

Parsha Pearls



FROM THE WORDS OF THE GEDOLIM

Hashem caused this to come about, it is wondrous in our eyes. (Hallel, Tehillim 118:23)

The Metzudos David explains that this chapter of Tehillim will be said by the Jewish people upon their redemption from exile. It begins, “Give thanks to Hashem for He is good,” and then continues, “From the straits I called out to Hashem...” and describes the travails of exile. When the exile is over and the Temple is built, we will say, “Open for me the gates of justice,” the gates of the Temple, “I will go in through them and give thanks to Hashem...the stone that the builders discarded has become the cornerstone; Hashem caused this to come about” – not by our own power. “It is wondrous in our eyes” – and we cannot understand how such a complete

redemption took place, something that would never have happened naturally. “This is the day that Hashem made,” the day of the redemption; “we will rejoice and be happy in it” for this redemption will surely last forever, unlike the accomplishments of human beings, which do not last.

Alternatively, the Radak explains that the nations of the world are the speakers here, and they will say when the redemption comes, “This redemption is so wondrous that it could only have been done by G-d. Why then should we be upset at the Jewish people’s success? Let us rather rejoice with them, for this is day that G-d made - the clear work of G-d.”



I keep the word of the king, and the matter of the oath of G-d. (Koheles 8:2)

Rabbi Aryeh Leib Zunz explains that Israel says during its exile, “I keep the word of the kings of my host nations, and never rebel against them, because G-d made me take an oath on this matter.” This refers to the oath in the last chapter of Kesubos (111a) that prohibits us from rebelling against the nations. On the contrary, we must always remember and teach our children the statement of our Sages (Berachos 58a), “A kingdom on earth resembles the kingdom in Heaven.” We must be humbly grateful for the kindness and generosity of the leaders of nations, and show our gratitude in

all ways possible. (Melo Ha’omer)

King Solomon expresses the same idea in another verse, “Fear Hashem, my son, and the king; and do not join changers” (Mishlei 24:21). The Malbim explains: Fear Hashem when it comes to matters of religion, and fear the king in matters of civil law; do not join those people who wish to change the political regime, to revolt against the king and replace him with a different government. For if you do this you are ignoring also the fear of Hashem, Who commanded that you fear the king.

When the children of Israel passed by the land of Edom on their way to the Promised Land, G-d told Moshe to warn the people, “They will be afraid of you, but be very careful. Do not start up with them!” (Devarim 2:4) Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel said, “If when they afraid of us the Holy One, blessed is He, told us to be very careful, now that we are in exile, surrounded by them, all the more so!” (Midrash Lekach Tov, Parshas Devarim)

Yishaya the Prophet said, “And the people did not return to the one who smote them, and they did not

seek Hashem Tzeva-os” (9:12). The Gaon of Vilna explains: When Hashem causes Israel to be subjugated by a nation, the right thing is to accept their rule with love and humble ourselves under the hand of that nation. This is what Yirmiyah the Prophet said (27:17), “And they shall serve the king of Babylonia and live.” During that subjugation we must seek Hashem with all our hearts. (Commentary of the Gra on Yishaya)

The prime example of the Jewish attitude toward gentile leaders is found in the story of Yaakov’s meeting with his brother Esav, who wanted to kill him. He sent Esav a lavish gift, several herds of animals led separately by his servants. The Torah says that Yaakov instructed the first servant to tell Esav,

“This is from your servant Yaakov, a gift sent to my master Esav.” Then it says, “And he commanded also the second one, also the third one, also all those who went after the flocks” (Bereishis 32:20). Rabbi Kalonymus Epstein of Cracow (d. 1823) asks: Why does the Torah mention the second and third specifically, and the rest generally? It should say “he commanded the fourth and the fifth and the sixth,” or it should just say “he commanded all those who went after the flocks.”

The answer is that Yaakov’s conduct was a model for the Jews in all future exiles, and the herds he sent symbolized the respective exiles. There are four exiles: Babylonia, Persia, Greece, and Rome. The first three herds are mentioned specifically

because they each symbolize the Jewish people’s subjugation to one particular empire. But the fourth exile includes not only Rome but the many other kings and governments that have ruled over the Jews throughout the past 2000 years. Yaakov commanded us, his descendants, to follow his example in the first, second and third exiles, and in all subsequent exiles. If we do so, then just as Yaakov’s bowing and gifts softened Esav’s heart and transformed him into a friend who did him no harm, the same will be true of any nations who wish to harm us. When they see that we humble ourselves before them, not using belligerent words but rather words of appeasement, accepting their rule upon us, they will sweeten and be unable to harm us at all. (Maor Vashemesh, Parshas Vayishlach)



And Hashem said to him, “This is the land that I promised to Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, saying, to your seed I will give it. I have shown it to you in your eyes, but you will not cross over there.” (Devarim 34:4)

The Midrash (Parshas Masei, on Bamidbar 34:2) says that this teaches that Hashem showed Moshe a vision of Gehinom. Moshe began to be afraid, but Hashem said, “I have shown it to you in your eyes, but you will not cross over there.” Where does the Midrash see in this verse any reference to Gehinom? The verse is only saying that Moshe was permitted to see Eretz Yisroel.

The answer is based on the Midrash in Bereishis Rabba 44:21: “Hashem showed Avraham four things: Gehinom, the exiles, the giving of the Torah and the Temple. He said to him, “As long as your descendents are busy with the last two, they will be spared the first two. But if they leave the last two, they will get the first two. [Since the Temple will one day be destroyed, they will have to get one of the punishments.] Which punishment do you choose for them?” Rabbi Chanina bar Papa said: Avraham chose

the exiles. Rabbi Yudan, Rabbi Idi and Rabbi Chama bar Chanina said: Avraham chose Gehinom, but Hashem chose for him the exiles... Rabbi Huna said in the name of Rabbi Acha: Avraham was sitting and thinking all that day: “What should I choose, Gehinom or exile?” Said the Holy One, blessed is He, to him, “Avraham! Throw away that coin [of Gehinom]!”

Thus by enduring the exile we are sparing ourselves the suffering of Gehinom. When G-d showed Moshe Eretz Yisroel, He also showed him the entire future of the Jewish people, including the exile when they would be expelled from the Holy Land. Moshe was very upset over this, so G-d showed him Gehinom so that he would know what the Jewish people were being spared by living in exile. (Vayael Moshe, p. 319)



True Torah Jews
183 Wilson St. PMB 162
Brooklyn, NY 11211

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CONCORDIA
merchant services

1710 Flushing Ave
Ridgewood NY, 11385
T: 718.963.1960 F: 718.963.1985
E: support@concordiasvc.com