

# YEARNING FOR GEULOH

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The Rambam writes (הלכות מלכים פי י"א ה' 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 *Neviim*, but he also denies the Torah and Moshe Rabbenu, because the Torah says, ושב ה' א' את שבותך ורחמך ושב וקבצך מכל העמים אשר הפיצך ה' א', שמה (דברים ל' ג') 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 ל"א), that one of the questions a person will be asked when he reaches the heavenly throne is צפית לישועה, did you look forward and wait for the Redemption to come? Similarly, the Gemoro (ראש השנה ל' א'), quotes the *Novi Yirmiyohu* (ירמיה ל' י"ז) ציון היא דורש אין לה. The prophet bemoans the fact that no one seeks ציון and our Sages deduce from this *posuk* that ציון 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*, אני מאמין באמונה שלמה בביאת המשיח, I have total belief that *Moshiach* will come, and even though he is delayed, ואף על פי שיתמהמה עם כל זה אחכה לו בכל יום שיבא, I nevertheless wait for him every day that he will come.

However, the same *Rambam* writes in הלכות תשובה, פי ז' ה"ה, that the Jewish people will never be redeemed unless *Klal Yisroel* does *teshuvo*, 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 ל'),

And when all these things, the *brochos* and the *klolos* 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 (סנהדרין צ"ז ב') who states that unless *Bnei Yisroel* do *teshuvo* there will be no redemption. When R' Eliezer was asked whether the redemption would really not come if *Bnei Yisroel* would not do *teshuvo*, he answered that if they do not do *teshuvo* on their own, *Hashem* will appoint a harsh king and then they will do *teshuvo*, but without *teshuvo* 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 *teshuvo*? 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* (פרק ז') and in *Divrei Hayomim* (פרק י"ז) tells us that after Dovid was well established in his palace, he said to *Noson Hanovi* "How can I sit comfortably in a permanent palace and the holy Ark still moves from place to place in a tent?" The *Novi's* response was that before Dovid no one else expressed this feeling and therefore the *Mikdosh* would be built not by *Dovid Hamelech*, but by his son, Shlomo. The *Midrash* explains that if *Dovid Hamelech* would have built the *Mikdosh*, the *Novi* would never have destroyed it. Then when *Bnei Yisroel* turned away from the *Novi*, the punishment of the *Ribono shel Olam* would not have been vented on the *Beis Hamikdosh* (i.e., on the wood and stones), but on the *Bnei Yisroel* themselves. The *Novi* continues by telling us that the *Novi* brought a great famine on the Jewish people. The *Ramban* in *Parshas Korach* (במדבר ט"ז כ"א) deliberates why the *Bnei Yisroel* were punished with famine and explains that during all of the hundreds of years of the period of the *Shoftim* - 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*, (דברים י"ב, ה') לשכנו תדרשו ובאת שמה 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, הקב"ה 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 הקב"ה in their midst, then הקב"ה 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 טמא - impure - as a result of carrying it. They came to *Moshe* and expressed their distress at being deprived of bringing the *Korban* of הקב"ה amongst the rest of *Bnei Yisroel*. *Moshe Rabbenu* responded that he would have to consult הקב"ה. הקב"ה 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 *halocho* 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. הקב"ה responded to this spiritual yearning with the introduction of the new *halocho* 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 *teshuvo*. 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 הקב"ה 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 גמי בבא בתרא ע"ג ב'. Rabba 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 *הקבי"ה* 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 *דברים (בי ג')* the *posuk* says: *את ההר הזה פנו לכם* - the time has come for you to leave the mount - *הר שעיר* and move northwards. However, *Chazal* explain this word to mean that when dealing with *Eisov*, *הצפינו לכם* - hide yourselves. *צפון* in this context does not mean north, it means *הצפינו* hide yourselves, which the *Kli Yokor* explains to mean that when *הקבי"ה* blesses 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 Yokor* 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 *אנשי כנסת הגדולה* (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 *הקבי"ה*, 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 *זכרונו לחיים למענך* *אלקים חיים*, yes, 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 *במהרה בימנו אמן*.