

BS"D Parashat Mas'ai 5782

Three Stages of Redemption

This week's parasha finds the Jewish nation standing on the shores of the Jordan River about to begin the next great phase of our history – the return to the Holy Land, not as individuals, but as a holy, great, and proud nation.

For our generation, it was almost *deja vu* when we returned from the bitter galut to re-enter our Holy Land to begin the last and greatest phase of our history. This is this week's message. All the rest is elaboration or commentary.

The Gemara (Pesachim 56a) describes the last hours of Ya'akov's physical existence in this world, when he gathered his 12 sons to reveal to them what lies in store for the Jewish nation at the "end of days".

However, at the precise moment when their hearts and minds were at their peak attention, HaShem withdrew His Shechina (Divine spirit) from Yaakov and the revelation became obscured. The revelation was then transferred to Ya'akov's sons in the form of six words that created three phrases: without the Gemara expanding on their meaning:

שמע ישראל // יהוה אחד // יהוה אחד

"Hearken Yisrael // the Lord is our God // the Lord is One"

I understand the prophecy as follows:

The "Shema" consists of three phrases:

- 1) *Shema Yisrael* – Hearken Yisrael
- 2) *HaShem Elokeinu* – HaShem (the appellation describing His

quality of mercy towards the Jewish nation) Elokeinu (the appellation describing His quality of absolute, even harsh, justice).

3) *HaShem Echad* – the Lord is One (when dealing with His creations with mercy).

So too will the future redemption of the Jewish people evolve in these three stages:

1) The initial phrase of “*Shema Yisrael*” appears without mention of HaShem. It refers to the initial stage of redemption with the ingathering of Bnei Yisrael from the far corners of the globe to Eretz Yisrael. They will return for a variety of reasons, but not necessarily religious ones. Most will come to escape antisemitism, totalitarian regimes, or to build a state based on secular socialist Zionism.

2) Phase two “*HaShem Elokeinu*” includes two names of HaShem: the ineffable (unutterable) YH... representing HaShem’s quality of mercy and compassion, and the name “Elokeinu” representing HaShem’s quality of absolute justice.

This second stage of redemption will be characterized by a bitter conflict between Torah leaders as to how to view the new-old Jewish political state (Medina). Religious-Zionist rabbis will see the Medina as the expression of HaShem’s quality of mercy and compassion for His people Yisrael.

The Medina is HaShem’s declaration that the Shoah was the last major test in the 2000-year period of anger and galut (exile), and the beginning of a new period of our renaissance leading to the fulfillment of all our prophets’ visions. Millions of Jews have returned, our sovereignty over Yerushalayim and the Temple Mount and the extraordinary military victories are undeniable signs that the geula (redemption) has begun.

In contrast, most of the Hareidi branch of Torah scholars will claim that the period of “Elokeinu” – absolute judgment – is

still very much in effect, with the Medina just a stage in the natural development of political societies.

3) Phrase three “*HaShem Echad (is One)*”, is when HaShem’s quality of mercy and compassion to His chosen people will be undeniable, indisputable, unambiguous, unequivocal, absolute and conclusive; not less than when the nation “**saw** with their physical eyes HaShem’s articulation” of the first two commandments.

This will be a time when all rabbinic leaders will unite in the reality that the Medina is HaShem’s avenue for the advent of Mashiach and our final redemption.

We shall witness the miraculous demise of our enemies, as stated at the end of the first chapter of Tractate Berachot. We shall witness miracles far surpassing those of the exodus from Egypt.

HaShem will “shine His countenance” upon all those who are here to receive it.

May HaShem grant our gallant soldiers victory over the forces of evil: for the final redemption of our people will come about in the merit of the mesirut nefesh (self-sacrifice) of His loyal children residing in Eretz Yisrael.

LOVE HASHEM WITH ALL YOUR HEART

How do we explain the next three phrases in Kriat Shema which deal with loving HaShem:

לְבָבְךָ לְבָבְךָ לְבָבְךָ לְבָבְךָ לְבָבְךָ לְבָבְךָ

*“With all your **heart**, with all your **soul** and with all your **might**”?*

I suggest:

A reasonable individual plans his steps cautiously, considering all the possibilities before him. Yet, certain situations give rise to immediate, involuntary physical and emotional responses.

For example, a young person can go on a hundred dates and not be impressed by even one of them, and then on the 101st date he finds the love of his life. This phenomenon occurs also with regard to lofty ideals; for while it is true that some people operate dispassionately, others feel an inner drive to achieve longed-for ideological goals.

Once people are smitten in either realm, the second stage is to deepen and develop that attachment – whether regarding matchmaking or ideals.

If matters advance, well and good. However, if there is no feeling of progress towards the goal and no positive response from the other side, that attachment can be abandoned or continued in hopes of improvement. If the couple continue and it turns out that this new love is turning into a nightmare or that the ideal to which they are devoting their life is causing unbearable suffering, they can back out or resume striving for success.

The Midrash relates that before the Sinai Revelation, HaShem offered the Torah to the seventy nations. When Esau's descendants asked what the Torah contains and HaShem answered, "Don't kill," they rejected it. When HaShem explained to Yishmael's descendants that the crux of the Torah is "Do not steal," they too, rejected it. And so it was with all the other nations. In the end, HaShem offered the Torah to Israel, and our ancestors unhesitatingly responded, "We shall do and we shall obey" (Shemot 24:7).

The first expression, "with all your heart", describes the spiritual passion Israel felt when HaShem drew near, and they

were about to receive the Torah. It was a visceral reaction deriving from the depths of the Jewish soul.

For the past 2500 years, we have been serving HaShem with our bodies, hearts, and souls, seeking to develop the connection between us and to hear the voice of our Father in Heaven calling us – but to no avail. From the time of the last prophet, Malachi, 2400 years ago, HaShem has not made direct contact, and the feeling was that our relationship was one-sided.

At every point we had the option of abandoning that connection and becoming like all the other nations. Yet, the Jewish people stubbornly cling to our Creator, despite the absence of a clear and explicit communication from HaShem to us.

We continued, unreservedly, to worship HaShem in love and faith. That is the meaning of the second phrase, “with all your soul”. It is to carry on, despite everything, towards the fulfillment of all of HaShem’s promises to the Jewish people.

Clinging to HaShem brought us enormous suffering over 2000 years of exile, at the end of which we endured the worst experience imaginable – the Holocaust. All the same, we are carrying on without hesitation or weakness in our loyalty to HaShem. That is the intent of the third phrase, “with all your might”.

We lost many Jews on the way; many were murdered, it is likely that many chose assimilation among the goyim. We today are the remnant of the long and sad exile from our land caused by our unfaithful conduct against the Torah.

But we are here! We made it! We are the Yehoshua bin Nun and Calev ben Yefunah, the only two men among the 600,000 between the ages of 20-60 who left Egypt and survived to enter the Holy Land.

We and our children, and their children, living in Eretz

Yisrael are the foundation stones of Am Yisrael's guaranteed illustrious future.

May we all live to see the fulfillment of the prophecy of Zecharya that the fast days will turn into days of feast and joy.

Remember and do not forget JLMM – Jewish Lives Matter Most

Shabbat Shalom

Nachman Kahana

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