

# Parsha Pearls

FROM THE WORDS OF THE GEDOLIM

Haazinu 5770

**And He will say, where are their gods, the rock in which they trusted, who ate the fat of their offerings, and drank the wine of their libations? Let them arise and help you, and be a shield to you! (32:37-38)**

This prophecy about the final stage of exile foretells that the Jews will be worshipping idols at that time. Idolatry does not mean only the worship of statues – it means any denial of G-d's control over the world and attribution of that control to other forces or entities. In that context Zionism, with its claim that the Jewish people are in exile only because of their own weakness and can redeem themselves on their own initiative and with their own power, is a form of idolatry.

When Moses Mendelssohn died in 1786, the Noda Biyehuda said that Mendelssohn had the recycled soul of the founder of Christianity. Both were Jews who brought a Jewish idolatry into the world and wrought great destruction. The Noda Biyehuda prayed (or, according to another version of the story, decreed) that the soul should never come back into the world again. When Herzl founded the political Zionist movement in 1897, the Shinnover Rebbe said, “The Noda Biyehuda’s prayer was evidently not accepted. He is back again!”

Similarly, Rabbi Meir Simcha of Dvinsk said, “Zionism is a second Christianity, and Herzl is much worse than the founder of Christianity.” (Om Ani Chomah, Sivan 5734, quoted in Mishkenos Haro'im p. 391)

In the end of days, the Torah foretells in Parshas Nitzavim, the “last generation” of Jews, as well as “the gentile who comes from a faraway land,” will see the desolate condition of Eretz Yisroel and ask, “Why did Hashem do this to this land? Why was this great anger aroused?” And the answer will be that they worshipped idols (29:23-25). The Brisker Rav commented: The worst part of the tragedy described here is that the Jews will be just as ignorant as the gentiles as to what caused the Jewish people’s problems. But note that only the gentiles from faraway lands will be ignorant; the gentiles from Eretz Yisroel will know well what the problem is.

In Parshas Vayeilech, the Torah says that the Jews will repent and say, “Surely because my G-d is not in my midst, these evils have befallen me.” Then the Torah continues, “But I will hide My face on that day, due to all the evil that they did, for they turned to other gods” (31:17-18). The question is: if they are repenting, why does Hashem continue to hide His face from them? The Sforno explains that even

when tragedies befall the Jews, they do not turn to Hashem for help. Rather “they try to escape through other means.” In other words, their repentance in the previous verse was only an admission of guilt, but not a resolve to change. For all intents and purposes, they still rely on their “other means.”

What should the few remaining loyal Jews do under such conditions? Rabbi Elchonon Wasserman addresses this question: “At a time like this, such as there never was in all of Jewish history, what should we do? Should we despair of doing anything to change the situation, sit back and wait for Hashem to have mercy and bring back His people? G-d forbid to think so! The Mishnah at the end of Sotah (49b) says, ‘Just before the coming of moshiach, chutzpah will increase... the government will be transformed into heresy, and there will be no one who can rebuke...the wisdom of the sages will become rotten, those who fear sin will be despised, truth will be absent...and what will we have to rely on? Our Father in heaven.’ They say in the name of Rabbi Chaim Volozhiner that just as the rest of the Mishnah lists bad things that will happen, these last words are also a bad thing, the worst of all the curses: that the Jews who fear sin at that time will give up hope and stop fighting the war of Hashem, saying, ‘We will rely on our Father in heaven.’ But this is a terrible mistake. Scripture calls out to us (Tehillim 68:35), ‘Give strength to G-d.’” (Omer Ani Maasai Lamelech, paragraph 7)

In another place, Rabbi Elchonon elaborates on this theme, “Can we fulfill our obligations by saying ‘we have no one to rely upon but our Father in heaven’? He promised us that the Torah would never be forgotten from the Jewish people (Devarim 31:21). Can we simply rely on this promise? True, we have complete faith that impurity will lose its war against holiness, as Scripture says, ‘I will cause the spirit of impurity to pass from the earth’ (Zechariah 13:2). ‘And I will sprinkle on you pure water, and you will be purified’ (Yechezkel 36:25). But this does not exempt us from our obligations.

“As an analogy, if a man were drowning, would anyone ask: ‘What is the point of saving him? We believe that no one even hurts his finger unless it was decided in Heaven that he should hurt it (Chullin 7b). So if it was decreed that this man should die, it will not help to save him, and if was not decreed, he will surely be saved without my help. Hashem has many emissaries.’ This logic is flawed, because we have no business looking into Hashem’s secrets. We must do what we were commanded to do, and let Hashem do what He wishes (Berachos 10a). One must save a drowning man as if his life were dependent only on him. One who refrains from saving him based on the above logic is considered a shedder of blood. The same applies to our subject: we are obligated to save the Torah and the Jewish people, and to act as if Hashem had never promised us anything at all.” (New Kovetz Maamarim, v. 1 p. 237).

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