

## THE THIRD — AND COMPLETE REDEMPTION

By BENJAMIN BAK

In *Parashat Lech Lecha*, God promised the land of Israel to Abraham and his children three times. First we find this promise: וירא ה' אל אברם ויאמר לזרעך אתן את הארץ הזאת . . . (בראשית יב:ו)

A second time we are told:

וה' אמר אל אברם אחרי הפרד לוט מעמו שא נא עיניך וראה מן המקום אשר אתה שם צפנה ונגבה וקרמה וימה. כי את כל הארץ אשר אתה רואה לך אתננה ולזרעך עד עולם (שם יג:יד-טו)

And finally, we find the third solemn promise:

ויאמר אליו אני ה' אשר הוצאתיך מאור כשדים לתת לך את הארץ לרשתה (שם טו:ו)

Three times God promised the land to Abraham. Yet Abraham questioned its fulfillment:

ויאמר, ה' אלקים כמה ארע כי אירשנה (שם זז')

Why was it necessary for God to repeat the same promise three times? And why was Abraham so skeptical about its fulfillment?

In the first two promises God employed the term *Etain* "I shall give." In the third promise there is a change of language: Abraham is promised a *Yerushah* or "inheritance." We know that *Yerushah* comes only after a loss is sustained. *Avraham Avinu* asks: *Bamah Aidah?* He wants to know what price will have to be paid for this *Yerushah!* And he is especially disturbed by the mention of *Ur Kasdim* in connection with the third promise. *Ur Kasdim* brought back memories of the fiery furnace into which he was cast because of his faith. Will fiery furnaces precede the redemption of the land of Israel? God put to rest all of Abraham's doubts and fears:

ויאמר אליו קחה לי עגלה משלשת (שם ט')

The three separate promises represent three distinct redemptions and deliverance in Jewish history. The first deliverance will

be fulfilled after *Galut Mitzrayim*. After a period of slavery and oppression in Egypt the Jewish people will enter the promised land. They will take possession of the land, establish a glorious kingdom and build a magnificent *Beit Hamikdash*. But the land will not be theirs forever. They will inhabit it for eight and a half centuries; then a tragic *Hurban* will occur. The *Beit Hamikdash* will go up in flames and the people will be exiled into Babylonian captivity.

Then will come the second deliverance. *Galut Bavel* will last only 70 years and the children of Israel will return to the land of their ancestors; they will build a second *Beit Hamikdash* and establish a second commonwealth. Again this return will not last forever. The second commonwealth will also be destroyed — this time by the Romans, and the Jewish people will be scattered all over the globe. Nineteen centuries of wandering, pogroms, persecution and oppression will elapse before the third deliverance will occur. This time it will be an everlasting and eternal one. There will never again be a *Hurban* after the third return, because this return will occur after the greatest of all calamities to befall our people. "I am the Lord who brought you out from *Ur Kasdim*," from the *fiery furnace*. The new conquerors and possessors of the land will be the survivors of crematoria and gas chambers, and as a reward for the fiery martyrdom of the people I promise that the land will be theirs forever — a *Yerushah!*

And so my friends, this ought to be our great source of *Nehamah*: *There will never be a third hurban!* Despite the many enemies that surround Israel and seek to destroy it, Israel will live forever!

The late Chief Rabbi of Israel, *Harav* Isaac Herzog of blessed memory, was on a visit to this country in 1942, and suddenly decided to fly home despite the fact that the Nazis were knocking at the gates of Alexandria. To his many friends who urged him to remain in the States, he said: "I have a *Kabalah* that there will not be a third *Hurban!*

As part of the service of blessing the new month this morning we prayed for a future redemption:

... מי שעשה נסים לאבותינו . . .

“He who wrought miracles for our fathers and redeemed them from slavery to freedom, may He soon redeem us and gather our exiled brethren from the four corners of the earth; for all Israel is one fellowship, and let us say, Amen.”

According to tradition, our period of slavery in Egypt was originally intended to last 400 years, but God in His mercy, seeing the rapid spiritual deterioration of the people, shortened it to 210 years. We pray to the Almighty that our present dispersion should also come to a speedy conclusion, even before the termination of the originally assigned period of *Galut*. And may we hope that the *Geulah Sheleimah* will soon be fulfilled in our days. Amen.