

# Parsha Pearls

FROM THE WORDS OF THE GEDOLIM

Eikev 5769

**And it shall come to pass, if you listen well to My commandments, which I command you today, to love Hashem your G-d and to serve Him with all your heart and soul. (11:13)**

Regarding this verse, the Gemara (Taanis 2a) says, “What kind of service is in the heart? The answer is prayer.” The Rambam (Tefillah 1:1) counts this as one of the 613 Commandments, and adds, “The Torah does not prescribe a number of prayers, a text or a specific time for prayer... Ezra and his court composed the Eighteen Blessings.”

In Megillah 17b, the Gemara goes through all of the blessings of Shmoneh Esrei and explains the reasons for their order. The advocates of the modern return to Eretz Yisroel point to several of these explanations as proof to their version of the proper order of the redemption, but upon closer examination we can see the fallacies in their reasoning.

Firstly, the Gemara says that the blessing “who gathers in the exiles of Israel” was placed after the blessing over the fruits of the earth because Eretz Yisroel will produce fruit before the ingathering of the exiles. Actually, this is a proof against Zionism. It says that the land will give forth its fruit before the ingathering of the exiles, not that the exiles will come back to the land and cultivate it, causing it to give forth its fruit. This bearing of fruit is clearly not going to be something precipitated by Jewish efforts.

Secondly, they point to the fact that the blessing on the ingathering of the exiles comes so early in the Shmoneh Esrei, long before the building of Jerusalem and the kingship of moshiach. The Satmar Rav has already dealt with this argument in Vayoel Moshe 1:22, and we quoted his words in the Parsha Pearls for Ki Sisa 5766. The Raavad writes (on Eduyos 2:9) that in every exile, there are two times of redemption: a number of years, and a number of generations. When the number of years ends, Hashem takes the Jewish people out from their captivity and subservience to the nations, but for the fulfillment of Hashem’s promises to them they must wait until the right generation has arrived. This is why even after the time came and they left Egypt, they had to wander in the desert for 40 years until the generation destined to enter the Land had arisen. Similarly in the Babylonian exile, they were released from exile after 70 years, but the building of Jerusalem was not completed until 30 years later, in the time of Nechemiah. In the future as well, we will be gathered from all the lands of our exile to an intermediate place called “the wilderness of the nations,” and when the right generation arrives we will go from there to Eretz Yisroel. This intermediate place is described by Yechezkel: “And I will take you out from the nations, and I will gather you from the lands where you were dispersed, with a strong hand and an outstretched arm and poured out wrath. And I will bring you to the wilderness of the nations, and I will contend with you there face to face. As I contended with your ancestors in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will contend with you, said Hashem G-d. And I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into My covenant. And I will filter out from you the rebellious and the sinners against Me; from the land of their sojourn I will remove them, but to the Land of Israel they will not come, and you shall know that I am Hashem.” (Yechezkel 20:34-38)

The blessing in Shmoneh Esrei about the ingathering of the exiles refers to this first stage, when the Jews will be gathered into the wilderness of the nations. This stage comes before the building of Jerusalem. Therefore, the blessing reads simply, “Who gathers in the dispersed of His people Israel,” without saying to where. Some versions of the Nusach Ari

have the word “l’artzeinu” - to our land – in the middle of the blessing. The Arizal himself said that this blessing has 20 words, so those versions would seem to be incorrect. And even if they are correct, certainly our prayer is eventually to return to Eretz Yisroel, but the order of the blessings laid out in the Gemora in Megillah 17b relates to their main subjects, expressed in the endings of the blessings, which are the most important part. Here the main subject of the blessing is not the return to Eretz Yisroel.

Thirdly, the Gemara says that the blessing “who builds Jerusalem” comes before the blessing “the sprout of David your servant” because “once Jerusalem is built, David will come, as it says (Hoshea 3:5), ‘Afterwards the children of Israel will repent and seek Hashem their G-d and David their king.’” It seems that Jerusalem will be built before moshiach comes.

The Satmar Rav explains in Vayoel Moshe 1:57 that moshiach’s coming will be in stages. There will be a long period in which he is bringing all of the Jewish people to repent (as per Rambam Hilchos Melachim 11:4), and until he completes that task we will not accept him definitively as moshiach; he will not attain kingship. The building of Jerusalem will take place during that interim period, after moshiach has come but before he attains kingship. The blessing “the sprout of David your servant” refers to the last stage, the kingship of moshiach.

The Rebbe adds that not only will moshiach be here before the building of Jerusalem; many other tzaddikim of the past will be here as well. According to the Gemara, the blessing “restore our judges as of old” (three blessings prior to the building of Jerusalem) is based on the verse in Yishaya 1:26, “And I will restore your judges as of old, and your advisors as in the beginning.” The Yalkut Shimoni on that verse says that “judges” refers to Moshe and Aharon, and “advisors” refers to David and Shlomo. Thus we see that together with the first stage of moshiach’s arrival, there will be a limited resurrection of the dead for very great tzaddikim, to enable them to see and participate in the redemption.

We can add that the blessing “who builds Jerusalem” itself states clearly that the throne of David will be established, and this is an integral part of the blessing. When Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi prepared his famous version of the prayerbook, he brought it to the sons of Rabbi Pinchas Koritzer, who owned the printing business in Slovita. But they refused to print it, because he had made a change in the blessing about Jerusalem. Normally, the blessing goes, "And build it soon in our days an eternal building, and speedily establish the throne of your servant David in its midst; blessed are You, Hashem, Who builds Jerusalem." Rabbi Schneur Zalman, however, switched the order and wrote: "And speedily establish the throne of your servant David in its midst, and build it soon in our days an eternal building; blessed are You, Hashem..." "Why did you make this change?" they asked him. "Because the rule is that the just before the end of a blessing, before the word 'blessed,' we must say the same idea expressed at the very end of the blessing, after the word 'blessed.'" "There is no need to make any change," they said, "for our father said, 'Without the Davidic dynasty there is no building of Jerusalem.'" (See also the Bach on Orach Chaim 118, who asks Rabbi Schneur Zalman’s question.)

The fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Sholom Ber Scheersohn, discusses the order of the blessings in Igros Kodesh 1:130, and reaches a similar conclusion as the Satmar Rav. “Certainly,” he writes, “the coming of moshiach will precede the building of Jerusalem and the Temple, and the building will be done by moshiach. The exiles will be gathered by him, and then his kingship will come; that is the kingship of David. That is why the Gemara is careful with its words and states, ‘Once Jerusalem is built, David will come.’ It does not say ‘the son of David,’ the term usually used for moshiach upon his arrival. This is because ‘David’ is a term for the full-fledged kingship of moshiach, as we see in Yechezkel 37:24, ‘And My servant David will be king over them.’”

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