

Kindert Torah

Parashas Vayeshev

בס"ד

The Freedom Banner

"Abba, I saw something very interesting this morning."

"What was it, Avi?"

"An airplane was flying along slowly across the sky. Attached to its tail was a banner with a message written on it. Everyone was looking up at the banner to read the message."

"That is interesting, Avi. Perhaps that is the way that the Yishaya's prophesy will be fulfilled."

"Which prophesy, Abba?"

"The one that we pray for three times a day, in the tenth *bracha* of the *Amida*. 'Sound the great shofar for our freedom, raise a banner to gather our exiles, and gather us together from the four corners of the earth.' Yishaya¹ prophesized, 'He will raise a banner for the nations, assemble the castaways of Israel, and He will gather in the dispersed ones of Yehuda from the four corners of the earth.'² Perhaps the banner that publicizes the *geula* to the nations will be borne aloft by an airplane."

"I hope we see that banner very soon, Abba. While we are on the subject, can you please explain this *bracha* to me?"

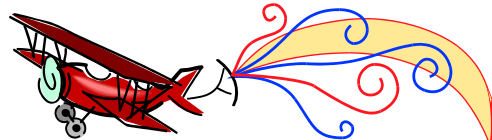
"With great pleasure, Avi. When Yaakov Avinu came to Mitzrayim and the brothers all gathered together with Yosef, the *malochim* (heavenly angels) said, 'Blessed are You Hashem, Who gathers in the dispersed of His people Yisrael.'³ Our Elders subsequently fixed these words as the closing of the blessing. This is actually a pivotal *bracha*. Until now, all of the blessings have contained requests for the individual's welfare. The next series of eight *brochos* are appeals for the Jewish nation as a whole. They detail the events that will occur in the final *geula*, and how one will follow from the other. In the tenth blessing, we appeal to Hashem for freedom from the oppression of the exile, and an ingathering of the Jews scattered around the globe. Once all of Klal Yisrael is in its place, the judicial system (Sanhedrin) can be restored. The Sanhedrin can then judge and sentence the wicked ones. Once all evil is wiped off the earth, then the crown of the *tsaddikim* can be raised up for all to see. There will be nothing preventing Hashem from returning to Yerushalayim, rebuilding it, and restoring the throne of the kingship of the house of Dovid HaMelech. Then the gates of *tefillah* will be opened and the *avodah* (Temple service) will be restored to its original glory."⁴

"It sounds magnificent, Abba. I can hardly wait."

"Your *tefillas* and *teshuvah* can actually hasten the process, Avi."

"How is that, Abba?"

"I will explain. There is a famous question asked by the *meforshim*. The seventh *bracha* contains the request, 'redeem us speedily for Your Name's sake.' The tenth *bracha* asks for the ingathering of the exiles, which is the beginning of the redemption. What is the difference between the two? The Achareis Lishalom⁵ relates that each *bracha* represents a different way that the *geula* can come. The tenth *bracha* appeals to Hashem to redeem us for our merits. We are referred to as 'His people, Yisrael'. We have done the *teshuvah* necessary to earn the recognition as Hashem's nation, and therefore merit the *geula*. The seventh *bracha* speaks about the mistreatment that we receive at the hands of the nations. 'Hashem, free us because our captors abuse us and do not deserve to keep us.' Therefore, this *bracha* concludes, 'Blessed are You Hashem, redeemer of Yisrael'. You carry out the entire redemption yourself. So we see the tenth *bracha* speaking about the *teshuvah* of every Jew



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making us fitting to be redeemed and hastening the *geula*."

"What an incentive to do *teshuvah*!"

"Indeed. Other *meforshim* explain that there are two *geulas* – *geulas haguf* (the redemption of the body) and *geulas haneshama* (the redemption of the soul). The *geulas haguf* precedes the *geulas haneshama*; therefore, it is mentioned first, in the seventh blessing.⁶ Rav Shimon Refael Hirsch makes the distinction between the individual's redemption (*bracha* seven) and the national *geula* (*bracha* ten). Both necessitate *teshuvah* before the *geula* can come. Lastly, the seventh blessing requests deliverance from daily troubles, while the tenth one beseeches Hashem for the final *geula*."⁷

"How can I improve my *kavannah* (concentration) in this *bracha*, Abba?"

"The Mesillas Yesharim⁸ advocates feeling distress about the *golus* (exile) and the *churban* (destruction) which both diminish the honor of the Almighty. We should always pray for the *geula* and the return of *kovod Shomayim* (the honor of heaven). When we are in *golus*, the *Shechina* (Divine Presence) is in exile along with us. When the dispersed of Klal

Yisrael will return from the *golus*, the *Shechina* will also return.⁹ The words, 'and gather us together' refer to the unity of the gathering. Once we have national unity, there is nothing preventing the *Shechina* from returning.¹⁰

"And so we pray, 'Sound the great shofar'. What is the great shofar? The ram of Yitzchak had two horns. The left one became the shofar that Hashem blew at Har Sinai. The right one is bigger than the left. Hashem will blow it at the *kibbutz galuyos* (ingathering of the exiles).¹¹ This will be the fulfillment of the prophecy, 'It shall be on that day that a great shofar will be blown'.¹² 'For our freedom'. Take us out our captivity amongst the nations.¹³ 'And raise a banner to gather our exiles, and gather us together from the four corners of the earth'. We explained this prophesy earlier. Another reason that we long for the redemption is to fulfill the mitzvos that are dependent upon all of Klal Yisrael residing in Eretz Yisrael.¹⁴ 'Blessed are You Hashem, Who gathers in the dispersed of His people Yisrael.' The *geula* will come when we are fitting to be called His people, when we have returned to Him in *teshuvah shelayma*."¹⁵ "Speedily in our days, Amen!"

Kindertlach . . .

We feel the *tsar* of the *golus*. We long to see Hashem's *kovod* restored to His people and His Land. We strive to do *teshuvah* and we pray for the final redemption. We are anxious to hear the great shofar and see the banner raised for our freedom. The wording of the blessing describes the sequence of the events. Firstly Hashem will remove the yoke of subservience, 'sound the great shofar for our freedom'. Then He will gather the exiles into one place, 'and raise a banner to gather our exiles'. After that, we will go upright to our Land, 'and gather us together from the four corners of the earth'.¹⁶ Kindertlach, may we all see each other there on that great day.

¹ Yishaya 11:12

² Abudarham, Iyun Tefillah, Maggid Tsedek

³ Levush in Otzer HaTefillos

⁴ Iyun Tefillah

⁵ in Otzer HaTefillos

⁶ Shela in Maggid Tsedek and Eitz Yosef

⁷ Artscroll Siddur

⁸ Chapter 19: Serving Hashem beyond the letter of the law

⁹ Yesod Vi'shosh Ho'avodah

¹⁰ Maggid Tsedek

¹¹ Pirkei Rebbe Elozer

¹² Yishaya 27:13

¹³ Abudarham

¹⁴ יובל, עבד עברי בתי ערי חומה, שדה חרמים, שדה אחוזה, גר תושב (ערכין כט).

¹⁵ Iyun Tefillah in Otzer HaTefillos

¹⁶ Dover Shalom in Kavannas HaLev