



## SIMCHAT SHMUEL

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One afternoon a number of summers ago, I had the *zechut* to sit and visit with *Moreinu V'Rabbeinu, Rabbi Dr. Sholom Gold ztvk'l*, the beloved Dean of OU Israel's Avrom Silver Jerusalem College for Adults. As always, time spent with this giant of Jewish life left me inspired and feeling blessed. Blessed to have a role model and teacher like Rabbi Gold ztvk'l whose love of *Torah, Am Yisrael* and *Eretz Yisrael* was exuded with every fiber of his being; and blessed to know that I have been fortunate to follow in his footsteps, to build our family here in *Artzeinu HaKedosha* and contribute in our own unique way in building Jewish Life here in *Eretz Yisrael*.

My discussion with Rabbi Gold, as typically happened when we sat together, returned to this very great blessing, of the building of Jewish life here in the Land of Israel. Rabbi Gold reminded me of an idea he had shared with me on numerous occasions in the past.

It is often stated in the name of the great sage **HaRav Moshe Feinstein ztvk'l**, that in his esteemed opinion, the *mitzva* of *Aliya* to live in Israel in our time, is a *mitzva kiyumi* - a voluntary *mitzva*, a *mitzva* where one certainly receives great merit through the fulfillment of the *mitzva*, but nonetheless is not necessarily compulsory. Rabbi Gold confided in me that for many years he struggled to understand this ruling of *Rav Moshe*, and then one day he finally came to this conclusion. *Rav Moshe zt'l*, was teaching us that a Jew should **truly want** to make *aliya*, not feel compelled to live in Israel, but rather

should want to live here, **should be happy and excited to build their life here in this sacred land.**

Our *Sedra* opens with the familiar 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. ***Vhaya-Lashon Simcha***. Our arrival to the Land of Israel is something to celebrate and rejoice over!

The great early Chasidic sage, the ***Kedushat Levi-Reb Levi Yitzchak MiBerdichev zy'a*** further elaborates: *“והיה לשון שמחה כי בארץ ישראל נפתח הלב לשמוח בעבודת ה'”* — the joy of entering the Land stems from the fact that in *Eretz Yisrael* the heart opens naturally to joy in Divine service. The *simcha* is not incidental but intrinsic to the Land itself.

***The Ohalei Yaakov, the Admor of Husi-yatin zy'a***, shared a powerful message on this *Shabbat* of *Parshat Ki Tavo* in 1952, The Rebbe points to this insight of the *Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh*:

*Vhaya-Lashon Simcha...*

*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 for 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.*

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"When it comes to the job market, Shlomo is the מַלְךְ." — Rabbi Aryeh Ronay

*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 which 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.*

*This Spiritual Renewal will not come 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..."*

The Rebbe had the capacity to contextualize the challenges of Jewish life during the difficult formative years of *Medinat Yisrael*, and the vision to see the fledgling state being built in the Land of Israel, as a Center of Jewish life, which would serve as a catalyst for strengthening Jewish identity and commitment.

*Baruch Hashem*, in the seventy three years since the Rebbe shared this powerful message, the growth of Torah learning and Jewish commitment, and ritual observance has indeed grown exponentially.

*Yehi Ratzon*, may we indeed merit to celebrate the 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.....* ■