

EXILE □ CHAPTER 3

by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman

But what's our exile experience today in fact? For even though we're subsumed by it (since it's the gist of our life-experience, after all), and despite the fact that our being in exile is our people's worst problem, and -- especially -- because we're so overwrought by other issues that have drowned out the whole idea of our being in exile, it's important for us to know exactly what we're going through now as a consequence of it.

So let's depict the galut we're now in.

Understand of course that we won't be discussing what we American Jews experience, for example, rather than what other Jews in France, Morocco, or even Israel experience (yes, even Israel, since galut is a state of being rather than of place, hence one is still in galut in Israel until the Moshiach will have come). And rather than speak of it on a historical, psychological, or sociological level, we'll concentrate instead upon the hidden spiritual moorings come undone as a result of it and upon the subtle ways the malady of galut has eaten away at our beings.

But let's begin by underscoring the fact that on one level or another, our people have always somehow trusted in G-d's promise that He'd indeed bring on the redemption.

As the prophet enunciated it (somewhat defiantly), "Do not rejoice for my sake, my enemy! For I will arise when I fall; G-d Himself will be a light unto me when I sit in darkness!" (Micha 7:8). His point was first off to express the mysterious stubbornness lying behind our people's trust and hope in the fact that G-d will eventually redeem us.

But Micha also meant to underscore the fact that we've always known deep within, despite our latent fears that G-d had abandoned us, that He'd actually been preparing goodness and blessings for us all along, and has somehow been readying great and vast treasure-troves of bounty for us that will prove to be more copious than one could ever imagine.

So let that never be forgotten -- nor G-d's promise that eventually He'll tell the Moshiach to "Speak comfortingly to Jerusalem and cry out to her that her fighting is ended, her iniquity is pardoned; that she has received from G-d's hand double for all her sins (That) the crooked will straightened out and the rough places smoothed; (that) G-d's Glory will be revealed and all flesh will see it together" (Isaiah 40:2-5). And let's also understand that He'll also tell him to say, "Behold your G-d! Behold, G-d the L-rd will come with a strong hand, and His arm will rule ... He will feed his flock like a shepherd, gather the lambs with His arm and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those that are with

young" (Ibid. 9-11).

Still-and-all, galut is unholy and repellent, oftentimes demonic, as we've been indicating. And it's also frankly *counterintuitive*. After all, who would have expected G-d to authorize this to happen to us, His chosen people? Be that as it may, let's begin to look at galut from an existential perspective.

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