

Parsha Pearls

FROM THE WORDS OF THE GEDOLIM

And they shall make me a sanctuary, and I will dwell in their midst. (25:8)

The Gemara in Rosh Hashanah 16a says: Heretics, informers and freethinkers, those who deny the Torah and those who deny the revival of the dead, leaders who place fear upon the community, and those who sinned and caused other to sin, like Yeravam ben Nevat and his colleagues - go down to Gehinom and are punished there for generations and generations... Gehinom will be gone before they are gone... Why? Because they stretched out their hands against the Zvul. Zvul refers to the Beis Hamikdash, as it says, "I have built a house of Zvul for You" (Melachim I 8:13). Rashi says: They stretched out their hands against the Zvul - they destroyed the Beis Hamikdash through their sins.

The Rambam codifies this Gemara in Hilchos Teshuva 3:6, but he adds "one who denies the coming of the redeemer" to the list of heretics.

There are two questions to be asked here: 1) Where do we find that the Temple was destroyed because of the sin of heresy? The First Temple was destroyed because of idolatry, immorality and murder; the Second Temple was destroyed because of causeless hatred (Yuma 9b). 2) Even if heretics caused the destruction of the Temple, that could only have been true of those heretics who lived at the time of its destruction. How then can the Gemara make a general statement that all heretics in all generations cause the destruction of the Temple? And how can the Rambam codify this as an enduring principle of halacha?

We can answer this based on the Yerushalmi Yuma 5a: "Any generation in which the Temple was not rebuilt, it is considered as if they destroyed it." Thus, even if the actual destruction took place because of other sins, the fact that the Temple is not being built in our time is the fault of the heretics, and they are considered to have destroyed it.

Alternatively, we can answer that when Jews do mitzvos they are building the Beis Hamikdash in heaven, and when that Beis Hamikdash is complete, it will descend to earth. The Gemara in Chagigah 12b says that there are seven heavens, and the fourth one, called Zvul, contains Jerusalem and the Beis Hamikdash. This is the Beis Hamikdash that we are building through our mitzvos, but the heretics "stretch out their hands against Zvul" and destroy what we have built.

In our generation we are witness to a flood of heresy. Even many of those who claim to believe in all of the 13 Principles of Faith take actions that belie that belief. The Brisker Rav said: "The Rambam (Melachim 12:2 and Teshuva 9:2) says that moshiach will redeem the Jewish people from their subjugation to the nations. Anyone who believes that it is possible to be redeemed from subjugation to the nations without moshiach is lacking in full belief in moshiach."

We can explain this flood of heresy based on the Mishnah in Avos 5:5, which says that ten miracles

occurred in the Temple, and one of them was that the Kohein Gadol never became impure on Yom Kippur. Why was that a miracle? He was pure the day before Yom Kippur, and he was kept awake the entire night (Yuma 19b), so how could he become impure? The Tosafos Yom Tov answers that life is a constant struggle between the Good Inclination and the Evil Inclination. On Yom Kippur morning when the Kohein Gadol performs the service of the day, Hashem wipes out all the sins of the Jewish people and they start again with a clean slate. The Evil Inclination, who is also the Accuser (Satan), is defeated, and he must start over again inducing the Jewish people to sin. On the night of Yom Kippur, since he knows that he will soon be defeated, he puts all his strength into this last stage of the battle. He tries to make the Kohein Gadol impure so that the service should not be performed. It was a miracle that despite his strenuous efforts, the Satan never succeeded at this.

In our time, the Satan faces an even bigger, permanent defeat. When moshiach comes and the Beis Hamikdash is rebuilt, the Satan will be slaughtered (Succah 52a). The great shofar will be sounded, and

he will be swallowed up (Yerushalmi quoted by Tosafos on Rosh Hashanah 16b). Knowing that his end is near, he puts up a last struggle to avert the redemption by destroying the Beis Hamikdash through heresy. He makes sure heresy spreads in the world as much as possible. For him not to succeed requires a miracle even greater than the miracle of the Kohein Gadol not becoming impure on Yom Kippur. (Vayoel Moshe, Introduction, p. 9)

Similarly, the Chofetz Chaim said, "The nature of everything is to become as strong as it can possibly be just before its time comes to disappear. Thus a candle flickers brightly just before going out, and the darkest hour is just before dawn. So when the days approach when we will see the fulfillment of the verse, 'I will cause the unclean spirit to pass from the earth' (Zechariah 13:2) the uncleanness becomes strong with its last remaining power, with a strength never seen before. We can infer from this that the days of the redemption are soon to come." (Omer Ani Maasai Lamelech, section 30)



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