The Shoah and the Return of the Jewish People to the Land of Israel

הִנֵּה אֲנִי פֹתֵחַ אֶת-קִבְרוֹתֵיכֶם וְהַעֲלֵיתִי אֶתְכֶם
מִקִּבְרוֹתֵיכֶם עַמִּי; וְהֵבֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם, אֶל-אַדְמַת
יִשְׂרָאֵל
יחזקאל ל”ז

Thus says HaShem, God, behold, I will open your graves, and I will raise you from your graves and I will take you to the land of Israel…

This is a very special Shabbat. One that marks the transition between two very important historical milestones, diametrically opposed, that affected and profoundly changed the Jewish people.

On the one hand, this past Thursday we commemorated Yom HaShoah, the day of the remembrance of the Holocaust. On the other hand, this coming Wednesday night (May 4th), we will celebrate Yom ha’Atzmaut, the day of the Independence of the State of Israel.

We Jews have suffered countless persecutions, massacres, and pogroms. In all lands and at all times. But we never experienced anything as sinister as the Shoah. Both in absolute and relative terms, there was never such a devastating massacre of Jews, as the Holocaust that took place in Europe between 1940 and 1945.

Remember when no one dared to oppose the Third Reich, and the hesitations of Winston Churchill and the Allies who were about tom give up. Or when the Nazis exterminated half a million Hungarian Jews in just 6 months. Or when the Nazis were preparing the gas chambers in Tunisia to transport there and gas the Jews of North Africa, Palestine, Syria, Iran, and Iraq. The Jewish people never saw their end so close. We never

ever had lost our hope so much. We never felt so clearly that we were irremediable, hopeless, and condemned to die.

Or already dead…

And then, in just 3 years, which in terms of the millennial Jewish history is less than the blink of an eye, the greatest miracle that the Tora (Debarim 30) and all our prophets had promised so long ago finally happened. The KIBBUTS GALUYOT – the return of the people of Israel to our land – began. HaShem, literally, opened our graves, He took us from below the ground, and brought us back home – to the beautiful land of Israel.

More than 2500 years ago, the prophet Ezekiel (Yehezqel) had a very special prophetic vision (nebua). In this vision Yehezqel finds himself transported to a valley. As he looks around him, he sees that the valley is filled with bones – dry, human bones.

Ezekiel sees it and remains silent. HaShem then asks him: "Son of a man: Do you believe that these bones can come back to life?"

Nothing is more dead than dry bones. Looking at them, with humility, perplexity, and common sense Yehezqel replied "HaShem, only You can know it "

Suddenly there was a deafening noise. The bones began to move. They joined with each other and formed skeletons. The skeletons then were covered with veins, then nerves, muscles, and flesh. And then they were covered by skin. Now they were not bones but human bodies. But without life. Corpses. HaShem told Ezekiel: "Prophesy so that these bodies will come to life … so a soul will enter these bodies and that they shall live again." And so it was. "And a breath of life entered those bodies and they stood up. It was a great army, very numerous." And HaShem said to Ezekiel, "Son of man, these bones are the house of Israel. They might say: 'our bones have dried up, our

hope is lost, we have been condemned [to disappear].’ Therefore, prophesy and tell [the people of Israel]: thus says HaShem, God: Behold, I will open your sepulchers, and I will raise you up from your graves and bring you to the land of Israel …

It is impossible not to connect this intense prophecy with 1945 and 1948.
In 1945 we were condemned to disappear. We were dry bones, or worse: ashes. And then, when everyone thought that we had disappeared for good; that we would never be a people again, and that all the ancient prophecies would never be fulfilled, the greatest miracle occurred: HaShem opened our graves, our crematoriums, rescued us, and gave us back our lives. But His miracle did not end there. The inconceivable happened. HaShem fulfilled what He had promised us 3500 years ago: We returned to our land and established the State of Israel. We saw His Providence, and we become witnesses of His faithfulness to fulfill His promise. As Ezekiel had prophesied: *“And when I open your graves, and take you out of them, My people, and lead you to your land, you will know that I, HaShem, I have promised, and I have delivered. “*

SHABBAT SHALOM