YEARNING FOR GEULOH

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The Rambam writes (הלכות מלך המשנה פ מ י"א): Anyone who does not believe in the coming of Moshiach, or even if someone believes but does not yearn for his coming, he not only denies the prophecy of our Nevi'im, but he also denies the Torah and Moshe Rabenu, because the Torah says, שבעת י' א ואש שבעות ורומד ושבע י' קבוצ 되 כל העמים שאר הפ יצו יא, והיה שמים (דברים י', א). Hashem will then bring you back and have mercy on you and will bring you back and gather you from all the nations where Hashem has scattered you.

This idea is expressed in various Maamarei Chazal. We are told (שבת י' פ מ י"א), that one of the questions a person will be asked when he reaches the heavenly throne is: Did you look forward and wait for the Redemption to come? Similarly, the Gemoro (ראשהであること פ מ י"א), quotes the Novi Yirmiyohu (رسمו פ מ י"א). The prophet bemoans the fact that no one seeks צידע and our Sages deduce from this posuk that צידע needs seeking, that we have to yearn and seek for its return to its former glory. The Rambam includes this in the twelfth of the thirteen principles of Emunoh, א"כ אם ממית באומת נשיםbows כבאס המשיח, I have total belief that Moshiach will come, and even though he is delayed, לא על פי שימentreprise י' כל זה אוחז פ בבי ושיבת. I nevertheless wait for him every day that he will come.

However, the same Rambam writes in הלכות תשובה פ מ י"א, that the Jewish people will never be redeemed unless Klal Yisroel does teshuva, and the Torah promises us that the Jewish people will do teshuva at the end of their Golus, whereupon they will immediately be redeemed. The Rambam quotes the posuk (דברים י', פ מ)

And when all these things, the brochos and the klokos which I have set before you shall come to pass, then you shall reflect upon them in your hearts among the nations where the L-rd, your G-d has driven you. And you will return to the L-rd your G-d and you will listen to His voice according to all I have commanded
you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul. Then the L-rd your G-d will restore your captivity and He will have mercy upon you and He will again gather you from all the peoples where the L-rd your G-d has scattered you.

This Rambam is based on the opinion of R’ Eliezer (ועליזר סימא) who states that unless Bnei Yisroel do teshuva there will be no redemption. When R’ Eliezer was asked whether the redemption would really not come if Bnei Yisroel would not do teshuva, he answered that if they do not do teshuva on their own, Hashem will appoint a harsh king and then they will do teshuva, but without teshuva there will be no redemption.

If that is so, how do we explain that every day we hope and yearn that Moshiach will come on this very day when, unfortunately, the situation is that most of Bnei Yisroel - the great majority - are far removed from teshuva? How can we await Moshiach and the redemption any and every day? It is clear that, somehow, our actions and expectations can influence the coming of Moshiach.

We can find an answer by examining the Midrash describing the situation when Dovid Hamelech desired to build the Beis Hamikdosh. The Novi in Sefer Shmuel (פ' ג) and in Divrei Hayomim ינ (ר'כ) tells us that after Dovid was well established in his palace, he said to Nison Hanovin “How can I sit comfortably in a permanent palace and the holy Ark still moves from place to place in a tent?” ר'כ’s response was that before Dovid no one else expressed this feeling and therefore the Mikdash would be built not by Dovid Hamelech, but by his son, Shlomo. The Midrash explains that if Dovid Hamelech would have built the Mikdash, הקב would never have destroyed it. Then when Bnei Yisroel turned away from הקב, the punishment of the Ribono shel Olam would not have been vented on the Beis Hamikdosh (i.e., on the wood and stones), but י科幻, on the Bnei Yisroel themselves. The Novi continues by telling us that הקב brought a great famine on the Jewish people. The Ramban in Parshas Korach (ה' כ) deliberates why the Bnei Yisroel were punished with famine and explains that during all of the hundreds of years of the period of the Shofrim - the Judges - nobody came forward with the sentiment that Dovid Hamelech expressed - How can we live comfortably in our cities while the holy Ark remains in a tent and travels from place to place? Had they expressed that sentiment, the Beis Hamikdosh could have been built much earlier and then even Dovid Hamelech could
have built it, for the initiators would have been Klal Yisroel. Only because Dovid Hamelech was the one who initiated it, the Mikdosh could not be built during his lifetime but had to be postponed until a generation later when Shlomo became king. That is why Bnei Yisroel were being punished with a famine during the time of Dovid Hamelech. And the Ramban quotes the words of a posuk, וְזָכַר הַנָּבִיא מַגִּיד ( trebuie, ד, קא, הלן נזרו הקבש שמעוש רכיבי, ד), which means “You should seek the presence of the Shechina in your midst and that way you come there”.

This Ramban is difficult, however, because even if the Bnei Yisroel would have wanted to have a Mikdosh at that time, it could not have been built because Chazal teach us that when Bnei Yisroel came to Eretz Yisroel they were given three sequential commandments: to appoint a king, to wipe out Amalek and to build a Mikdosh. There was no king at that time, and Amalek had not yet been wiped out, so how could they have built a Mikdosh? It would be difficult to answer that they should have appointed a king and fought Amalek because we find that even when they did ask for a king later at the time of Shmuel Hanovi, it was too early and Shmuel was upset.

We believe the answer may be that when Bnei Yisroel desire something which is to their spiritual betterment, it responds to that desire positively even changing the normal sequence of events. Since Bnei Yisroel did not ask for a Mikdosh it showed that they themselves did not feel the need for it and so the normal course of events followed, namely, to first appoint a king, to fight Amalek and then to build the Mikdosh. If Bnei Yisroel had felt a spiritual vacuum and had desired and demanded a permanent place for Shechina in their midst, then they would have responded immediately to fulfill their wish. Since they did not feel this need, and only Dovid Hamelech as an individual felt it, it was delayed and as a result the famine came.

We can see this point in a number of other places. Just to cite one. We find in Parshas Behaaloscho that the bearers of Yoseph’s coffin could not bring the Korban Pesach because they had become אכלה - impure - as a result of carrying it. They came to Moshe and expressed their distress at being deprived of bringing the Korban of חטאת amongst the rest of Bnei Yisroel. Moshe Rabbenu responded that he would have to consult Kabbalistic authorities responded that those who were impure on Erev Pesach could bring the Korban Pesach a month later. Their request was
rather unusual, because if the halacha says you cannot bring a Korban Pesach, there is normally nothing you can do about it. However, their spiritual yearning for the elevation that comes about from bringing the Korban Pesach was such that they could not bear the thought of being deprived. רשב״ת responded to this spiritual yearning with the introduction of the new halocha of Pesach Sheni.

With this thought we can answer our original question. Under normal circumstances the redemption will not take place until Klal Yisroel does teshuva. However, when there is a strong yearning from even a section of Klal Yisroel that, in itself, will hasten the Geuloh even if the normal requirements have not yet been met. This is the meaning of yearning for the redemption, because that in itself will hasten and bring the redemption sooner. Therefore Chazal and the Rambam said that it is not enough to believe in Geuloh, but one has to hope and yearn for it in order to speed its coming.

It has been quoted in the name of the Chofetz Chaim that he related that a delegation from Brisk came to offer Reb Yoshe Ber Soloveichik, the Rav of Slutsk, the rabbinical seat of Brisk. They tried to prevail on him to accept but he did not think it appropriate to leave his current position, and after a discussion of a number of hours they could not prevail upon him to relent. Finally, a member of the Brisk delegation stood up and said, “Rebbe, there are 30,000 Yehudim of Brisk who are waiting for your coming - you must come!” When he heard that, he turned to his Rebbetzin and said, “You heard that they are waiting for me to come. If that is so, I must go.” So, the Chofetz Chaim said, can you imagine if even a section of Bnei Yisroel would earnestly wait for the redemption, what the response of רשב״ת would be? Certainly He would say, “Let Me go and redeem My people.”

In our days, thank G-d, we live in an era of prosperity and comfort and a problem arises because therefore a genuine yearning for a change in the Golus situation is missing. We forget that however pleasant and comfortable the Golus is, the situation, G-d forbid, could change. This is so beautifully illustrated in a parable in מענין דברי הר המדרש ע״ה. Rabba Bar Bar Chono relates that one day they were traveling on a ship and saw a little island upon which vegetation grew and alighted from the ship, made a fire and cooked and baked. Suddenly the island started to turn over and they were all plunged into the water. They were only saved because
they were near the ship. The island was really not an island at all but a sleeping giant whale. The Maharsha explains that this parable illustrates our situation in Golus. We are shipbound, traveling from place to place, sometimes thinking that we have reached dry land, but it is only an illusion, it is only a temporary situation. In the end they all had to run back to the ship.

We must realize that the brocho of peace and prosperity that gives us is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. If we realize this, it will be possible for us to feel a void, a vacuum and to yearn for fulfillment. In the posuk says: רכ לשב סב את רמה וו מים לבש - the time has come for you to leave the mount - and move northwards. However, Chazal explain this word to mean that when dealing with Eisov, היכם ולבש - hide yourselves. This in this context does not mean north, it means hide yourselves, which the Kli Yoter explains to mean that when you bless you with wealth, do not display it and thereby entice the ire of the population where you dwell. Hide it and live quietly. Indeed, we can determine whether we consider our well-being as an end in itself or as a means to an end by how we live. The Kli Yoter explains that the display of wealth by the Jewish people was the root cause of our troubles throughout the generations.

Rosh Hashono is coming and we all realize that our lives and well-being is being decided on that day. However, a glance at the tefillos that the Men of the Great Assembly devised and gave us for Rosh Hashono, shows us that the issues we normally pray for, good health, livelihood, joy from the family are not included; all these requests have been added on much later in the piyutim. All that is included in the text of the Shemonei Esrai is the re-establishment of Malchus Shomayim, of the Kovod of אכיב, of the eradication of evil, which are all spiritual requests. We show that we realize that our own personal well-being depends upon the realization of our spiritual requests in the Shemonei Esrai. To the extent that our lives and well-being are conducive to that spiritual end, our tefillos will be answered as we say ובברך ליום אמו ישראל, remember us for life because our lives are for You.

As a preparation for Rosh Hashono, we have to rethink what life is about, what is the tachlis and what is only the means to an end. By doing that we will be able to express a genuine yearning for the Redemption for which we are praying.