



SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR

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One of the great religious personalities of the pre-state *Yishuv* and early years of *Medinat Yisrael*, was the *Ohalei Yaakov* of Tel Aviv, Rabbi Yaakov Friedman, zt'l, the *Admor of Husiyatin zy'a*. The Rebbe of *Husiyatin*, was fortunate to make *aliya* from Poland, just ahead of the Nazi onslaught, settling in Tel Aviv in 1938, where he lived until his passing in 1954. Within the Rebbe's beautiful teachings we not only find depth and inspiration, but are often given a glimpse of this very challenging period in Jewish History.

The *Ohalei Yaakov* shared a powerful message on this *Shabbat* of *Parshat Ki Tavo* in 1952. Our *sedra* opens with the words:

V'haya Ki Tavo El Haaretz - And it shall be when you arrive upon the Land...

The *Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh*, in his comments on this verse explains: *V'haya - Lashon Simcha*. Our arrival to the Land of Israel is something to celebrate and rejoice over!

The *Rebbe of Husiyatin*, asked regarding this insight of the *Ohr HaChaim*:

When we look at the reality and spiritual circumstances here in Eretz Yisrael today (in 1952), one can't help but ask - how are we to rejoice? Yes, indeed we have merited

to receive the gift of Medinat Yisrael, and the beginning of the ingathering of the Exiles, but how can we rejoice when we look at the lack of spirituality which seems rampant among us? I do not wish to pass judgment, Chas V'Shalom, rather our way is always to find merit and see the good. There are three reasons for the spiritual malaise which is so worrisome and a cause for deep concern. 1. A portion of our people have received a poor education 2. A portion of our people live in difficult conditions and circumstances, abject poverty. 3. The Shoah nearly decimated our people and left so many broken physically and despondent emotionally and spiritually; we have yet to recover.

However, there is no room for despair! The Torah has already promised us that indeed the Jewish people will return to the ways of Hakadosh Baruch Hu - V'Shavta Ad Hashem Elokecha.

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This spiritual renewal will not come from America, or from England or from any other place, except for here in Eretz Yisrael. The spiritual renewal of Am Yisrael will indeed come forth from this Center of Jewish Life we are building now here in Eretz Yisrael....”

Baruch Hashem, in the sixty-eight years since the Rebbe shared this powerful message, the growth of Torah learning, Jewish commitment and ritual observance has indeed grown exponentially. Yehi Ratzon, may we indeed merit to see continued spiritual transformation taking root here in our sacred Land, and may we experience in the days ahead the redemption and transformation of the entire world, which will flow forth from Artzeinu HaKedosha. ■



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