

DEADLINE: THE YEAR 6000

by Rabbi Yisroel Ciner

The Talmud [Avodah Zarah 9A] teaches that the world as we know it will exist for six thousand years. The time designated for the Moshiach [Messiah] is somewhere after the year 4,000 but before the year 6,000. Each thousand corresponds to a day of the week. Upon the completion of the six thousand years, the world will enter a totally different stage of existence, corresponding to the Sabbath. As we stand in the year 5,761, less than a quarter of a 'day' remains. Just as the tempo on Friday increases as the Sabbath draws close, reaching a feverish pitch on the last quarter of the day, the events that have presently engulfed Israel represent the frenzied preparations needed for the world to ready itself for its ultimate state.

In order to obtain a clearer perspective on the recent events we must first gain a better understanding of the purpose of galus [exile] in general. Rav Dessler, in his classic *Michtav Me'Eliyahu*, explains in the following way.

The essence of galus is that the Shchinah [Hashem's holy presence] is in exile--that holiness and spirituality seem to be subordinated. When we are exiled to a place where the truth is trampled upon, serving Hashem seems to be unimportant and inconsequential. Those who insist on such 'archaic practices' are the objects of derision. The mission of Klal Yisroel is to remain strong in our belief and implementation of that belief and not be influenced and deterred by the contrary environment surrounding us.

Those who stand firm in their commitment to Torah, recognizing it as the sole purpose of creation and ticket to eternity, while viewing the 'success' of society as superficial and transient, have 'passed' the test of galus, have been elevated through it and in turn elevate the entire world.

The need for exile dates back to the very beginning of man's odyssey. Adom Harishon [the first man], before he sinned, was on the level of the Garden of Eden. He clearly saw spirituality as the only true reality and physicality as nothing more than a cloak attempting to obscure it. By sinning, he and the entire world were thrust into a state of concealment where physicality appears as reality. The odyssey of mankind, that became the lot of Klal Yisroel, is to first bring the world back to the state of Adom Harishon prior to his sin and then catapult it even higher to its ultimate perfection.

The deadline for this process is 6,000 years--the vehicle used is galus.

Each galus presented its own unique difficulties and challenges. However, the common thread is the opportunity and responsibility to see through the smoke screen of nature and the physical and to

recognize the truth/reality.

The tikun {correction} first began on an individual basis with the Forefathers and then was transformed into a national task upon the seventy souls who descended to Mitzrayim [Egypt].

Mitzrayim, our first galus, was an environment of intense spiritual involvement with the forces of impurity. Sorcery, demonism and contacting the dead were their means of subjugating nature to their whims and desires. Our not changing our names, language and mode of dress showed our rejection of that society and its norms.

The odyssey continued with receiving the Torah followed by the sin of the Golden Calf. The building of the First Beis Hamikdash [Temple] and its destruction and subsequent Galus Bavel [Babylonia]. The building of the Second Beis Hamikdash, Galus Yavan [Greece], its destruction and our present galus of Edom.

The sin which led to that destruction was baseless hatred with haughtiness at its root. You're not competing with me and you're not trying to hurt me. Nevertheless, your very existence eats me up. This haughtiness leads to chutzpah--no embarrassment at all. Who are you to tell me what's right or wrong? Alternative lifestyles...

Whereas the galus of Mitzrayim at least had a connection to spirituality, the galus of Edom is all crass, sensual physicality. Technology allows seemingly complete mastery over nature, increasing the haughtiness with the sense of absolute control.

The final stage of this galus finds us returning to our land, yet the galus of the Shchinah [Hashem's holy presence] is still being perpetrated, but this time by our own people. It's difficult to quote such a thing but the Vilna Gaon wrote that at the time before Moshiach, the control of Israel will be in the hands of descendants from the mixed multitude that joined up with us as we left Mitzrayim. Their motto will be "The strength of my hand has brought me this" and the name of Hashem will be conspicuously absent from their litany.

This will be the final testing stage before Moshiach. Those who fight against the Torah will haughtily lay claim to all successes. They will attempt to disseminate heresy and contempt for the spiritual. We returned to the land. We fought for it. We control it. Who's Hashem? The test, Rav Dessler concludes, will be to see through the farce of "our strength" and focus our energies on seeing the clarity of Hashem's Hand through serving Him.

The odyssey continues. The rulers, with smug complacency, plan a secular revolution, attempting to tear down the remaining religious fibers which weave their way through society. The complacency is shattered.

The only way to bring peace is to be at peace with our mission in life. With that, the clarity of the Garden of Eden will again shine and the entire world will recognize His light.

As this Friday night's prayers state: Blessed are you Hashem, Who spreads the Succah of peace over us, over the entire nation of Israel and over Yerushalayim.

Wishing you a peaceful and joyous Sukkos,
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