

CONSOLATION? WHERE?

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

FRIDAY NIGHT:

And I pleaded to G-d at that time, "G-d, You have begun to show Your servant Your greatness, and Your strong hand. What G-d is there in heaven or on earth Who can do as You have done, with the same power? I pray to you, please let me pass over and see the good land on the other side of the Jordan, that good mountain, and Lebanon." (Devarim 3:23-25)

Ironically, as disengagement takes place, these parshios have so much to do with Eretz Yisroel, love of it (Pinchas), rejection of it (Mattos), the borders of it (Massei), eleven-day journey to it that has turned into over 3,000 years of wandering (Devarim), and now (Vaeschanan), longing to enter it.

That's Hashgochah Pratis.

Why did Moshe Rabbeinu long to enter Eretz Yisroel? There are many answers given, one of which is from the Kli Yakar, and it is that Moshe Rabbeinu wanted an opportunity to perform the mitzvos that can only be carried out in Eretz Yisroel - the Mitzvos talui b'Aretz.

Not that Moshe Rabbeinu needed to do them for his own sake, for his desire alone to do them counted as if he had actually performed them. Then for whose sake did they count? We might not have known the answer to this question had the GR"A not clued us in to the value of such mitzvos, especially at the End-of-Days:

A major principle of the Rabbeinu was that all activities regarding the beginning of the redemption have to be similar to the activities during the time of Ezra and Nechemiah, and in the time of Koresh. Rabbeinu wrote explicitly that the ingathering of the exiles is dependent upon the fulfillment of the commandments connected to the land. The second meaning of "take possession by force" in the words of Rabbeinu (i.e., the Chet has a kametz as noted above), is as it says (Kiddushin 26a) in accord with the posuk, "settle in your cities that you have taken" (Yirmiyahu 40:10). (Kol HaTor, Ch. 1:9)

That is also amazing Hashgochah Pratis.

The one area, for the time being (because eventually Jerusalem is next, G-d forbid), that has become the center of attention for the entire world, and upon which so much of Israel's future depends, happens to be known for its production of bug-free produce. Unless you have lived here for about 20 years you cannot begin to imagine how much additional pleasure the produce of Gush Katif has provided religious Jews living in Eretz Yisroel - and especially olim, over the last decade!

Thus, it is hard to have nechamah after this Tisha B'Av given the current situation. Not only has the suffering of the people of Gush Katif become more intensified, but the way in which the government and Israeli police have dealt with them and their supporters have evoked comparisons to dictatorial regimes of the past. Frighteningly, some Jews have become so detached from their heritage that they can actually derive pleasure from hurting fellow Jews!

Indeed, after a tire-burning incident recently in protest of the disengagement the police arrested the young boys responsible. Frustrated by the government's near total suppression of the anti-disengagement voice, desperate measures are being taken to attract attention for the cause against hitnatkut.

Upon seeing how the security police that previously had been valued for their work against Arab terrorism manhandled the boys, one woman walked up to an officer and said, "Why? Why do you have to be so rough?" to which he replied, "Because I enjoy it . . . because I hate you all so much! You light tires on fire and make trouble, and I hate all of you!"

The lady, unlike the officer, kept her cool enough to try and show how hasty a generalization he was making, but he wanted nothing of it. It seems as if he, and many others like him, would rather stay with their hatred of religious Jews, and in some cases, of those who oppose the policies of the government. So much for the only bastion of democracy in the Middle-East!

Indeed, in whatever direction hitnatkut goes in the end, it will have served to reveal the deep-rooted divisions (and it did not merely cause some) within the Jewish people today, and the divisions are bound to become worse with time. What will be after the disengagement? Everyone is just going to go home and have a good night's sleep and start fresh the next morning?

Right!

SHABBOS DAY:

"As for you, Daniel, obscure the matters and seal the book until the time of the End; let many muse and let knowledge increase." (Daniel 12:4)

Let's get some perspective here, and then we can see how really muddled the situation is.

Who's calling the shots today? First there is the Prime Minister of Israel, Ariel Sharon. With all due respect, he is not a man with a Torah vision. Unlike many of his predecessors, he does not show any sense of Jewish history or relationship to the ultimate goals of the Jewish people as per the Torah. He is making his decisions about the future of the state of Israel based upon how he envisions the country surviving in a world without G-d.

He is not alone in this vision. He is backed up, or perhaps even led by the likes of Shimon Peres and others who have little, if any respect at all for belief in Torah. True, the Charedim in this country, for one reason or another, have not always presented the best face of Torah-life for secular Jews to

evaluate. But anyone with a little intelligence will tell you that you do not judge the validity of G-d's Torah by the way His people obey it. Torah is Divine, man is only human.

Like many others, such leaders are gambling. For the sake of free-will there is a concept called Hester Panim, the hiding of G-d's Face. This translates into people going against the will of G-d and seemingly getting away with it, if only for a little while. It translates into people doing the will of G-d, failing in society and even suffering in the process.

And you want to tell me there is a G-d?, they say.

No G-d, no need to sacrifice physical comfort for meaningless spiritual goals, they conclude. They misunderstand Hester Panim. They misjudge G-d's patience and the goals of Creation. They're having a good time and getting away with it, even pushing G-d's people around and not getting hit by lightning.

And yet,

I guarantee you, as they approach death, they will see the folly of their gamble when it is too late to do anything about it. Like others who have made the same gamble, they will be sick with regret when they see just Who was really playing with whom. However, in the meantime, they just keep pushing forward, all of them, imposing their unG-dly will, even getting embroiled in scandals from time-to-time, and getting away with it.

Where's the consolation in that?

And they're only taking orders from above, that is, the White House. The Israeli government has said this in many different ways. Funny how America praises Israel as being the example of democracy in the Middle-East, and then takes it away from us by imposing its view of the future on the Middle-East.

There was a time in history when people had to believe that their king was not only G-d-chosen, but G-dly himself, even if they knew better. Well, the truth is, the first part of the statement is in fact true, for nothing happens that is not a function of Divine Providence. However, the second part of the statement never was true, and certainly is not true today of presidents and prime ministers.

From where did the President get his vision of the future of the Middle-East? Somewhere under the many layers of White House policy may exist some miniscule and exotic philosophical vision of G-d's world and our responsibility to it. But the President is no princess able to feel the pea many layers below, and if all of the king's horses and all of the king's men couldn't put Humpty-Dumpty back together again, then how can they patch together a coherent world outlook of which G-d Himself can approve?

The mud patch only thickens when you toss in Russia with her world view, England with its private agenda, and the rest of Europe and its weltansicht. And, they're all dictating to the Israeli

government what they should be dictating to G-d's people about His land. So, billions of people just go with the flow as if they have received the word of G-d in their own little ears.

Absolutely amazing!

How much off-base can you get?

Nope, there's no consolation there.

SEUDOS SHLISHIS:

One who trusts in G-d will be surrounded by kindness (Tehillim 32:10)

Even an evil person who trusts in G-d will be surrounded by kindness. (Midrash Tehillim 32:10)

Imagine the following scenario. There you are standing before the Heavenly Tribunal on your own personal day of judgment, which is about to decide where you are going next: Heaven or Gihennom.

So, they pull out your file and read off your life, eliciting a smile from you when they get to the good things you did, and with admission and a shaking of your head as they rattle off the sins, even the ones you thought wouldn't make that much of a difference in the end, but they did.

Then they say, "And for not having believed in G-d until the last moment regarding to the future of Gush Katif, you will spend additional time in Gihennom."

So, you look up in surprise, and you exclaim, "WHAT? Believe in G-d that He would save Gush Katif in the eleventh hour? How could I? The situation looked so dismal! The whole world was breathing down our back! The Israeli government squashed all efforts, including the legal ones just to overturn the plan! Even great rabbis were predicting the unfortunate success of disengagement! How was I able to go about business as if I didn't have a care in the world in the face of all of that!?"

"Well," says one of the Heavenly magistrates, "Chizkiah HaMelech did. He went to bed that night though he had been surrounded by a vicious army of 185,000 troops with state-of-the-art machines of war, in spite of the fact that the majority of his people were calling for surrender!"

"But," you stumble in confusion and desperation, "what difference would my bitachon have made to the events of the day?"

"Perhaps nothing . . ." another Heavenly judge says, "perhaps everything! You never know . . . Did your history not include many great unpredicted miracles against all the odds?"

"Yes, but . . ." you sputter. "If I had believed and remained positive until the end, and then had to watch disengagement occur, I would have been devastated!"

"Good point . . ." another Heavenly judge pipes in, as you smile thinking you have scored a point.

"If you are weak in bitachon and emunah, . . ." he finishes, causing the smile to flee from your face. "If

you turn to Brochos 60b, you will see that it says that 'All that G-d does He does for the good'. Now, how do you understand that?"

Looking down at your Heavenly feet, you answer, "I suppose it means that nothing can go wrong in history, ultimately . . ."

"Very good!" the judge praises you. "Which means," he concludes on your behalf, "that whatever happened in the end to Gush Katif, or at any point in world history, was part of a Master Plan that even we angels aren't always privy to in advance. How much more so you mortal beings."

Confused, you ask further, "So what was I supposed to think?"

"Ah, that's a good question," the first angel says. "What you should have done was believe that G-d would - not just could, but WOULD turn the situation around for the best, even at the last second if need be . . ."

"But you see that He didn't!" you protest.

". . . and if the results do not end up the way you would like them to," the angel continued as if uninterrupted, "then you say, 'All is for the good', and move on to your next test in life."

"The events of history come and go," another Heavenly judge explains, "but all that follows you here is your reaction to them, and primarily your trust in the One Who allows it all to happen in the first place."

MELAVE MALKAH:

G-d's word came to me: "Son of man, direct your face toward Gog the prince of the land of Magog, and the leader of Meshech and Tuval, and prophesy concerning him. Say: Thus says G-d: Behold, I am against you, Gog, the prince, leader of Meshech and Tuval. I will lead you astray, and I will place hooks into your cheeks and bring you out with your entire army, horses and riders, all of them clothed in splendor, a vast assembly with buckler and shield, all of them wielding swords . . ." (Yechezkel 38:1-4)

Oh boy, sounds fearsome, and it will be. But, what counts the most is the conclusion:

". . . Therefore," says G-d, "Now I will bring back the captivity of Ya'akov and show mercy to the entire House of Israel and be zealous for My holy Name . . . Then I will not hide My countenance from them again, for I will pour out My spirit upon the House of Israel . . ." (Ibid. 25, 29)

Or, as it says in this week's Haftarah:

"Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your G-d; I have strengthened you, even helped you, and even sustained you with My righteous right hand. Behold, all who have become angry with you will be shamed and humiliated; those who fight with you they shall be like nothingness and shall perish. The men who struggle with you, you shall seek them but not find them; the men who fight you, they shall be like nothingness and naught. For I am Hashem, your G-d,

Who grasps your right hand, Who says to you, 'Fear not, [for] I help you!' " (Yeshayahu 41:10-13)

If not today, then tomorrow. And, if not tomorrow, then the day after. And if not then, then the day after that, etc. But come it will, and in the meantime, the real battle will be one of PERCEPTIONS. For, the gematria of Gog u'Magog is SEVENTY, the SEVENTY of the Ayin of Amalek, who spends all of his time trying to destroy our Torah perception of reality by infecting us with spiritual doubt, the gematria of his name.

It is Moshiach Ben Yosef who is unaffected by Ayin Hara - the evil Ayin of Amalek, who defeats him with the holy aspect of Ayin: the Ayin of Sod, whose gematria is SEVENTY. Shimshon, whom the Mishnah says failed [to be Moshiach Ben Yosef], did so because he went after his eyes (Sotah 10b), as opposed to above them, in his battle against the Pelishtim - read: the Palestinians of his time over Gaza.

This is why, explains the Vilna Gaon, regarding the war against Amalek, Moshe Rabbeinu was told to speak b'aznei Yehoshua - in the ears of Yehoshua, the gematria of b'aznei equating SEVENTY. And thus, Mordechai defeated Haman, the prototypical descendant of Amalek, in SEVENTY days. His rise and fall is told in SEVENTY pesukim in Megillas Esther, occurring in the Year SEVENTY of exile.

The Erev Rav's greatest tool in the final showdown, says the GR"A: achizas einayim - literally meaning, "grasping of the eyes" or deception.

And therein lies the nechamah (the consolation). For, "the salvation of G-d comes in the blink of an eye," as quick as it takes to replace a false perception with a true one. For, when it comes to G-d and His vengeance, it really is a case of now you see them, now you don't.

Have a great Shabbos. May there be only good news.
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Text

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