



## RABBI AARON GOLDSCHIEDER

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# The Avodah of Tisha B'Av

### UNCEASING ANTICIPATION

A well-known Talmudic teaching states that we will be asked six questions by the heavenly court regarding our time on earth. A question asked of every Jew is: *Tzipita leye'shuah*? "Did you await the redemption?" A Jew is to yearn for the Messianic days which is highlighted by the return of the Jewish people to the Holy Land. (Shabbat 31a)

Many have been puzzled in trying to locate the precise Torah source for the obligation of "awaiting the redemption." One would assume that the fundamental concept of anticipating the redemption should be based on a particular verse in the Torah.

In the classic compilation of the 613 mitzvot by the *S"mak* (*Sefer Mitzvot Katan*) written in the 1300s by Isaac of Corbeil, he claims that the obligation of "awaiting the redemption" is contained in the first commandment of the Ten Commandments. "Just as we are to believe that God redeemed us from Egypt, we must also believe that God will redeem us at the end of days. The story of the Jews leaving Egypt is not meant to only recall what happened in the past but it also symbolizes what will happen in the future."

The eminent chief rabbi of the Old City of Jerusalem, Rav Avigdor Nevenzhah, suggested



Rav Avigdor Nevenzhah

that there is another source in the Torah that hints to the obligation to anticipate the redemption. When the Torah relays the law of offering the daily sacrifice, the pasuk says that this law requires *shmira*, a close watch

(*Bamidbar* 28:2). This is generally understood to mean that one must be scrupulous in observing these laws. Rav Nevenzhah, however, suggested that the word *shmira* has another meaning. The Hebrew word *Shomer* can also mean to await, anticipate, or pine for something. Thus, one can interpret this verse to mean that although the sacrifices cannot be brought at this

time without the Beit Hamikdash, we anxiously await its rebuilding.

One must await the redemption. (*Yerushalayim be'Moadeah, Bein Hameitzarim*, Nevenzhah pp. 86-87)

### IMPULSIVE?...YES

Rav Yitzchak Mirsky, author of the popular series of sefarim *Hegiyonei Halacha*, takes note of the fact that there are two distinct times in the Talmud when the Jewish people are criticized for being an *ama paziza*, an impulsive nation.

First, the story is told about the Talmudic sage Rava who was so immersed in his Torah study that he failed to notice that his fingers pressed beneath his legs began to bleed from

the pressure. A certain heretic who witnessed this scene called him out and said, "You are a nation that is impulsive. You act without thinking. This undesirable trait of yours goes back to your response at Mt. Sinai when you accepted the Torah without even knowing what exactly you were accepting." (Shabbat 88a)

Little did this heretic realize that this episode was actually one of our nation's proudest moments. The people of Israel's overhasty acceptance of the Torah was a deep expression of love and profound devotion to Hashem.

The second time that the Talmud employs the expression *ama paziza* (impetuous nation) is also when a heretic hurled this same insult toward an eminent talmudic sage. "When Rabbi Zeira ascended to Eretz Yisrael he could not find a ferry to cross the Jordan river. He took hold of a rope [that was strung across as a makeshift bridge] and crossed the Jordan." He was ridiculed by a certain heretic who said that you are an *ama paziza*, impetuous people. Rabbi Zeira answered: Moshe and Aharon did not merit seeing the Land; now that I have the opportunity I will not miss the chance. (*Ketubot* 112b).

The love that a Jew has for Torah and for Eretz Yisrael is driven by a deep attachment to holiness and an attempt to experience true closeness to the Shechina.

In a well-known quip from Rav Kook, he once said that one of the fiercest kings which the Jewish people had to vanquish when entering the Land of Israel was *Melech Cheshbon*. In a brilliant play on words, Rav Kook said that one who wants to make aliyah has to be willing to conquer *Cheshbon* ("precise calculations"). Moving to Israel often entails leaving behind the financial stability that one had in the diaspora,

one's friends and family, and the familiar communities in which one was raised.

Eretz Yisrael will always be built by those dreamers who heroically act upon their idealism and with great zeal achieve what appears to be at times virtually impossible to attain.

### MOSHE BARRED FROM BURIAL IN THE LAND

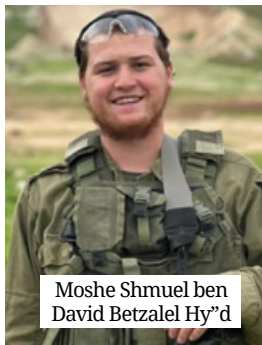
Rebbe Meir Yechiel Halstock (1889-1928), the Ostrovitzer Rebbe, cites a striking midrash in which Moshe Rabbeinu requested of God to allow his bones to be carried to the Land of Israel and be buried in its holy soil. Moshe argues that Yosef's bones were brought from Egypt and reinterred in the Land of Israel. Why then should I not be honored in the same way?

The Almighty's answer to Moshe is quite powerful. Yosef, who associated himself with the Land is merited to be buried in the Land, but you, Moshe, did not identify yourself as a citizen of the Land of Israel. The midrash clarifies this statement: Yosef publicly declares that he had been stolen from the

Land of the *ivrim* (Jews). A reference to the Land of Israel.

In contrast, says the Midrash, when Moshe ran away from Egypt and found himself at the well of Yitro, the daughters of Yitro identified him as an *ish mitzri*, a man from Egypt. Moshe heard this and did not correct them. Thus, God said, you failed to associate yourself with the Land of Israel and therefore you are not worthy to even be buried in the Land.

The Rebbe of Ostrovitzer, asked the following ostensibly obvious question regarding the teaching in this Midrash. How does the Midrash make the comparison between Yosef and Moshe? Yosef does in fact live in Israel and therefore he considered the Land of Israel to



Moshe Shmuel ben David Betzalel Hy"d

be his home. Moshe never lived in Israel. How can the midrash hold him accountable for not associating with Israel as his home?

The Rebbe offered a penetrating answer: The Land of Israel was given to every descendant of Avraham. Every Jew should view residing outside of the Land as something impermanent. A Jew's authentic place of residence is only in the Holy Land. (*Hegiyonei Halacha*, vol. 2, Mirsky, pp. 229-230).

### **"DON'T GO INTO GAN EDEN"**

A Jew's yearning for redemption is a mitzvah which is ongoing. Yet, there are times when our collective desire to witness the final salvation is intensified. At this time, when the Nation of Israel is in the midst of a war, we continue to experience the excruciating pain of the loss of soldiers on a constant basis. Our hearts are torn and we raise our voice to Heaven with an intense prayer for *geulah*.



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A few weeks ago a young soldier by the name of Moshe Shmuel Noll Hy" d from Ramat Beit Shemesh was killed in Gaza. He was one of the five soldiers from the Netzach Yehudah Battalion in the Kfir Brigade who was killed in the incident. Moshe was 21 years old.

The family's rabbi offered a heartwrenching eulogy at the burial. The rav, Rebbe Kalman Shapira is the grandson of Reb Yeshaya Shapira zt"l who was known as the *Admor HaChalutz* and he was one of the most illustrious students of Rav Kook.

The Rebbe first shared that Moshe's mother relayed to him that she wanted her beloved son to be buried on Har Herzl. The Rebbe said that he said to her, "I know exactly why you want him to be buried on Har Herzl. It is because it is from that spot that all the holy souls will first rise during *Techiyat Hameitim*, the Resurrection of the Dead."

The Rebbe continued his eulogy by describing Moishy's soul ascending to the heavens and how all the gates will open and hosts of angels will accompany him to the entrance of Gan Eden. The angels will lead him to the sublime place that is prepared for him.

And then the Rebbe cried out with terrible shouts: "Moishy, don't go in! Don't you dare agree to enter Gan Eden! If you go on you will forget us. Please, tell them you are not willing to enter until the Holy One, Blessed be He, answers your prayers and and ours, that the Geulah will finally come. Moishy, I know you well, you are a strong man, don't go in!"

The sentiments expressed by the Rebbe of Aish Kodesh in Ramat Beit Shemesh can be understood within the framework of the Chasidic tradition which at times allows speaking forcefully to God and demanding heavenly compassion. A number of powerful examples of this can be found in remarkable stories about

Rebbe Levi Yitzchak of Berditchov, lovingly known as the “Defender of Am Yisrael.” The following exquisite prayer uttered by Rebbe Levi Yitzchak captures this distinct approach:

“Master of the World, what does it take to rebuild the Holy Temple in Jerusalem? Some iron, some stones, and some water. Well we have plenty of that.

Iron? Look at the ironclad resilience of your people. We have been tested time and again, and we have remained steadfast and strong like iron. So many have tried to force us to bend our ways and we have not bent an iota.

Stone? Father in heaven, You know that there have been those of us who have not been able to withstand the suffering, and their hearts have turned to stone. They have tried, but the challenges have been too great; their soft and sensitive hearts have been transformed into stone.

Water? Oy, dear God, how many tears have been shed throughout our long and bitter exile? How many broken hearts have cried rivers and oceans of tears? How many tears have been spilled over the tragedies of our brothers and sisters?

So You see, dear Lord, You have everything you need. Then what are you waiting for?”

(Touched By Tears, A Kinnos Companion, Spero, p. 284)

In our prayers for *Geulah* this Tisha Be'Av let us have in mind the sacred soul of Moshe Shmuel ben David Betzalel Hy”d together with all those who sacrificed their lives for *Klal Yisrael*.

May the *Geulah Shlema* come quickly in our day. Amen. ■



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