

IT'S GOOD TO CRY

by Rabbi Moshe Peretz Gilden

At the close of 210 years of Jewish enslavement and backbreaking work by the Egyptians, Hashem (G-d) gave ear to their cries. He remembered the covenant with their Patriarchs to take them out of Egypt. "The children of Israel groaned because of the work and they cried out; their outcry because of their work went up to Hashem" (Shemos/Exodus 2:23).

One of the tenets of the Torah's text is its brevity. It contains not so much as an extra letter; any words that would appear to be extraneous is an indication of a message explained by the Oral Torah, as contained in the Talmud and Midrash. The verse above mentions "because of their work" twice. Why?

The Or HaChaim (commentary on the Pentateuch of the Kabbalist and Talmudist Rabbi Chaim ben Attar, 1696-1743, Rabbi in Leghorn, Italy and Jerusalem) elucidates that this offers an insight into the nature of Divine mercy. The enslaved Jews groaned and cried out simply because of the burden of their work, the physical pain they were forced to endure, not in prayer with the hope of redemption. But Hashem does not always require a direct prayer for salvation. The anguished cry of a suffering Jew is not ignored. Although intended as an expression of pain, to Hashem it is heard as prayer.

After almost two millennia of golus (exile) and the bloodshed that has accompanied it, the Torah sages of recent generations have told us that the challenges of recent decades are the "birth pains of the Mashiach (Messiah)", indications that our ultimate redemption is near. The Shabbos Mussaf (Sabbath Additional Service) liturgy contains the promise that our final deliverance will resemble our earlier exodus. We look at the suffering the Jewish nation faces on every corner of the globe and in our anguish we cry, we wail, we moan. And we pray - for the redemption we know is immanent and for the end of our nation's suffering. And our tested faith is reinvigorated knowing that in addition to hearing our prayers, Hashem, in His infinite mercy, heeds every Jewish tear and considers each one another prayer that helps bring our salvation ever closer.

Have a Good Shabbos!

Please forward your questions for Rabbi Gilden to RabbiGilden@MilwaukeeKollel.org

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