

# Parsha Pearls

FROM THE WORDS OF THE GEDOLIM

לע"נ הרה"ה ר' יעקב נחמיה בן ר' חיים צבי ע"ה, ע"י נכדו הרה"ה ר' אברהם שלמה יאקאבאוויטש הי"ו

Vayeitzei 5770

**“I will be like dew to Israel; he will flower like a rose” (Haftarah, Hoshea 14:6).**

The prophet Hoshea compares the Jewish people to a rose. Shlomo Hamelech makes a similar comparison in Shir Hashirim 2:2: “Like a rose among the thorns is My beloved among the daughters.”

The Midrash (Shir Hashirim Rabbah) explains: Just as a rose withers in dry weather, but when the dew comes out it becomes fresh again, so too, as long as Esav’s shadow exists, Israel appears to be withered in this world; but when Esav’s shadow passes, Israel becomes fresher and fresher.

The Yefeh Kol comments on this Midrash that the rose is the most soft and sensitive of plants, and therefore hot, dry weather has a stronger effect on it. The other side of the coin is that the rose opens very quickly once the weather turns moist – within 24 hours. Here too, the exile of the Jewish people is more severe than that of other peoples, but their redemption will be more dramatic. It will occur all at once, unlike the rise of other nations which proceeds slowly, in stages.

There is another place where Chazal say that the redemption will come in stages. The Yerushalmi (Berachos 4b) says that Rabbi Chiya Rabbah and Rabbi Shimon ben Chalafta were walking together at dawn, and Rabbi Chiya Rabbah said that the redemption of the Jewish people will be similar to the dawn: "So is the redemption of Israel. At first, little by little; and as it continues it gets bigger and bigger."

Some have used this passage as a basis for their claim that the redemption is a long process that will begin before the coming of moshiach, through natural means. However, nothing in this passage or anywhere else indicates that this slow redemption will happen before moshiach comes. The Sages are teaching that the redemption process initiated by moshiach – not beforehand - might have to be in stages so as not to overwhelm us with the full light of redemption all at once, just as the sun rises slowly so as not to overwhelm the eye with so much light all at once.

These two statements of Chazal are no contradiction; they represent the two possible scenarios discussed by the Gemara, Sanhedrin 98a. The Gemara there quotes the verse, "I am Hashem, in its time I will hasten it" (Yishaya 60:22) and expounds: if the Jewish people deserve it, Hashem will hasten the redemption, and if they do not deserve it, it will come in its time. If the Jewish people deserves it, moshiach will come "with the clouds of heaven" (Daniel 7:13); if not, he will come as "a poor man riding a donkey" (Zechariah 9:9). But note that both of these scenarios involve moshiach; there is no statement that the redemption will begin without moshiach.

Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch Kalischer (1795-1874) was one of the founders of the Chovevei Tzion movement, and in his 1862 book *Derishas Tzion* he did indeed interpret the Yerushalmi to mean that Jewish settlement in Eretz Yisroel could be the beginning of the redemption. But even he made clear that this did not include fighting wars and conquering the land from the gentiles, which would be prohibited under the oaths:

Regarding the oath of G-d, which forms the basis for people who retreat from listening to the words of the prophet – “Do not give Him silence until He establishes and makes Jerusalem the praise of the earth” (Yishaya 62:7) – I will respond to you in two ways: Firstly, the warning “do not arouse or awaken” (Shir Hashirim 2:7) only means that we may not go up with a strong hand to the walls of Jerusalem, as it is explicit stated in the Gemara there (Kesubos 111a) “that they must not go up as walls” and Rashi explains “with strength”; and also that they must not rebel against the nations; but rather they must wait for the kindness of Hashem, that He turn His eye of mercy to us, if He is pleased with the work of our hands. He only made us swear not to engage in forceful immigration, to go up to the mountain with strength, but to desire its stones and to settle the land is fine, and there is no greater mitzvah than this, as I have explained at length. (Maamar Kadishin p. 35b)

One of the letters of commendation on *Derishas Tzion* is from Rabbi Chaim David Chazan, the Rishon Letzion (Sephardic chief rabbi of Jerusalem under the Ottoman empire). He writes in the letter:

Not by might and not by power, G-d forbid, to rebel against the nations of the world, the benevolent kings who surround us; or, G-d forbid, to go up against the walls, to fight with the rulers; but rather to fulfill our desire and perfect our hearts, to fulfill the will of G-d, by arousing from below, by doing what we have the power to do, with G-d’s help and the help of benevolent kings and their complete willingness.

Rabbi Yitzchok Yaakov Reines (1839-1915) was a leader of Chovevei Tzion and the founder of the Mizrahi movement. In 1902 he published a book called *Ohr Chadash Al Tzion* calling for settlement in Eretz Yisroel, but cautioning (p. 240) that it must not violate the oaths:

What is the point of Chanukah? Seemingly, there is no lesson for us to learn from it for our generations, for then all the miracles took place only after they arose on their own and fought the war of Hashem, but if we try to imitate the actions of our forefathers of that time, coming out with a battle cry and defeating our enemies, these actions would obviously be forbidden to us, since the Holy One, blessed is He, severely foreswore us not to push for the end of exile by force. But we can learn from the story to work to better the state of the Jewish people and settle it on its land, for this is its honor and the honor of its Torah. And this can take place even now, in acceptable and permissible ways.

In his *Sefer Haarachim* (pp. 298-299), Rabbi Reines explains that the Ramban in *Sefer Hamitzvos* advocates “conquering” Eretz Yisroel only in a peaceful way:

We must ask on the Ramban: How is it possible to say that there is a mitzvah on us to expel the Ishmaelite kingdom? Are we not foresworn not to go up as a wall (*Kesubos* 111a)? Yet the Ramban holds that the mitzvah of conquest applies even during exile, when the land is not under Jewish rule. The answer is that the Ramban means conquest by purchase, that it is a mitzvah to buy land in Eretz Yisroel and to settle there, for conquest does not have to mean through war.

Still, the vast majority of rabbis at the time of Rabbi Reines opposed his movement, because they foresaw that despite his good intentions, Eretz Yisroel would be settled by secularists who did not care about the oaths or any other part of the Torah. And as early as 1830, Rabbi Kalischer too was warned by his great teacher, Rabbi Yaakov of Lissa (1760-1832), author of *Nesivos Hamishpat*, to abandon his project. The *Nesivos* wrote to Rabbi Kalischer:

G-d forbid for us, whose minds are weak, to take an action as you say, to break the barriers established by the earlier generations. If only we could succeed in keeping the Torah we are obligated to keep as the authorities teach! And they guarded themselves from actions and effort in the realm of redemption and gathering in the exiles. What has G-d done to us, that a religious Jew like you comes to reveal the secrets of the world regarding the redemption... And since I am afraid that now that these strange ideas have entered your head, it will be hard to get them out, I hereby forbid you to publish your ideas. I really do not know why you even thought of asking for my letter of approval. But if you humbly seek my advice, I say to you: Leave this path, for it creates a stumbling block for the irreligious of the generation, G-d forbid... Due to our limited understanding, we cannot resolve all the statements in the Talmud regarding the redemption. There is no agreement on the subject. It is therefore obvious that we must wait until Eliyahu comes to do his part...

The Maharsha (*Kesubos* 111a) says that every individual Jew is allowed to go up to Eretz Yisroel, but they must not go up together, with a strong hand, to build the walls of Jerusalem. From all that you wrote, it seems that your whole goal is that a multitude of Jews should go up, they should buy a lot of land and build themselves walls and a *mizbayach*. May G-d protect us from such strange ideas. And if a large multitude ascends, there will be no way to ensure that everyone acts with holiness and keeps the mitzvos. This is what the *Terumas Hadeshen* (*Psakim Uksavim* 88) was afraid of. One day, irreligious people will arise and build the walls and altars of Jerusalem by force.

Believe me, I thought very hard about whether to reply to you, and what to reply. And now that I am replying, I ask you twice and three times to weigh the matter carefully before publishing your ideas. My hair stands on end and a fire burns within me when I see that you have made the idea of redemption a cheap matter, and you write that the righteous redeemer will come through natural means. We have not yet healed from the sickness of the accursed [*Sabbatean*] movement, and now the danger of another downfall looms, G-d forbid. I think that you need repentance and atonement for your ideas. I am fearful of proofs from the words of the prophets, knowing how evil and sinful men sought out and twisted *pesukim*, transforming the words of the living G-d into evil. Please remember how many of our brethren sank head to toe in the mud due to *Shabbesai Tzvi* and his followers, who confused their minds with false explanations of Torah, and caught in their net even many great Torah scholars with proofs from the Talmud and the holy *Zohar* that the redemption would sprout from their movement.

I was most upset that you wrote...that Ezra and Nechemiah did not worry about the oaths stated in *Kesubos*. Your mistake is obvious: the oaths that G-d administered apply only after the destruction of the Second Temple and the rebellions... In conclusion, believe me that my eyes and my heart always look to the land of our fathers, but I know that the main thing and the great foundation is to wait and hope for the kindness of Hashem, and if He wishes to gather in the dispersed of Israel and build up the ruins of Jerusalem, we do not need any sacrifices, any explanation of verses, or any Talmudic dissertations. G-d forbid for us to ignore the warning of our Rabbis in *Kesubos*: “If not, I will permit your flesh...” I have written all this to you knowing the pureness of your heart and that your intent is for Heaven, and may Hashem in His mercy judge you favorably.



True Torah Jews  
183 Wilson St. PMB 162  
Brooklyn, NY 11211

For additional copies of this publication,  
or to sponsor an issue,  
PLEASE CALL 718-841-7053.