Ranon Ginsberg

Shabbat Shemini Atzeret/Simchat Torah

כא׳ בתשרי ה׳תשפ״ז

Together

This past Wednesday, a *flydubai* flight from Dubai to Tel Aviv almost didn't make it. The Omani Jihadist co-pilot attacked the captain in the cockpit, stabbing him in the neck, and the plane dropped nearly 20,000 feet. The wounded captain, bleeding out, managed to unlock the cockpit door. A little girl coming out of the plane bathroom saw the blood and ran over to tell her mom, and immediately a group of ordinary Israelis, including a plumber, a CEO, and a dentist, went in, subdued the terrorist and stabilized the captain. The plane landed safely in Saudi Arabia. The passengers then switched to a new plane and made it back safely to Tel Aviv, singing songs thanking and praising Hashem. And even the next day one of the passengers was davening at Maarat HaMachpela and everyone was singing Al Hanisim to thank Hashem for this wonderful miracle. Baruch Hashem, we came out victorious once again.

In Parshat Vezot HaBracha, Moshe ends his final blessing to Am Yisrael with these words:

"אַשְׁרֶיךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל מִי כָמוֹךָ עַם נוֹשַׁע בַּה׳ מָגֵן עֶזְרֶךָ וַאֲשֶׁר־חֶרֶב גַּאֲוָתֶךָ וְיִכָּחֲשׁוּ אֹיְבֶיךָ לָךְ וְאַתָּה עַל־בָּמוֹתֵימוֹ תִדְרֹךְ

Happy are you, Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by Hashem, the shield of your help and the sword of your pride! Your enemies shall come dwindle away before you, and you shall tread on their backs" (Devarim 33:29)

Notice what Moshe doesn't say. He doesn't promise that we will never have enemies. The Jewish people having enemies trying to kill them has been a constant throughout Jewish history. But what he says is "happy are you," because we are a people saved by Hashem. Rashi explains that Hashem is both the shield and the sword. He protects us and He fights for us. And

in the end, our enemies are the ones who fall.

The Gemara in Masechet Shabbat says that a person should never stand in a place of danger and say “a miracle will happen for me,” because it might not happen. We are supposed to act. That doesn’t mean Hashem wasn’t there. It means this is how He shows up, through people who step up. I don’t know why some stories play out like this plane incident and others play out worse. But this Gemara and the pasuk describe what I saw this past week: people who were attacked were saved because they acted, and in the end came out stronger.

This Shabbat marks three years since October 7. What happened on that day is on a completely different scale from what could have been with this flight. But it’s hard to read about a plane heading home almost going down on Sukkot without thinking of that day. So this Simchat Torah, just as Am Yisrael has done the past few years, we dance with both grief for what we lost and gratitude for what we still have. Because despite all the tragedy Am Yisrael has experienced, in the end we always come out stronger and on top.

Shabbat Shalom and Chag Sameach!

P.S. All the news in the first paragraph about the flight is according to firsthand accounts from the passengers and early reports, the full details are subject to change.