# What do we celebrate in Yom HaAtsmaut?

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The Tora speaks of reward and punishment for the mitsvot we do or fail to do. There are penalties established for individuals and collective punishments, which affect the entire Jewish people. The most severe collective punishment that the Tora stipulates for the rebellion of Israel is “exile”. So says, for example, Debarim 28: 64-65 *“And then [if Israel abandons my Tora] HaShem will scatter you among all the nations, from one end of the earth to the other …. among those nations you will not find peace or a resting place … You will live in constant suspense, filled with dread both night and day, never sure of your life … “.*

But just as the Tora predicted the rebellion of Am Israel and the horrors of the exile, it also predicted the reconciliation and the return of Israel to their land (qibbuts galuiyot).

In chapter 30 of the book of Debarim (Deut.) This process is explicitly described. Let’s analyze it verse by verse.

In the previous chapter, as we said, the Tora states that if the people of Israel leave the Tora they will be taken into exile and live oppressed and persecuted by the nations. Now, the Tora says that a new thought will awake within the Jew.

30:1 *“And when all these [bad] things will happen to you (= exile, persecution, suffering) … and you would reflect in your heart, while you are among the nations where HaShem your God*

*has led you … “.* This pasuq describes the beginning of Teshuba, our return to HaShem. This reconciliation begins with us. First, with a new way of thinking. Understanding that all the suffering, the bad things that happened to the nation of Israel, was predicted by the Tora thousands of years ago. Thereore,  and this is the “new” thinking, if leaving HaShem has caused all this suffering, if we return to Him, our exile and tribuations will end. This thought should awake a feeling: feeling closer to Hashem, realizing that He loves us as a father loves his children.

This is what the next pasuq says

30:2 *“And then you woud come closer to HaShem your God and obey his voice,  all I’m commanding you this day, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul.”* These thoughts and feelings must be translated into actions: observing the Tora, our covenant with HaShem. In a way, by observing the mitzvot the individual Jew is “resetting” the dormant covenant with HaShem, reactivating it.

Once we take the first step, it is the turn of HaShem. The greatest miracle is about to be detailed:

30:3 *“And then [when this happens] HaShem your God will bring you back from among the captives (= the Jews who were exiled among all the nations of the earth), and He will have compassion on you, and He will gather you from all the peoples where HaShem your God has scattered you. “*

HaShem’s response to our Teshuba is qibbuts galuiyot, ending our exile, bringing us back from all the nations of the earth to our own land.

Thus says the following pasuq

30:4 *“Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens,  from there HaShem your God will gather you and bring you back  [to your land].”*

No matter how far we are. HaShem will bring us back from exile. And would He take us?

30: 5 *“HaShem your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you will take possession of it. He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your ancestors.”*

The process of returning to the land of Israel is taking place today. More and more Jews return to the land that Hashem granted to our parents. Israel is a very prosperous country, more porsperous than ever, and the number of Yehudim living there has never been higher. No doubt there is still much to do and improve, but the fact is that our collective reconciliation but HaShem has begun. We are probably the most privileged generation of all Jewish history. We are living this ancient and beautiful prophecy. Moreover,  we ARE that prophecy.