The Quickening and the Realignment of History

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After a forty-year detour we finally arrived at the doorstep of Israel. The ground began to shake with historical tremors. Bilam and Balak, normally sworn enemies, hastily built a coalition to defeat the Jewish occupiers who, they feared, would consume them "as an ox consumes the grass". Rachav, the woman who lived in the walls of Yericho, and secretly hosted Yehoshua's spies, reported that the inhabitants of Cna'an, upon hearing of the miracles of *keriat Yam Suf*, resigned themselves to defeat. שמעו עמים ירגזון – the entire region and everyone who stood in the way of Jewish destiny, trembled.

In truth, the regional political upheaval started well before we arrived. The end of Parashat Chukat describes legendary wars between the armies of Emor and the warriors of Mo’av. Emor, led by its mighty warrior-king Sichon, emerged as the big winners and saw their empire vastly expanded.

The Return of Hashgacha

The Torah describes these "unrelated" wars for several reasons. Firstly, the Emori victory showcased their ferocious military prowess. Yet, facing off against the children of Hashem, their armies collapsed like a house of cards. This impressive defeat of the “invincible” Sichon demonstrated that Hashem had restored His *hashgacha* to us, after a dark forty-year period of limited miracles and little prophetic communication. Defeating Sichon, who himself had routed Moav, gave us the confidence that, with Hashem’s help, we could easily vanquish the 30 chieftains of Cna'an.

The Quickening and the Accounting

Additionally, the Emori-Moav wars reflect the broader instability which spread throughout the region. Jewish redemption isn’t a local or national event but radiates to the entire planet. Jewish redemption introduces a world of heightened spirituality and broad prosperity. Our initial arrival in Israel was meant to conclude history, leading to a Messianic utopia. Whenever history reaches a redemptive "end", it must account for itself. Empires must rise as others must fall so that history ends with a balanced ledger. Therefore, as history lurches toward redemption its pace accelerates. As history advances toward its redemptive terminus, it rocks and sways…and it quickens. The quickening of history always brings rapid change and severe political turmoil.

Three Pharos

Our first *geula* also brought rapid political shifts. Egyptian Pharos possessed absolute authority and reigned for the duration of their lifetimes. Yet, as *yetziat Mitzrayim* approached, three different Egyptian kings ascend the stage: the Pharo of the beginning of Shemot, the "new king" who didn’t recall Yosef and who hatched the hateful conspiracy against us, and the Pharo who succeeded him after his sudden death. It is difficult to determine the exact timelines of the three Pharos but, at least textually, they were all coronated in rapid succession.

The Carousel of Babylonia and Persia

The first *geula* from Bavel was no different. In a brief span of about 80 years numerous Babylonian empires ruled and, suddenly, the indomitable Babylonian empire was unseated by Persia. Approximately four or five Persian emperors sat on the throne until we finally returned to Israel. Depending upon the timelines *seven*  or *eight* different dictators ruled this region between our exit from Yerushalayim and our return.

Political tumult and instability are harbingers of Jewish redemption. It was true in the desert as we approached Israel, and it was just as true as we began the complicated process of returning to Yerushalayim after the Babylonian exile. It remained true in the 20th century, as we embarked upon final redemption.

The Quicksand of the 20th century

During this fraught century two World Wars took the lives of over 100 million people. Powerful ideologies such as Fascism, Naziism and Communism came and went. Long standing maps were redrawn and, a few years later, redrawn again. Vast European empires receded, as former colonies achieved their independence. We have just begun the 21st century but it appears to be even more chaotic. As we arrive at the end of history, history itself quickens.

Chazal assert that that Hakadosh Barukh Hu is מחשב את הקץ, which means that He calculates the *geula*. This commonly refers to Hashem commuting our exile and redeeming us prior to our designated time. Additionally though, חישב את הקץ means that He recomputes the overall historical calculus. As we approach *geula*, history accounts for itself and political tumult ensues. It was true in Egypt, it was true forty years later in the East Bank of the Jordan, it was true 1300 years later in Persia, and it was true during the past century.

Redemptive Realignment

There is an additional reason that the Torah describes the Emor and Moav wars in such detail. Evidently, there is a different message and a different reason that we are informed of the precise territories conquered by Emor. The outcome of this war and the redrawing of maps directly influenced Jewish history. Moav was a descendant of Lot and therefore, we were banned from any military encounter with them and prohibited from settling their lands. Had the Moabite armies triumphed in this war, the East Bank of the Jordan would not have been available for Jewish settlement. Once the victorious Emorite kingdom absorbed these lands, they could now be included in future Jewish settlement. The final borders of Eretz Yisrael were dependent upon the outcome of this seemingly "unrelated" war. Of course nothing is unrelated to Jewish history. History was realigned to facilitate Jewish destiny.

Jewish history is cyclical. What happened once, happens again. Just as history was rearranged to accommodate our arrival from the desert, it was similarly reengineered as we arrived home from our 2000-year journey through the desert of exile. Once again, historical realignment began well before our arrival.

The 17th century

Two important events of the 17th century deeply influenced our return to Israel three hundred years later. The Puritan Revolution of the 1640s, led by Oliver Cromwell, established an environment of relative religious freedom, making the UK more hospitable to Jews. Two decades later, in the aftermath of the horrific Khmelnitsky rebellion in Poland, during which hundreds of thousands of Jews were brutally murdered, we began to look westward to the British Isles for safe haven. In a perfect historical confluence, Britain and the West became more hospitable to us, just when we most needed it. Jews settled into Britain, gaining political and cultural influence.

About three hundred years later this influence was crucial for the establishment of the Jewish State. In addition to broader Jewish lobbying, several politically well-placed British Jews including Chaim Weizman, who would eventually become the first President of Israel, and Edmond de Rothschild were instrumental in garnering British support for the State.

Of course, WWI had a lot to do with this as well. Britian emerged from the war with both a vastly expanded empire and with greater global influence. By contrast, the Ottoman empire suffered catastrophic losses, disappeared as a political entity, and, of course, ceded Palestine to a more friendly Great Britain.

While British influence in Europe increased after the war, Germany and Austria-Hungary, two countries with far less affection for the Jews, lost much of their political influence. All historical circumstances were well-aligned to facilitate the return of Hashem's people, to His land. It is hard to imagine the events of 1948 without these after-effects of WWI.

The “Century of America”

And, of course, the 20th century, often nicknamed “the century of America” saw the US become a dominant military, economic, and cultural superpower. In 1948, at the height of its power, US support for the State of Israel was decisive. And, in the ensuing decades, particularly over the past 50 years, they have been our staunchest ally. During the 20th century Britain passed the torch of its international influence to the United States. It also passed the torch of supporting Jewish destiny to the new emergent superpower.

A Brief Window

Let's not forget Russia. For the overwhelming majority of the past 200 years Russia was antagonistic to our people. The 19th century was marred by malicious state-sponsored antisemitism and discrimination in Tzarist Russia. In the 20th century, Stalin persecuted, executed and deported millions of Jews. In the more recent past Russia launched a virulent propaganda crusade against Israel, portraying us as an aggressor and oppressor of Palestinians. Much of the false canards being hurled at us in 2024 originated from their venomous campaigns.

However, there was a very brief pocket of history during which the Soviet Union supported us. Without their endorsement in 1947 and their support in 1948 we would not have achieved statehood. A few months after we declared independence, the Soviet Union turned against us, aligning with our Arab enemies. For a very brief period of history – no more than a year or so – our most aggressive enemy aligned themselves with Jewish destiny.

Redemption is the inevitable conclusion to history. As the horizons of redemption appear, history quickens. It also realigns to pave the path to redemption.