



In light of numerous setbacks in recent times, and the handing over of parts of Eretz Yisrael to the enemy, some people wonder whether ours is really the time of Redemption. Perhaps we were wrong to believe that G-d is now redeeming His Nation. Heaven forbid!

When the Master of the Universe spoke about Redemption, He never promised that there would be no difficulties along the way.

Moshe was certainly G-d's emissary in the Redemption from Egypt. When he set out to redeem Israel, he spoke to the Nation and they were enthusiastic. Yet when he went to speak to Pharaoh, that evildoer refused to listen. In fact, Israel's plight worsened, and the Jews were compelled to gather their own straw. Those moments were exceedingly hard for the people and for Moshe himself.

Ramban in his commentary explains that Moshe surely knew that Redemption did not have to come in an instant, but could come gradually. In fact, some regression was likely, as indeed occurred at the time, followed by improvement.

Ramban quotes our Sages on the verse, "My beloved is like a gazelle" (Shir Ha-Shirim 2:9): "Just as a gazelle comes in and out of view, so does the first redeemer appear to them, then disappear, then reappear" (Ramban, Shemot 5:22. Shir Ha-Shirim Rabbah 2:22). The gazelle runs in the mountains, suddenly disappears and then appears once more. Later on as well, it seems to have disappeared, but it has really just moved forward, and it then reappears further along. In the same way, Moshe is the redeemer who brought good tidings and put hope and faith in our hearts. Suddenly he seemed to have disappeared. The situation grew worse, and then it got better.

At the start of the return to Zion, the Arabs perpetrated a terrible pogrom in Chevron. Not only were many righteous Jews brutally murdered, but the community was in despair, saying, "This is not what we thought would happen." Maran Ha-Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook wrote an article "Return to the Stronghold!" saying, "We have to be courageous. In the terrifying event which has now occurred in Chevron, the redeemer seems to have disappeared, but he will be revealed once more" (Ma'amarei Ha-Re'eiyah, page 360).

We must not despair over what is happening. Rather, we must be courageous and persevere. This is not the first time since the start of our national rebirth that we face setbacks, and we have to consider that it will not be the last time either.

It says in Shir Ha-Shirim 2:17: "Be like a gazelle or a young hart upon the mountains of Beter." What is meant by "the mountains of Beter?" This is a mountain with a cleft [Beter] down the middle. The gazelle passes through the cleft and none can see it. It was to reassure us about those times that G-d forged His covenant with Avraham (Bereshit 15), likewise called "the covenant between the split halves [Betarim]." When we see the gazelle run, all rejoice and are enthusiastic. The true test of whether we yearn for salvation comes when we do not see the gazelle, when it is concealed in the mountain cleft.

In the Shemoneh Esrei prayer we express this yearning. Rav Kook explains that yearning for salvation includes two things:

1. Even when it seems to us as though the Redemption is at a standstill, or actually regressing, we have to continue to believe that the Master of the Universe is moving matters forward, only we do not see it.

2. We have to seize upon all possible means to advance redemption, what Rav Kook called “creative yearning” (Olat Re'eiyah 1:279).

When we face hardships and setbacks, we must not despair, but rather increase our strength and courage. Then, in the end, we will prove capable of the challenge.

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