



## **“Spiritual Will to the Jewish People”**

By Rabbi Ben-Zion Meir Hai Uziel

Translated by Elli Fischer

I praise the Lord with all my heart in the assembled congregation of the upright, for He sired me on the knees of my sainted forefathers and seated me before my good and upright masters and teachers. Collectively, they guided me on the path that I have traveled and the deeds that I have done upon the earth. It is to their credit that from my earliest youth I was destined to serve the public: first as an instructor and teacher of Torah to the students at the Tiferet Yerushalayim yeshiva and religious school and at the Doresh Tziyon *bet midrash*, where I studied in my youth, and later at the Ezra rabbinical school. I was taken from there and placed on the seat of the rabbinate, first in Tel Aviv-Jaffa and the environs, then in the great and holy Jewish community of Salonika, which, to my chagrin and horror, has been completely destroyed by the impure hands and trampling feet of the cursed Nazis – may their name forever be shamed and disgraced – and then in Tel Aviv-Jaffa again, and finally in our holy and majestic city of Jerusalem, where I now live and hope that, with God’s kindness, I may continue to live with sharp mind until my last day.

In these roles, I kept the following goals in my sight, illuminating my path: to teach students to love the Torah and its commandments, the Land of Israel and its sanctity, an absolute love for every Jewish man and woman, for the Jewish people as a whole, and love of the Lord, God of Israel; and to bring peace to every Jewish person, man and woman, in body and soul, speech and deed, mind and heart, intention and action, at home and on the street, in village and city—true peace to the entire house and family of Israel, the entire congregation of Israel, with all its branches and parties—and between Israel and its Father in heaven. These two goals are really one, since they both flow from the same origins: the Torah of the living God and King of the world, Who is the Sacred One and King of Israel, and Who gave the Torah of truth, whose ways are the ways of pleasantness and whose every path is peace, to His people.

These two goals have been my heart’s desire and my life’s purpose; I directed my life in accordance with them. Every day I prayed thus: “Guide me with Your counsel; steer me on Your path; grant peace and truth among all Your people Israel to love and sanctify Your name.” I am certain that I have not succeeded in reaching even a fraction of



a fraction of these goals that I have made my life goals, but I know, and God, Knower of mysteries, knows, and even Israel knows that this has been my intent and my prayer.

Now, as I take leave of you, brothers and sisters, teachers and masters, and all of Israel, to join my forefathers and my people who rest in Eden, I thank the entire people and everyone individually for the very great honor, far more than I, of meager deed, deserve—for honoring me throughout my life and for the pleasantness that you brought about by giving me a respectable and generous wage, with which I was able to establish and raise my family, may God grant them life.

Nevertheless, I hereby beg your pardon and complete forgiveness for the sins and iniquities, affronts and insults, if I sinned against an individual or a group and did not manage to reconcile with them during my life. Please know and trust that I did not do so intentionally. The dignity and desire of every man and woman in Israel and in all public bodies are exceedingly precious and beloved to me. Yet it is possible that, as a human being forged from matter, there escaped from my mouth or I perpetrated an act that offended someone's dignity or caused him to lose money. So I hereby ask: please forgive me for this and put my soul at rest.

As for me, I hereby state before God and man that I have no grievance against any Jew, and if indeed there were those who spoke spiteful or offensive words in my presence or outside my presence, I forgave them immediately. And now, I hereby fully and absolutely pardon and forgive any man or woman, and all of Israel, saying: peace, peace, unto those far and near.

I furthermore state: heed me, my brothers and members of my people, and God will heed you. A great and wondrous merit has become manifest in our present generation, when God's mighty but long-hidden hand was openly revealed on behalf of His chosen people, when He gathered us in from our scattered state and brought us up to the land that is the heritage of our ancestors. And there we have become a people that dwells upon its soil.

This ingathering of the exiles—which occurred during the past few decades—was the seed for the sprouting of the redemption, and when the time designated by the Creator of the world and the Elector of His people and His holy land came, He imbued a “spirit of counsel and valor” in the heart of each of our courageous pioneers, bequeathed them the crown of victory, and gave us this land that He swore to our forefathers and to us.



Remember this. Contemplate it seriously. Know and believe that God's hand wrought this in order to fulfill His word through His sainted prophets for the eternal peace of the Jewish people and for world peace, which is contingent upon Israel's observance of the Torah and its commandments, through which the name of the Holy One and Redeemer of Israel is sanctified. Thus, all of the nations will learn and know of belief in God and of His singularity, which will bring in its wake true peace to our camp and stable peace among all the nations. No wickedness or destructiveness will be perpetrated between man and man, kingdom and kingdom, or nation and nation, for all will know Him, and the earth will be covered in knowledge of God as water covers the sea.

I conclude with the following blessing: "May the Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers. May He never abandon or forsake us. May He incline our hearts to Him, that we may walk in all His ways and keep the commandments," for our lasting good.

Know this, all members of the house of Israel who live in the coveted land, which God bequeathed to our ancestors and to us, and return to His holy Torah. Study it and teach it to our future generations from trusted sources—from our teacher Moshe and our holy prophets, and from the Torah sages of every generation and who live with us in the present generation.

Keep its commandments to the letter and its laws and statutes in full, for "the judgments of the Lord are true, righteous altogether." Always lovingly recall the words of the lord of all prophets, the man of God, in his holy Torah: "Then God commanded us to observe all these laws, to revere the Lord our God, for our lasting good and for our survival, as is now the case. It will be therefore to our merit before the Lord our God to observe faithfully this whole Instruction, as He has commanded us," without admixture from the laws and judgments of the nations. Moreover, protect, with every safeguard, the peace of the state and the peace of the people; "love truth and peace," for divisiveness and schism are the most dangerous enemies. They eat away at the house of Israel and cause its bones to rot. By contrast, peace and unity are the eternal foundations for the national existence of the house of Israel, may it never fall. These are the pillars upon which the house of Israel is founded for all time; they are conduits of blessing, sources of bounty, and the vehicle of the Jewish people's courage and might.



Protect and strengthen these twin pillars so that your courage and might are reinforced, and all the destructive forces that surround us like a noose and seek to destroy us and blot out the name of Israel and its Torah will disappear.

Remove all causes of schism and divisiveness from our camp and our state, and place in their stead everything that will inspire peace and unity in our midst. Thus, our encampment will be pure, sanctified, fortified, and consolidated like an impregnable wall against which no destructive or avenging force may conquer. May God, Who makes peace in His heights, make peace for us and bless us in accordance with His word to His prophet Moshe: “The Lord your God has multiplied you until you are today as numerous as the stars in the sky. May the Lord, the God of your fathers, increase your numbers a thousandfold, and bless you as He promised you.” “May God grant courage to His people; may God bless His people with peace.” “Then the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem shall be pleasing to God as in the days of yore and in the years of old.”

Now I, your brother, take leave of you for eternal life, with blessings for peace, for the redemption of the world with the restoration of the throne of the Davidic dynasty, and for the rebuilding of God’s temple in the holy city of Jerusalem.

**Ben-Zion Meir Hai Uziel**