

One Heart, One Destination

Rabbi Pinchos Lipschutz

As I write this, I am sitting on an airplane, flying to Eretz Yisroel to spend the Yom Tov of Matan Torah in Tzion: "ki mitzion teitzei Torah."

It is now 1:30 a.m. and the end of a long day. I was tired until I got on the plane and began to silently thank Hakadosh Boruch Hu for enabling me to make this trip. My great-grandfather and his family in Lita were left with very little after the First World War, writing letters to people he knew, literally begging them to help him get to Eretz Yisroel. It never happened. He remained in Lita, dreaming of the day.

And here I am, his great-grandson, who boruch Hashem has never known the privation of pre-war Lita. I was born in freedom he never dreamed of and live in a land of plenty. I never take it for granted, as I enjoy its benefits. Our people have been blessed with a gift from Hashem in the merit of our forefathers and their devotion to Him. They had very little, and their lives were tough, but their lack of physical pleasures did nothing to temper their delight in spiritual pursuits and faith in Hashem.

Here I am, on a new \$300 million airplane that is bringing me to the land our people davened to return to for thousands of years. I shake off my tiredness as I realize that in ten hours, I will be stepping out into the country Hashem promised us.

As I am having these thoughts, several babies begin to cry quite loudly. Who can blame them? They have no idea where they are headed, nor how blessed

they are to be living in this time and to have the zechus to breathe in the avira d'ara d'Eretz Yisroel.

To drown out the noise, I put on my earphones and begin listening to music by Naftoli Kempeh. Without any prodding, my head dances to the words, "Shearecha anu dochfin ki atah rav selichos ubaal harachamim." The music jumps. "Shaarei shomayom p'sach v'otzarcha hatov lonu tiftach."

I could listen to those words all night.

Hashem, please open Your gates to us.

We are small, but You are kind, forgiving and merciful. Please replenish us from your plentiful warehouses.

The tune is captivating and takes me over. I feel the graciousness of Hashem as that music pulses in my head.

Hashem, please help us. Give us what we need. Allow us to connect to You. Shavuos is upon us, and on the day that the Torah was given to us, we are given the ability to receive it all over again.

I open Rav Elimelech Biderman's Shavuos pamphlet that my brother handed to me as I left for the airport and begin reading.

I read the Chasam Sofer's statement that on Pesach we commemorate something that took place in the past, as we say, "Zeicher l'Yetzias Mitzrayim." Sukkos, as well, is a celebration of something from the past, as the posuk states, "Lemaan yeidu doroseichem ki basukkos hoshavti es Bnei Yisroel, so that

your future generations shall know that Hashem fashioned for us sukkos when He took us out of Mitzrayim." Shavuos, however, is different. On Shavuos, we celebrate something that is happening now. Today is the day of Matan Torah, back then at Har Sinai and now, wherever we are.

What a beautiful thought. On Shavuos, we can all receive the Torah just like when it was initially delivered to us on Har Sinai.

I start thinking about how great it is that we are given a new start, a jumpstart in Torah. And then I hear Kempeh again strumming his guitar, singing, "Chamol al maasecha." Hashem have mercy on your creation. Be happy with them. And let them say to You, "Betzadekcha amusecha. Make us all holy, the pride of creation..."

If we apply ourselves, He will shine His mercy upon us and help us rise, like a grandfather lovingly takes the hand of his young ainikel and walks with him up a flight of steps, talking to him softly, encouraging him, teaching and guiding him.

"Chamol al ma'asecha." Hashem, my hand is outstretched. Please, grasp it and help me climb so that I can be a pe'er m'kedoshim.

As I begin getting lost in my thoughts on preparing for the great day of Matan Torah, I hear the joyous, hopeful words, "Vahaviyosim el har kodshi vesimachtim bevais tefilloshi." A happy tune begins playing. Hashem will bring us to His home and we will be able to bring korbanos and be joyous in the presence of the kedusha. I feel like getting up and dancing in the aisle. How blessed I am, how blessed we all are, as we wait for that great day.

"Tishalu oti mi ani, al mah ani choshev gam bayom vegam balaylah, ani Yehudi ani agid lachem. Ani choshev al Yerushalayim ihr hakodesh ani cholem al haMoshiach sheyavo." I'm drifting off to sleep and my earpiece sings into my ear. Ask me what I'm thinking about. I'll answer you that I'm thinking about the holy city of Yerushalayim and I'm dreaming of Moshiach.

As I drift between being awake and asleep, he took the words right out of my head.

I dream of Moshiach taking us out of golus and bringing us all to Yerushalayim and the Promised Land. It will happen one day soon. Let that be today.

I wake up from my dream. Moshiach has not yet come, but I'm preparing to land in the country our people have yearned to live in for centuries. I'll get into a taxi, and before I know it, I'll be in Yerushalayim for the regel of Shavuos.

Millions of Jews would flock to Yerushalayim for Yom Tov. They would travel by foot and by donkey for days, celebrating together. They'd come laden with bikkurim and maaser sheini, and with money with which to buy korbanos and provisions for their families.

Today, we don't have the Bais Hamikdosh and nobody is coming to Yerushalayim to bring korbanos and bikkurim. But as I wait for my luggage, passengers of another El Al flight join us. Then people come from a United flight and also from an American flight, all from the New York area, Yidden gathering at the carousels, a mini ingathering of the exiles, albeit for a few days.

At great expense and forsaking many comforts, they flew to experience that feeling as best as we can in our days.

The Shechinah hovers in the botei knesses and botei medrash, but being on Shavuos at the Kosel, the location from which the Shechinah has never departed, is being in a different world.

Thousands stream from all across Yerushalayim, young and old, bochurim and zekeinim, black hats and white knitted yarmulkas side by side. Waves of people, one after another, pulsing from different directions, joining together ke'ish echod, like on that fateful day 3,335 years ago. Some sing loudly and others hum tunes and holy words to themselves, several bodies but one heart with the same goal and destination.

For many years, I would be part of that throng and there was nothing like it. Now, however, that my feet don't allow me that pleasure, I watch how the streets fill with people, foot traffic streaming to the closest place to holiness that exists, and I am comforted as I see the crowds grow. Hour after hour, through the night and the day, the traffic continues, thousands of people marching to kedusha.

They all ask Hashem as they go, "Shavoseinu kabeil ushema tzaakoseinu yodeia taalumos. L'amcha pnei zochrei kedushosecha. Hashem, hear and accept our tefillos."

Yom Tov is very special. I visit my rabbeim, Rav Avrohom Yehoshua Soloveitchik and Rav Dovid Cohen, and hear divrei chochmah and Torah that I wouldn't hear anywhere else. I leave their homes infused, recharged and reminded of who am

I and why I'm here; who we are as Jews and what we need to be doing. Life is rough. Klal Yisroel is in a tough position. What we do affects everyone.

The plague of anti-Semitism is gaining acceptance and spreading again, and our spokesmen and publications speak with bravado about what we should be doing to respond, forgetting that we are in golus. They forget our place and how our people have dealt with the hatred throughout the ages.

Rav Dovid Cohen comments that Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman would often quote the words of admonition that Yaakov spoke to the brothers as they went down to Mitzrayim to seek food as Eretz Canaan hungered. He told them, "Lomo tisrau?" admonishing them not to make themselves conspicuous when they are in a land not their own. This warning is relevant for all Jews in golus, including us.

And while those spokesmen become concerned about anti-Semitic words and acts, they fail to pay attention to what Iran is doing and how they are advancing their nuclear program, strengthening their allies and surrogate states that surround Israel. Iran presents a very clear and present danger to Israel in particular and the world in general.

In Israel, it is brother vs. brother, as the left seeks to destroy the right and the religious citizens, removing vestiges of Torah and halacha from the country. The hatred that descended to the world at Sinai is prevalent not only among Christians and Muslims, but also among our very own brothers.

Many of our senior leaders are sick and weak. We cry out on their behalf, asking that they be granted recovery and strength, as we mourn the vacuum that has been created over the past couple of years.

A pessimist has much reason to worry, but we need to remember that nothing in the world happens for the reasons teva ascribes to them. They happen and are happening because Hashem wills it so and directed them to take place to achieve a greater purpose. More often than not, we do not know the reasons why. It is usually only with the benefit of hindsight that we get a glimpse of the jigsaw puzzle that is life and the world.

I'm back on the plane four nights later. The babies start crying. I put my earphones back on and the tune "Becha botchu avoseinu botchu vatefalteimo" begins playing. Our grandparents placed their faith and trust in Hashem and were rewarded with redemption.

We are a people like none other. We have survived every imaginable tragedy and catastrophe. And now, once again, we ask Avinu Malkeinu to hear our tefillos and grant us salvation from that which plagues us personally in our daily lives and communally, balancing our existence in golus. Heal the elderly gedolei Yisroel who aren't well so that they can lead us to greatness in Torah and avodah and Moshiach Tzidkeinu bemeheirah beyomeinu. Amein.