

Parsha Pearls

Ki Savo 5767

קומי אורי כי בא אורך וכבוד ה' עליך זרה. (ישעיה ס,א)

Arise and light up, for your light has come, and the glory of Hashem has shined upon you. (Yishaya 60:1)

Rabbi Yochanan said: This may be compared to a traveler who was walking on the road at dawn when it was still dark. Someone came and lit a candle for him, but it went out. Then another person lit a candle for him, but it too went out. The traveler said: "From now on I will wait only for the morning light." So too, Israel said to the Holy One, blessed is He: "We made for You a menorah in the days of Moshe, but it went out. We made another menorah in the days of Shlomo Hamelech, but it went out. From now on we are waiting only for Your light, as it says (Tehillim 36:10), "For with You is the source of life; by Your light do we see light." (Yalkut Shimoni Nach, 499)

The Holy One, blessed is He, said: "In this world you were saved by humans: in Egypt by Moshe and Aharon, in the time of Sisera by Devorah and Barak, in the time of the Midyanites by the Judges. Since they were human, you went back into captivity afterwards. But in the future, I Myself will redeem you, and you will never again go into captivity, as it says (Yishaya 45:17), "Israel is saved by Hashem with an everlasting redemption." (Yalkut Shimoni Nach 577)

These Midrashim say that the earlier redemptions and earlier Temples were

not permanent because they were built by humans, but the future redemption and the future Temple will be built by G-d and so it will be permanent. But one is left with the question: why did G-d want history to proceed this way? Why didn't He redeem Israel Himself and build the Temple Himself from the start? Why did the first two Temples have to be built, only to be destroyed later?

The Yismach Moshe (Tetzaveh) explains this with the analogy of a man who planted a tree, uprooted it, planted another tree, uprooted it, and finally planted a third tree, more beautiful than the other two. People asked him why he did not just plant the third tree from the start, and he explained that the earth had not been rich enough to support such a tree. He therefore planted the first two trees, which drew the proper nutrients to the place and laid the groundwork for the third tree. Similarly, G-d wanted the first two Temples to pave the way for the third. This is the meaning of the verse, "You bring them and plant them in the mountain of Your inheritance, a foundation for Your dwelling You have made, Hashem, a Temple which Your hands have founded, Hashem" (Shemos 15:17). The Temple "which Your hands have founded" is the Third Temple, which will come down completely built

by G-d. The first two Temples are a "foundation" for the third.

The Yitav Lev (Toldos) asks: Seemingly the analogy is not perfect, because while the man has to prepare the ground before planting the tree, G-d is all-powerful and could have created the Third Temple right away. He answers that yes, G-d could have done it, but then the Jewish people would not have enjoyed the redemption as much, since they would not have earned it. There is a Talmudic principle that "one who eats that which is not his is embarrassed to look in the giver's face" (Yerushalmi Orlah 1:3). A person only gets pleasure when he earns what he enjoys. Thus, the Third Temple must be preceded by a long exile in which the Jewish people has an opportunity to prove their faith in G-d and thus earn the redemption. To strengthen their faith, they turn to their holy books and study their history, the great days when the first and second Temples stood, when G-d's presence was manifest in the world, when there were prophets and miracles. G-d wanted the first two Temples to exist in order to pave the way for the Jewish people to remain faithful during the long exile.

With this in mind, the Yitav Lev explains the verses in the book of Eichah (3:18-23): "And I said, my future is lost, my hope from Hashem...this I reply to my heart, therefore I hope...renewed each morning, great is your faithfulness." During the long exile, a Jew sometimes wonders if all hope is not lost. Year after year we wait, and the redemption does not come. But then he replies to his heart: the exile has an important purpose, and that is to remain faithful to G-d, to continue to believe in His redemption, and thereby to earn that redemption.

The Midrash says that when the redemption finally does come, G-d will say to the Jewish people, "My children! I am amazed at you – how did you wait for Me so many years?" They will reply: "Master of the World! If not for the Torah You gave us, we would have become lost among the nations." (Midrash Eichah 3:19)

Waiting for the redemption is indeed a great test, and even G-d will be amazed if we succeed. The only path to success, says the Midrash, is to study and pay close attention to the holy Torah.