

Parsha Pearls

FROM THE WORDS OF THE GEDOLIM

Pesach 5768

**"And He saw our affliction, our toil and our pressure." Our pressure – this refers to forcing.
(Hagadah Shel Pesach)**

Rabbi Shlomo Kluger (1786-1869), in his commentary *Maasei Yedei Yotzer*, explains that the Jewish people was not deserving of redemption at that time, but with their outcry to G-d they "forced" the end of the exile and were redeemed prematurely. Seemingly, he asks, this would violate the Three Oaths (Kesubos 111a). One of the oaths is not to force the End, and Rashi says that this refers to excessive prayer for the redemption. He answers that the nations were also given an oath: not to afflict the Jews too much. The Egyptians violated this oath, and so the Jews were also permitted to violate their oath.

The Satmar Rav comments that this resolves an important question regarding this comment of Rashi. If it is really prohibited to pray excessively for the end of the exile, then why do we never find the commentators and halachic authorities specifying an exact definition of how much is "excessive"? And it would seem that we do pray a lot for the redemption, mentioning it numerous times in our prayers, three times a day. But according to Rabbi Shlomo Kluger, the answer is that this oath has been null and void almost from the start, because during every phase of the exile, beginning with the destruction of the Temple, the gentile nations have violated their oath and afflicted the Jews too much. It is therefore permitted for us to pray for the redemption as much as we want, and that is why the commentators do not bother to define the limit.

However, this does not mean that the other oath on the Jewish people, which forbids them to ascend to the Holy Land en masse and take it over, is dependent on the gentiles keeping their oath, as Zionists have

claimed. If this claim were true, the Jewish oath would have become null and void shortly after the destruction of the Temple, and we would not find the Amoraim Rav Yehuda and Rabbi Zeira discussing whether the oaths prohibit Jews to go from Babylonia to Eretz Yisroel. And as we say in the Hagadah, "In every generation they rise up against us to destroy us." In every generation they have "afflicted the Jews too much" and yet in every generation halachic authorities such as the Rambam, the Rivash, the Rashbash and the Aruch Hashulchan have treated the oaths as binding.

Furthermore, it is clear that the Jews' oath was not made for the gentiles' benefit, since we see that, according to the Yefeh Kol and others, the oath prohibits taking over the land even with the gentiles' explicit permission. Rather, the Jews' oath was meant to preserve our state of exile until the coming of moshiach, sent by G-d at the time He deems correct. To attempt to end the exile before its time is thwarting G-d's plan and is tantamount to heresy. Thus the oaths cannot be understood as a covenant or treaty between the Jews and the gentiles; the Jews' oath is a completely spiritual matter with no connection whatsoever to what the gentiles do.

However, in the case of the oath prohibiting forcing the End, which according to Rashi means excessive prayer, we cannot say that violating the oath is tantamount to heresy, since on the contrary, prayer strengthens the Jew's belief that G-d controls all events and only He can end the exile. Therefore, as long as the gentiles treated the exiled Jews in accordance with G-d's decree and did not exceed their limit, G-d did not want us to pray for the end of exile, since the exile was His plan

and is for our benefit. But when the gentiles exceed their limit, their actions emanate from their own free will and not from G-d's decree, and so we may pray to G-d to save us from them. (Vayael Moshe 1:79)

The question still remains: when the nations exceed their limit, why are we permitted to pray for the coming of moshiach and the final redemption? We should just pray that they stop afflicting the Jews too much, so that the exile planned by G-d can continue for our benefit. Furthermore, the nations have exceeded their limit from the very beginning, and yet we see that the exile has continued for almost 2000 years. Clearly this is G-d's plan, so why are we allowed to pray for the redemption?

We can answer these questions when we realize that the concept of the interdependence of the oaths really has its source in the Midrash. "Rabbi Yosi bar Chanina said: There are two oaths here, one to Israel and one to the nations of the world. He adjured Israel not to rebel against the yoke of the kingdoms, and he adjured the kingdoms not to harden the yoke upon Israel, for if they harden the yoke upon Israel they cause the End to come prematurely" (Shir Hashirim Rabbah 2:7). Of course, this Midrash does not say what the Zionists claim it says, that if the nations harden their yoke it becomes permitted for Israel to rebel against them and bring the End prematurely. It says that if the nations harden the yoke then G-d will bring the End prematurely. But we see an important thing here: that at a certain point, G-d's reaction to the nations' affliction of the Jews is not just to stop that affliction, but to bring the final redemption.

The reason for this is explained by the prophet Yechezkel (36:20-24): "They came among the nations, and they desecrated My holy name, when it was said of them, they are the nation of Hashem, and have come out of His land. And I had pity on My holy name,

which the House of Israel desecrated among the nations where they came. Therefore, say to the House of Israel, so says Hashem G-d: Not for your sake do I act, House of Israel, but for My great name which you have desecrated among the nations where you have come. And I will sanctify My great name, desecrated among the nations, which you have desecrated in their midst, and the nations will know that I am Hashem, said Hashem G-d, when I become sanctified through you before their eyes. And I will take you from the nations, and I will gather you from all the lands, and I will bring you to your land." Rashi (v. 20) says that the desecration of G-d's name lay in the fact that the nations said, "These are G-d's people, and yet G-d could not save them from going into exile." According to this, the redemption should have happened right away, to correct this desecration of the name. But G-d has a purpose for the exile, and so He lets the desecration of His name pass, up to a certain point. As the Talmud (Gittin 56b) says in a play on words, "Who is like You among the mute, Hashem?" G-d remains mute and does not take action to correct the desecration of His name, so that the purpose of exile can be fulfilled. However, the nations are warned that if they harden the yoke on the Jewish people enough, their desecration of G-d's name may reach the point where it outweighs the benefit of exile, and then G-d will bring the End prematurely.

Therefore, as soon as the nations first exceeded their limit, it became permitted for the Jews to pray hard for the redemption. This prayer is not viewed as contradictory to G-d's plan, for we can never know – perhaps the desecration of the name has reached the point at which it outweighs the benefit of exile. But in retrospect, we see that G-d has caused the exile to last this long, because evidently the nations' desecration in the past did not yet reach that point.

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