



Parashat Yitro 5772 - #221

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On Tu Bishvat... A Clear Messianic Sign

[She'al Na #3]

Q: When will the Messiah come?

A: It is known that our Sages rebuked one who engages in messianic calculations. "Blasted be the bones of those who calculate the end" (Sanhedrin 97b)! They will announce the coming of the Messiah, but in vain, and the disappointment causes a horrible crisis of faith.

Q: So when the Messiah arrives we won't greet him?

A: This is a different question. After he arrives, we will know. The Rambam writes that we will not know these matters until they occur (Hilchot Melachim 12:2). After they occur, however, we will know. When two students came and asked our Rabbi, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook "when will the Messiah come?", he responded with a smile: He has already arrived a little.

Q: What does "he has already arrived a little" mean? He either arrived or he didn't!

A: There is also a possibility that he will come "slowly, slowly" - gradually, in stages.

Q: If so, what is this "a little"?

A: This matter is explained by the prophet Yechezkiel. In an extremely special passage, he prophesied in the Name of Hashem to the mountains and the valleys.

Q: How is it possible to speak to mountains?

A: Why not? The Master of the Universe is concerned about the Mountains of Israel. The Shechina is distressed when the enemy rules over them. The Shechinah is distressed when they are destroyed and desolate. The Shechinah is distressed when they are mocked and scorned by the non-Jews. Therefore, when the time arrives, the Master of the Universe will act with great zealousness for the Land, and will decide that from now on these things will change and the non-Jews who are around will suffer their disgrace (Yechezkiel 36).

Q: That is to say, their lands will be desolate?

A: Actually no, rather our Land will bloom. "But you Mountains of Israel, you shall shoot forth your branches and yield your fruit to My people of Israel, for they will soon be coming" (Yechezkiel 36:8). If the Land is green, this is a sign that Hashem decided to bring salvation for His Nation. And blessed is Hashem, our Land is green both on this side of the 'Green Line' and on the other side.

Q: This verse is enough to signal the Redemption?!

A: This is what our Sages stated: "You have no Revealed End [clearer] than this, as it says: 'And you Mountains of Israel...'" (Sanhedrin 98a).

Q: Why the blooming of the desolate in particular? There are many other important matters.

A: But this is the first matter. "Not on bread alone does a man live" (Devarim 8:3), but bread is in fact essential. Rashi (Sanhedrin ibid.) explains: "When the Land of Israel will generously give her fruit then the End will approach". And soon will be established "for they will soon be coming". Jews are able to come, since there is food to eat.

Q: Is this the order of Redemption: first the establishment of agricultural settlements and afterwards the Ingathering of the Exiles?

A: Precisely. This is why the "Shemoneh Esrei" was fixed in its order. As our Sages taught: after the blessing over produce comes the blessing of the return of the exiles (Megillah 17b).

Q: If so, why aren't there the same reservations towards interpreting this sign as towards those who calculate the End?

A: This is not an End for which we wait passively, but rather an End which we create in our fulfillment of the Torah commandment of settling the Land. In this we are emissaries of the Holy One, Blessed be He.

Q: This means that we bring the coming of the Messiah?

A: Indeed. The Midrash of our Sages is known: If you are planting a sapling and they inform you that the Messiah is coming, plant first and greet him afterwards (Avot De-Rebbe Natan, Shechter Edition, chap. 1, version b). Is the Messiah not more important than a sapling? No - these are not two separate matters: by planting a sapling you will greet the Messiah!

Q: But one can claim that these are merely trees and agriculture, with no connection to the Messiah and his coming!

A: The Prophet came precisely because of this! Yechezkel is not talking about upper worlds, but about matters that everyone in this world can see: those trees, that agriculture. The difference is what they see in them: do they merely see trees, or do they see the shining light of the Redemption of Zion and a Divine command to redeem the Nation of Israel?

Rav Aviner on...
The “Money Crusade”
[Newspaper Interview]

Q: What is the Halachic position on accepting contributions from Christian institutions and individuals?

A: First of all, you must realize that we don't have to accept money from non-Jews – Christians or others. The Talmud likens the acceptance of such contributions to eating pork, because it profanes G-d's name. To be a beggar, to be a *Shnorrer*, is a very degrading thing, and even more so when you're being supported by money from non-Jews. What kind of thing is that to have the non-Jews support us? Can't we manage by ourselves? Figure it this way: All the money from all the various organizations of the non-Jews doesn't equal a half day of the State of Israel's annual budget. True, after the State was established the economic situation was terrible – but even then it was degrading to accept money. But today, our country is wealthy. Imagine a wealthy person standing in the Kotel Plaza begging for money! If a wealthy Jewish country accepts money from non-Jews, the profanation of G-d's name is even greater.

As far as Christian organizations go, the problem is even worse. Since the beginning of [their] history, the Christians have been trying to wipe us out. They tried to kill us but they failed. Then they tried to disperse us and to banish us, but we're still around. They tried to hurt us economically, but didn't succeed. They tried to degrade and humiliate us, but here we are.

What's happening now is being described in the Christian literature as the “Money Crusade”, as if to say, “With the help of money, we'll wipe them out.” They sum it up with two words, “Hug and Strangle”. By giving us money they'll become our friends. That will enable them to increase their missionary influence. In Israel there are tens of thousands of missionaries, with a budget of hundreds of millions of dollars. That doesn't mean, of course, that the person who accepts their money is destined to convert, but monetary gifts open doors for them. It gives them a ticket into Israeli society, which better enables them to trap Israelis through their missions. Maran Ha-Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaCohain Kook already wrote (Igrot Re'eiyah 4:61) that one cannot accept money from Christians when the one who's going to pay for it is another Jew who will convert to Christianity. That's simply immoral. The greatest rabbis have forbidden us to accept Christian money: the Chief Rabbinate, Ha-Gaon Ha-Rav Avraham Shapira ztz"l, Ha-Gaon Ha-Rav Mordechai Eliyahu ztz"l, the rabbinical court of Chabad, the rabbinical court of the Eda Ha-Charedit in Meah She'arim, and more.

Q: What about the claim that Jewish lives depend on that money?

A: In the State of Israel, there is nobody dying of hunger. To claim otherwise is wrong. It's straightforward libel against the Jewish People. When someone is in economic distress, money can be attained for him. The welfare services pass along tens of billions of Shekalim.

There are also many legitimate free-loan societies and charities.

I know of one charitable institution that, inter alia, accepts Christian money. Eighty percent of the contributions they receive line the pockets of the fund's administrators. They talk all nice about how they're receiving donations for poor, downtrodden people, but the money is going straight to their own pockets. G-d have mercy on them and may He help them to repent.

When the “Ateret Cohanim” yeshiva was founded thirty years ago, an affable American approached me and asked if we were building the Temple. I answered “No”. He then asked, “But you do want the Temple to be built, don't you?” and I answered, “We certainly want it to be built! Who doesn't?” He then asked, “And what are you doing to advance it?” I answered that we study Torah and seek to refine our character. Then he said, “I am willing to organize a donation for you from the Evangelical Protestants in the amount of fifty million dollars a year. Do you agree?” I gave him a one-word answer: No. I lost fifty million dollars times thirty years: 1.5 billion dollars.

But I have no regrets.

Stories of Rabbenu — Our Rabbi, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook

Sign of Redemption

When asked what should be said to the unconvinced sector of the Charedi (Ultra-Orthodox) public regarding the Redemption, he said, "We are not Karaites! We are Talmud-faithful Jews, and the Talmud itself teaches us about the revealed Final Redemption. It says that there is no more clear sign of the Final Redemption than the Land of Israel's offering its fruit generously to the ingathering Jews. This idea is explicitly expressed in the Talmud" (see Sanhedrin 98a).

Our Rabbi would say: Atchalta De-Geulah is not now; it was a hundred years ago! Now we are in a more advanced stage of the Redemption (Ha-Rav Eliezer Waldman).

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