

Bechukosai - Rabbi Lerner - May 12, 2011

The Final Portion of the Tochachah

26:40-44: There is a glimmer of hope at the end of this lengthy rebuke, after an awakening of the people and realization of the cause of all their suffering, with a confession by the people as the final part of teshuvah. *Then they will confess their sin and the sin of their forefathers, for the treachery with which they betrayed Me, and also for having behaved toward Me with casualness, with a feeling of randomness - kerí - as if everything is random rather than controlled by God. I will also behave with you with kerí and will bring them into the land of their enemies, perhaps then their unfeeling heart will be humbled and then they will gain appeasement for their sin. I will remember the bris with Yaacov, Yitzchak, and Avraham, and I will remember the land. The land will be bereft of them and it will be appeased for all of the years of Shemittah that were ignored; they must gain appeasement for their sin. But it will not be total destruction in the land of their enemies because I am their God.*

If pasuk 40 talks about their doing teshuvah, why does the next pasuk say that Hashem will (future tense) act with kerí and bring them into the land of their enemies. Why talk about their sins again if they have done teshuvah? And why mention the Avos in reverse order?

Rashi: the sins of the fathers are being repeated by the children.

Rashi: I will bring them into the land of their enemies - Hashem Himself will do this - this is actually a good thing for the Jewish people, so that the Jews will not assimilate - Hashem won't allow them to assimilate; Hashem will ultimately bring them back from exile; He will set up prophets to chastise them in galus and keep them from straying. Hashem doesn't allow us to assimilate by creating hatred of the Jews by the goyim.

Sforno: when it says they will confess their sins it means only some of them will confess their sins - leaders like Daniel and Ezra; only the more righteous ones will confess.

Ramban: after it says they will confess their sins, the Torah should have skipped pasuk 41 which talks about galus again - it created havoc with the simple interpretation of these pasukim. Therefore, what it means is that even after they have said their confession, Hashem will still allow apparent natural disasters to strike them until their stubborn hearts will be humbled. This is an allusion to our being brought into the land of Israel, but it will not be reconquered by the Jews; there will be difficult enemies afflicting us when we return to the land of Israel, as Ezra writes after their return to Israel: *Behold we are like slaves in the promised land given to our forefathers, in our own land; all of the good that was promised to us, with the fruit and produce and cattle, all go to our rulers; we are in a pitiful state here in our own land.* So, our initial confession will get us back to Eretz Yisrael, but it will be a very problematic return; we will still be suffering.

Rashi (in the beginning of Sefer Ezra): the beginning of this period of history unfolded after the death of Belshazzar, with the ascension of the Median king, Darius. Darius is followed by Cyrus the Great - he is the first Persian king. In his first year it was the completion of the 70 years of Galus Bavel from the captivity of Yehoyakim - the beginning of the galus, but not from the date of the destruction of the first Temple. So, Hashem saves us after the first 70 year anniversary, and Cyrus gave permission not just for the Jews to return, but also to lay the cornerstone of a new Temple. But, then the anti-Semites started to slander the Jews to Cyrus, and he then stopped the building of the Temple. The Jews were then stymied for the remainder of the reign of Cyrus, and the reign of Achashverosh who succeeded him. It was not until Darius the

son of Esther when the Jews were allowed to build the Temple; he was a righteous king who allowed the construction of the Temple in his second year. From the time of Cyrus until the second year of Darius was 18 more years - these extra 18 years were to mark the completion of 70 years from the destruction of the first Temple. There were different anniversaries of 70 years; the real end of the Galus was this last one when the Temple building could go forward without impediment.

Ramban: only after these additional 18 years is there true redemption. Pasuk 41 alludes to the fact that there will still be suffering in Eretz Yisrael; although it ultimately got better, it still was not great there since most of the Jews never returned to the land and remained in exile.

Ramban: the first Tochachah has to do with the first Galus, Galus Bavel. The second longer one alludes to the current, much longer Galus that we are still in.

Abarbanel refutes the Ramban - the two Tochachahs are not separate - the second is an elaboration of the first. This pasuk refers to the status of the Jews even after the first redemption, that we will go into a second galus which will go on and on because we have not really done true teshuvah - most Jews were happy to stay in galus. This pasuk alludes to the fact that the subsequent exiles will be much worse than the first.

26:42: Why are the Avos listed in reverse order? **Rashi**: it would be enough if He just remembered Yaacov, the smallest of the three - even the zechus of Yaacov should be adequate to redeem us. And if that is not sufficient, we can draw on the merit of Yitzchak; and if that is not enough, then certainly Avraham's zechus should be enough.

Ramban and **Abarbanel**: the pasuk says *and also* for Yitzchak and Avraham, because their merit was not as great as Yaacov - Avraham had a Yishmael, and Yitzchak had an Esav - Yaacov's zechus was complete, he had the greatest reward, his children were all righteous; we first go to the main account, and if needed, we draw on other accounts.

26:42: What does it mean by adding *I will remember the land*. **Rabbi Tachtal - Aim Habanim Semaychah**: there was a letter written by the first Lehavitcher Rebbe to Rav Levi Yitzchak when he was incarcerated in jail in St. Petersburg and was then released in Kislev - he notified his friend that he was free - *who am I, this lowly person, that through me there is a great kiddush Hashem - it was surely God's doing, and I take no credit for it. God wants to help me because of the zechus of the land and those who are living in Eretz Yisrael. This is what stood for us and will help us in all times, and will save us from those who persecute us*. The zechus of Eretz Yisrael can save people. When Hashem says He will remember the land, He is telling us that there is something to our credit beyond the zechus Avos - the land. Hashem will always remember the land and the Jews who love the land. He will always show gratitude to those who love the land. That is why he titled the work *Aim Habanim* - a woman never gives up on her children; Hashem never gives up on His children who remember the land. The greatest relationship is between a mother and child - the mother is always Midas Harachamim.

Oznayim LaTorah: in Tehilim (Perek 102) there is a pasuk that talks about the zechus of those who remember Eretz Yisrael - *Hashem will come and stand and have mercy on Zion because your children wanted the stones of the land and they find favor even rolling in the dust of the land*. If you love the land that much, Hashem will reciprocate and save us.