

Bo

Am Yisrael Chai

Valerie and I have just returned from Poland, where we had the privilege of accompanying His Majesty King Charles on a visit to Auschwitz for the commemoration of the 80th anniversary of the liberation of the camp.

As I stood on that ground, the place where the most horrific evil was perpetrated, I was comforted when I reflected on the words of the Prophet Jeremiah, which we will read this coming Shabbat in the haftara for the Parshah of Bo.

The prophet comments on the slavery of the Israelites in Egypt and some subsequent tragedies that befell our people, and then he brings these words of encouragement in the name of Hashem: “Ve’attah al-tira avdi Ya’akov ve’al techat Yisra’el” — do not fear my servant, Jacob; there is no need to be distressed, O Israel.

“Veshav Ya’akov veshakat vesh’aanan ve’ein macharid” — Jacob will, at long last, be able to rest; there will be a period of quiet. Jacob will be at ease, and Israel will have no reason to fear.

The prophet then goes on to talk about Jewish dispersion and says, “E’eseh challah bechol-haggoyim” — I will put an end to those nations who seek to put an end to the Jewish people.

“Otecha lo-e’eseh challah” — but I will never put an end to the Jewish people; the Jewish people will always continue to live on.

Here we have echoes of the promise of Hashem to the founder of our faith, Abraham, in the Parshah of Lech Lecha, when Hashem said, “Those who bless you, I will bless, and those who curse you, I will curse, and all the families on earth will be blessed through you.”

If we reflect on the past few millennia, we will see how accurate and true those words have become. The nations amongst whom we have lived — some of the most powerful on earth — who have sought to destroy the Jewish people, have in turn been destroyed. And those who have been well disposed towards us have been blessed, and tiny Am Yisrael has continued, always. Not just to live on, but also to thrive.

So, following our commemorations for the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, we can be certain, perhaps more than at any other time before, of the truth that Am Yisrael Chai.

The Jewish people will always live on, thrive, and be blessed.

Shabbat Shalom.