



Yahadut Zmaneinu, Moreshet Ha'am

YOZMA

AN ISRAELI JEWISH INITIATIVE IN MODI'IN



In the *Mishnah*, tractate *Rosh HaShanah*, we read:

There are four new years... (one of which is...) the first of Tishrei, the new year for years, for the Sabbatical years and for the Jubilee years and for the planting and for the vegetables

”ארבעה ראשי שנים הם... באחד בתשרי, ראש השנה לשנים לשמיטין וליובלות, ולנטיעה ולירקות”;

What did our sages intend by establishing the first of *Tishrei* as one of the four new years? Why did they choose to express the creation of the world in agricultural terms? Did they view the New Year as a special event of universal importance – fusing together the initial creation with the seasonal? Apparently they did.

On *Rosh HaShanah*, on the first of *Tishrei*, on the day of the creation of the world, we reset our annual clock. On this day, we all stand together linking our fate to Nature's. Humanity and Nature are both judged together and blessed together for the New Year in *Tishrei*. Our sages, in recognition of the joint destiny shared by humans and nature, established a joint New Year for both. The sages insisted on linking the holiday of *Rosh Hashana* to the primordial Biblical injunction from the Book of Numbers,

And in the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a holy convocation: you shall do no manner of servile work; it is a day of blowing the ram's horn unto you (Numbers 29:1)

”ובחדש השביעי באחד לחדש מקרא קדש יהיה לכם כל מלאכת עבדה לא תעשו: יום תרועה יהיה לכם”

And yet, the reality is a bit more complicated than merely linking a religious holy day to an agricultural experience. Our sages were actually tying together human reality to the notions of time, justice and the seasonal harvest – while managing to highlight something very important in the process. And what is this important unifying theme? Our sages hinted at the severed connection between Jewish-Hebrew agriculture and the land – the land which provided not only physical but also emotional sustenance for the people of Israel. By highlighting the connection to the land of Israel, our sages linked the cosmic creation with the cultural one.

Despite the people of Israel's generations-long exile, we find that its leaders continue to view *Eretz Israel* as the center. The exodus from Egypt - bringing with it the birth of the people as a collective unit (in the month of *Nissan*) – led the people almost as a "guided arrow" towards Canaan - a land whose seasons will ultimately influence the people's liturgy

YOZMA - Judaism of Our Time, Heritage of Our People

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and religious approach. The land of Canaan since Biblical times was and continues to be at the center of the Jewish compass. This focus never wavers – even more so at *Rosh HaShanah*. Many individual Jews from all over the world continue to view their current country of residence – however long Jews may have been living there – as temporary. They continue to dream in agricultural terms – planting, the sabbatical *shmita* year, the jubilee year – of *Eretz Israel*.

Throughout the generations many Jewish poets have viewed *Eretz Israel* as an object of longing.

Spanish Jewish physician, poet and philosopher Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi wrote,

My heart is in the East, and I am in the far West:

לְבִי בְּמִזְרַח וְאָנֹכִי בְּסוּף מַעֲרָב...

Andalucian Hebrew poet and Jewish philosopher Solomon ibn Gvirol wrote

Today - as much as we have yearned in the exile into which You sent us... so have we been redeemed by

Your benevolence for we placed our faith in You.

הַיּוֹם כִּמְהָ בְּגָלוֹת שָׁלַחְנוּ... פָּדַעַנוּ בְּחַסְדְּךָ כִּי בָךְ בָּטַחְנוּ

The Hassidic leader Reb Nachman of Bratslav described the land of Israel as a kind of compass when he said, "Wherever I go, I go to *Eretz Israel*".

And as the ancient dream began to become a reality, Jewish poet Haim Nachman Bialik wrote:

I am certain that the eyes of thousands of Diaspora Jews, raised to this mountain, burn brightly with the glow of hope and comfort, and that their hearts and souls sing out a blessing of thanks.

בטוח אני כי עיני רבבות אלפי ישראל, הנשואות עתה מכל תפוצות הגולה אל ההר הזה, מאירות עתה בזוהרי

תקווה ונחמה ולבם ובשרם ירננו ברכת תודה...

Rachel the Israeli poetess wrote,

I haven't sung to you my country... My hands have simply planted a tree... My feet have simply formed a path through the fields

לא שרתי לך, ארצי... "רק עץ – ידִי גָטְעוּ... רק שְׂבִיל – כַּבְּשׁוּ רְגְלֵי, עַל פְּנֵי שְׂדוֹת

Jews living close and far have always longed for and yearned for the return to *Eretz Israel*.

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In his song "The Journey to *Eretz* Israel", Ethiopian songwriter Haim Adisis writes of the constant yearning of each generation who viewed *Eretz* Israel as their goal – as their cultural, linguistic and moral focus. He beautifully expresses the Ethiopian's personal and communal wish to make their way to Israel:

Soon, it's just a little farther, pick your feet up, and make the last effort to reach Jerusalem.

”עוד מעט, עוד קצת, להרים רגלים, מאמץ אחרון לפני ירושלים.”

For the rest of us – for some of whom it will be a spiritual and physical "walk" and for others only a spiritual one – let us say this year at *Rosh HaShanah*:

Soon, it's just a little bit farther, soon we will be liberated, and we will not stop walking until we reach the land of Israel.

עוד מעט, עוד קצת, בקרוב נגאל, לא נפסיק ללכת לארץ ישראל

May each and every one of us find our own personal *Eretz* Israel this year.

With love and best wishes for a happy, healthy New Year

Rabbi Nir Barkin and Rabbi Kinneret Shiryon