

Parsha Pearls

Lech Lecha 5768

And the birds came down on the carcasses, but Avram chased them away. (15:11)

וירד העיט על הפגרים וישב אותם אברם (טו,יא).

The second chapter of Tehillim speaks of the nations who will plot against the Jewish people: "Why have the peoples made an uproar, and the nations speak vainly? The kings of the earth stand, the leaders have met together, against Hashem and his moshiach: 'Let us cut their reins and cast off their ropes.' He Who sits in heaven will laugh, Hashem will mock them. Then He will speak to them in His anger, and in His rage He will confound them: 'And I appointed My king on Zion, My holy mountain.'" What is the meaning of this last verse and what is its connection with the foregoing verses?

The Alshich explains this based on the Midrash (Bereishis Rabba 44:21), which teaches that Avraham Avinu chose exile for his descendents in order to save them from Gehinom: "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..." When Avraham did not let the birds devour the carcasses, i.e. did not let King David destroy the nations, this means that he chose exile for his descendents and therefore the nations had to be in existence in order to carry out the decree of exile.

The Talmud says that Avraham called the Temple a mountain, Yitzchok called it a field, and Yaakov called it a house (Pesachim 88a). The Alshich explains that Avraham spoke about the First Temple, and foresaw that it would be destroyed and become a mere mountain. Yitzchok spoke about the Second Temple and foresaw that it would be plowed over like a field. Yaakov spoke about the Third Temple, which will never be destroyed.

Now we can explain the verse in Tehillim: "And I have appointed My king..." The word is "nasachti" – I appointed as a prince – rather than "himlachti" – I appointed as a king. Hashem is speaking here and explaining why He allowed the nations to make an uproar and speak against the Jewish people. He says: "I took My king, David, and appointed him as a mere prince over his own small kingdom rather than a king over the whole world as he should

have been. Why did I do this? "On Zion My holy mountain" - because Zion must be a mountain, as Avraham called it. In other words, the Temple must eventually be destroyed and there must be an exile,

when the nations rule over the Jewish people, as Avraham chose. Therefore the nations must remain in the world and David cannot be permitted to subdue them. (Romemos Keil, Tehillim 2)

**And He said to Avraham, "Surely know that your seed will be a stranger in a land not theirs, and they will serve them, and they will afflict them, four hundred years."
(15:13)**

ויאמר לאברם ידוע תדע כי גר יהיה זרעך בארץ לא להם ועבדום וענו אותם ארבע מאות שנה (טו, יג).

The Rambam writes in his letter to Yemen: The Egyptian exile was foretold to last 400 years, and yet the way these years were to be counted was unclear. We did not know the end had come until Moshe and Aharon came and said the words 'pakod pakadti' which proved that they were the redeemers sent by Hashem. (And the children of Ephraim, who miscalculated the end and did not wait for Moshe and Aharon, were punished.) All the more so in this present exile, which has no foretold number of years, that we cannot claim to know anything about when its end will be until moshiach is revealed.

After Avram had lived in the Land of Canaan for ten years, Sarai, wife of Avram, took Hagar the Egyptian her handmaid and gave her to Avram her husband as a wife. (16:3)

ותקח שרי אשת אברם את הגר המצרית שפחתה מקץ עשר שנים לשבת אברם בארץ כנען ותתן אתה לאברם אישה לו לאשה (טז, ג).

The Gemora (Yevamos 64a) explains that this is a reference to the halacha that if a man is married for ten years and has no children, he must marry a different wife in order to fulfill the mitzvah "be fruitful and multiply" (Bereishis 1:28). In connection with this rule, the Midrash tells the follows story: Once there was a couple in Sidon who were married for ten years and had no children. They came to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and asked him to arrange a divorce. He said, "By your life, just as you got married with food and drink, so too you will separate with food and drink." They followed his advice and made a great feast. She induced him to drink too much, and then he said to her, "My daughter, choose whatever good thing of

mine you want in the house, take it and go to your father's house." After he fell asleep, she told her servants to lift him on a bed and carry him to her father's house. In the middle of the night he awoke and the drink had worn off. "Where am I, my daughter?" he asked. "In my father's house," she said. "What am I doing in your father's house?" "Didn't you tell me to choose any good thing I wanted from your house? There is nothing better in the world for me than you!" They went to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, he prayed for them and they were blessed with a child.

The Midrash concludes, "One human being said to another human being, 'There is nothing better in the world for

me than you,' and then they were answered. Then the Jewish people, who are waiting for the redemption of the Holy One blessed is He every day, and saying, 'We have no other desire in this world but You,' all the more so!" (Midrash Rabbah on Shir Hashirim 1:4)

The woman had waited many years to have children and was now ready to give up and go marry someone else. But once she expressed her true thoughts that she

wanted nothing other than her husband and she refused to give up, G-d answered her. In the same way, the Jewish people have waited hundreds of years for G-d's redemption. Now some of them are ready to give up and go look elsewhere for their redemption. In this difficult time we must remain faithful, express our true dedication to G-d and declare that we want no substitute, nothing else but Him. Then and only then will our redemption come.