

Aliya

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Finally - aliyah must become a top item on the agenda of the American Jewish orthodox community. The great Amora, Reish Lakish cried out in pain and anguish “I swear I hate you (Rashi: Babylonians who did not go up to Eretz Yisrael in the days of Ezra) for would you have come up more in the days of Ezra the Divine Presence would have descended upon the Temple and it would not have been destroyed” [Yoma 9b]. Reish Lakish is saying this some 700 or more years after Ezra and yet one can sense the resentment and anger. An historic opportunity of such proportions and such magnitude was allowed to pass without being seized passionately and embraced.

The Talmud in Berachot says “Would Jews have ascended in the days of Ezra, G-d would have done for them miracles as in the days of Joshua.” How tragic! - What could have been!

Since the Talmud speculated on what could have been it behooves us as well to investigate the great opportunities that can still be taken advantage of. The ending this time must be a happy one. So let's speculate. Would another 100,000 olim from the United States settle in Yehuda and Shomron, the very heartland of Biblical Eretz Yisrael, we would not be in our present precarious situation. Facts on the ground would speak more eloquently than any political pronouncements. Relinquishing land would not even be a matter for consideration. Would another 100,000 religious Jews come here with all the economic, cultural, and social power at their disposal, we would not have to suffer the incessant attacks of the reform movement who, with new found aggression and militant hostility, demand recognition. They expect us to tolerate, cooperate and collaborate with their destruction of Judaism. Their abject failure is apparent to all.

Would another 100,000 religious Jews vote in our elections they would make the religious bloc even more formidable than it is now. It would become self-evident that no government will ever be formed without the active participation of the orthodox community. Political power speaks loudest here. The impact of that electoral strength would go a long way towards silencing the voices of self-hatred that back anti-Semitic pejoratives. (Calling a religious minister this week “dirty Jew”.) Woe to ears who hear such terrible pronouncements.

Would another 100,000 Jews with the education and temperament of American upbringing join our ranks we would be better equipped to silence a so-called cultural, artistic and political left who mock and deride all that is holy to us; a left that collaborates with our enemies in the struggle for Eretz Yisrael.

Would another 100,000 Jews realize that while to the best of my recollection there is no Mitzvah to live in America - it is a Mitzvah to live in Eretz Yisrael.

We made a tragic mistake in the days of Ezra; and we made a genuine error by not joining the ranks of those who began to build this country in the early part of this century. We in fact abandoned Eretz Yisrael to secular Zionists.

It is not yet too late to rectify that serious error in judgment. We can become a major influence on the state, stature, and complexion of this country for centuries to come.

Israel is no longer some third world backward country. It is prosperous, economically strong, offering a wide variety of professional and business opportunities. Educational institutions of the highest caliber dot the country. The difficulties that caused people to hesitate about making aliyah no longer exist. The days of needing something (tuna fish, mayonnaise, etc.) from the States are over. Imagine - in a two block radius in the center of Yerushalayim, are situated a Mehadrin Nathans, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Dunkin Donuts, Bonkers Bagels - and just a way down the road - the Kotel HaMaaravi. You just can't beat that. That is not to say that it is easy. All change is powerful, agonizing and emotionally taxing - but it's worth it.

Maybe one of you will be the man, woman or child that will change the course of Jewish history.