers in Israel.

To be sure, it is of utmost importance to continue to pray for Medinat Yisrael and the Jews who live there. Nothing is taken for granted, we must not allow ourselves to become haughty of our achievements here in Israel in the last generation. But we must understand that something very dramatic is happening to our eyes these days. I do not know if it will happen in the next *Shemitta* or the one after it, but the Jews are quickly approaching the day when most of the Jewish people will live in the Land of Israel. This is a phenomenon that happened more than 2,500 years ago. In *halacha* it is called *rov yoshveha aleha*. This is a halachic concept with many implications regarding the level of *mitzvot hateluyot baAretz* being *de’orayta* or *derabanan*. But beyond that, this reality has implications for the perception of the State of Israel as the center of Jewish existence in our generation. One can argue whether to say *Hallel* on Yom

HaAtzmaut or not, one can spend hours discussing whether the State of Israel is the beginning of *geula* or not. But when we see how many immigrants wanted to come to Israel from everywhere in the world during the past year, regardless of religious and social affiliation, it is easy to recognize that the country has long since become a magnet for the entire nation.

I do not know a single ultra-Orthodox community that thinks that its future is abroad.

אַבְיָנוּ שְׁבַשְׁמִים, צוֹר יִשְׂרָאֵל וְגוֹאֲלוֹ,  
בְּרַךְ אֶת מְדִינַת יִשְׂרָאֵל, רֵאשִׁית צְמִיחַת גְּאֻלָּתֵנוּ.  
הִגְן עָלֶיךָ בְּאַבְרַת חֶסֶדְךָ, וּכְרַשׁ עָלֶיךָ סִפְת  
שְׁלוֹמְךָ, וּשְׁלַח אוֹרְךָ וְאַמְתָּךְ לְרֵאשִׁיָּהּ, שְׁרִיָּהּ  
וְיוֹעֵצֶיךָ, וְתִקְנֵם בְּעֵצָה טוֹבָה מִלְּכַפְיָךְ.

We are already in a different reality. We are already in a generation where the State is the main tool for the appearance of the Jewish people in the world, for better or worse. It is a huge merit to live in such a generation, but like any merit in our world, it comes with great responsibility not to miss the opportunity that has come our way, lest we fail in the laziness of the *ra’aya* who did not want to open the door for the *dod* (a reference to Shir HaShirim). In our situation, the *dod* is already here. What do we do so that He does not run away?

The State of Israel without spirit and values is like a body without a soul. If we want to affect spiritual change in Israel, we must show national responsibility for the whole and not just a specific

sector. It is specifically those of faith who must stand at the head of the camp calling for unity and togetherness, without mudslinging on others, even if they are not exactly alike in their worldview.

The test Israeli society has undergone during the past year of Corona did not end in much success. I do not refer to the exceptions, I refer to the tribal phenomena. There were tribes that put the success of the people first in their eyes, compared to others who sought to strengthen and strengthen their own tribe. It’s no wonder that this year the hostility toward Judaism and religion, and the religious social rift, increased to levels not known here for a long time.

If we want Israel’s chariot of redemption to continue up the mountain, we must all mobilize for it. We must understand the needs and pains of each “tribe,” strive to give each group a reasonable answer and find the critical common denominator for the future. Our existence as a people should overcome all other private values. We have no other way but to increase *kiddush Hashem* and the love of G-d by demonstrating a personal example of the world of Torah that will be a magnet and a source of inspiration for the State of Israel being built.

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