



GEULAS YISRAEL

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Emotional Solidarity, Even Without Ideological Agreement

After forty tumultuous years of leadership in the desert, Moshe finally enjoyed a measure of well-earned peace. The eastern campaign had concluded successfully, and Midian had been brought to justice. The people had been counted and organized into tribes and families, and the process for allocating the Land of Israel had been put in place. A potential crisis had been averted, as five women who feared they would be excluded from inheriting Israel were granted their rightful share. Most importantly, Moshe's successor had been appointed, assuring a smooth transition of leadership.

Out of nowhere, a potential crisis emerges. Two tribes, soon joined by half of a third, approach Moshe with a request to settle the recently conquered east bank of the Jordan. Its rich pastureland was ideally suited for their cattle and flocks.

At first, Moshe is seized by traumatic memories of thirty-eight years earlier. He fears this is a sequel to the sin of the meraglim. Once again, standing at the threshold of history, we are shrinking from our destiny. He fears that the retreat of these tribes will spread quickly through the nation, leading the people once again to reject the Promised Land and turn away from the covenant with Hashem. Reliving those dark days, he accuses them of following in the footsteps of the earlier rebels.

In response, the tribes assure Moshe that they have no intention of abandoning the Land of Israel. They pledge to fight alongside their fellow Jews until the Land is conquered and every tribe has received its inheritance. Moshe is reassured by their guarantees and formalizes their commitment in a binding agreement. The intricate laws of *tenai*, the ability to create halachic transactions contingent upon specified conditions, are derived from this agreement between Moshe and the tribes of Gad and Reuven. Any condition that is not formulated in the manner of the *tenai* of Bnei Gad and Bnei Reuven is not legally valid.

An Unexpected Request

However, there was an additional clause to this agreement. These tribes were expected to remain long after the fighting ended. They pledged:

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They would not return home until every tribe had received its nachalah. That commitment kept them away for another seven years. It took seven years to conquer the Land and another seven to divide it among the tribes. Only after every tribe had received its inheritance did the two and a half tribes return to their wives and families on the east bank of the Jordan.

Their presence during the first seven years was militarily indispensable. We were fighting on thirty-one fronts and needed every available soldier. It would have been unthinkable for such a large segment of the population to remain safely at home while their fellow Jews fought for the future of the Land of Israel.

Their remaining in Israel for the next seven years, however, served no military purpose. It served a social one. The allocation of this Land, which had been promised four hundred years earlier, was a defining moment in Jewish history. Imagine being handed a portion of Eretz Yisrael and realizing that you were fulfilling an ancient promise. Those years shaped the identity of the other nine-and-a-half tribes. Had these tribes been absent, they would gradually have drifted away from the mainstream. They remained so that, from the very beginning, they would share not only our battles but our destiny.

Unfortunately, despite their best intentions, they gradually drifted apart. After returning to their homes on the east bank of the Jordan, they feared that they would eventually be forgotten by the rest of the nation. They worried that, over time, an emotional and cultural divide would emerge. Presumably with noble intentions, they erected an altar on the east bank. This monument would remind future

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generations on both sides of the river that, despite living apart, they remained an integral part of the Jewish people.

Unfortunately, physical distance and the misunderstandings that often grow from limited contact caused their actions to be misread.

Their altar aroused deep suspicion, and our nation prepared for war. Before taking up arms, however, a delegation led by Pinchas was sent to clarify the intentions of the tribes on the east bank. Once it became clear that the altar had been built for noble purposes, the crisis was averted and peace was restored. Yet, despite the reconciliation, the two communities had already begun to grow apart. They viewed events through different lenses, developed different narratives, and nearly allowed those differences to erupt into violence.

ACROSS THE RIVER

It seems we are facing a similar challenge in modern Israel. We are deeply engaged in a religious debate over who is obligated to serve in the Israeli army. The positions are well established, and each side believes it is faithfully carrying out the will of Hashem. I have little to add to this machloket l'shem Shamayim that has not already been said. My own position is probably evident and can be inferred from the community to which I belong.

There is, however, a related issue that

receives far less attention. It deserves to be addressed even if the larger question of Charedi non-conscription remains unresolved.

We have lived through loss, pain, tears, disrupted family life, hardship, sleepless nights, and anxiety. Those carrying the burden of this war have become deeply invested in its outcome and in the fate of our people. That personal investment is itself part of our *avodat Hashem* and part of our *achrayut* to the Jewish people. When Am Yisrael suffers, we have a responsibility to stand alongside them.

I imagine that many Charedim who do not serve genuinely want to feel part of this struggle. I also imagine that many have made sincere efforts to share in what the rest of the country has been experiencing. Yet the emotional gap between those who are immersed in this war and those who are not seems wider than ever.

I believe the first step toward any solution is for all of us to find a shared emotional language. Many of those carrying the burden of this war feel that their sacrifice is neither fully seen nor fully appreciated by those who have chosen not to serve. Hurtful statements by extremists, who do not represent the mainstream Charedi community, only deepen that sense of alienation.

Much of this is unintentional. If you live on

the east bank of the Jordan, no matter how much you want to identify with those across the river, it is difficult to experience events in the same way. If you are not personally involved in the war effort, and neither are your family or friends, your emotional world will inevitably be different. It is this emotional divide that we must begin to bridge, even if the larger question of Charedi enlistment remains unresolved.

I don't have obvious solutions, but identifying the problem and separating it from the broader debate over conscription is an important first step. So too is fostering greater communication and making a genuine effort to understand the other side. The crisis between the two-and-a-half tribes and the rest of Israel was averted only because we chose to talk before we shot. They sought understanding before resorting to violence.

THE FEAST OF SHUSHAN

The talmidim of Rebbi Shimon bar Yochai once asked him why the Jews of Persia faced the threat of Haman and his plan for Jewish genocide. Rather than answering, he turned the question back to them. They suggested that it was a punishment for participating in the feast of Achashverosh. Chazal state unequivocally that the food served at the banquet was strictly kosher. If so, what was so wrong with attending the feast?

The problem was not where they lived. It was the emotional disconnect. By then, Jews had already returned to Eretz Yisrael and laid the foundations of the second Beit Hamikdash. They were struggling to rebuild the Land while facing fierce opposition and violence. The Jews of Persia may have been justified in remaining where they were, at least for the time being. But there was no justification for celebrating one hundred and

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eighty days of lavish feasting while their fellow Jews struggled to rebuild Jewish history and restore a land that would one day belong to their shared descendants.

Not every Jew will make the same choice about where to live or how to express their avodat Hashem. Yet emotional disengagement, especially during a period of crisis that will shape Jewish history for generations, is a different matter.

Long before we resolve our disagreements, we must learn to share one another's burdens. Emotional solidarity cannot wait for ideological agreement. ■



Rabbi Moshe Taragin's latest sefer entitled: **Reclaiming Redemption, Vol. II: Faith, Identity, Peoplehood, and the Storms of War**, is available at: mtaraginbooks.com.

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