

WAITING FOR THE REDEMPTION

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

And Yitzchak was 40 years old when he married Rivkah . . . (Bereishis 25:20)

Tzipisa L'Yeshua is not a term with which many are familiar, but they should be, because according to the Talmud, it is on the final exam:

Rava said, "At the time of a person's judgment after death, they ask him, 'Did you deal faithfully, did you fix times for learning, did you engage in procreation, tzipisa l'yeshuvah—did you anticipate redemption . . . ?' " (Shabbos 31a)

Even for many who already know this, the matter may not be taken as seriously as it ought to be:

if we examine ourselves, it seems as if we are very far from having faith in the future redemption. Occasionally we speak about God having made Heaven and Earth, and that He directs creation. However, when it comes to the arrival of Moshiach and the resurrection of the dead, we are quiet, as if we are embarrassed to speak about them, as if we have given up [on such realities] altogether. (Ohr Yechezkel, Emunas HaGeulah, 1960; p. 287)

Part of the problem may be that such people do not believe it is really a mitzvah, per se, to anticipate redemption, and to await Moshiach's arrival on a daily basis. After all, where is it listed among the 613 Torah mitzvos? As good a question as that is, the answer is better:

The Sefer Mitzvos HaKatan wrote in his explanation of the positive mitzvah, "I am God, your God, Who took you out of Egypt," that it means one must know that He Who created Heaven and Earth alone controls Above and below. However, to this he added, "This is the basis for what the rabbis teach: At the time of a person's judgment after death, they ask him, 'Did you anticipate redemption?' Where is this mitzvah written? It comes from here, for just as, 'I am God, your God Who took you out of Egypt,' means that we must believe that God redeemed us from Egypt, it also means, ' . . . I also want you to believe that I, God your God, will gather you in and redeem you in mercy a second time'." According to what he has said, belief in the future redemption is part of our faith in, "I am God, your God," and thus included in the first of the Ten Commandments . . . (Ohr Yechezkel, Emunas HaGeulah, 1960; p. 287)

Unbeknownst to many believing and praying Jews, it is a fundamental of Judaism to live in

anticipation of redemption. Not to do so is to violate an aspect of the most fundamental mitzvah of all, and thus Rav Levenstein concludes by saying:

The words of the Sefer Mitzvos HaKatan should arouse trembling in our hearts . . . and anyone who is not involved with these matters is far from having any true faith. (Ohr Yechezkel, Emunas HaGeulah, 1960; p. 287)

There is another more practical reason to anticipate the Final Redemption: readiness. Redemption, as massive, Biblical, and mystical as it is supposed to be, will still catch many by surprise. It's not like a train that blows its whistle as it enters the station, waking up even the daydreamers to the need to get ready to board.

Rather, events can occur in such a way that they can be misread by the misled. For the anticipators, they will sense the coming of redemption and prepare themselves for it. For those for whom redemption is a "joke in their eyes" (Bereishis 19:14), the events of history may catch their attention, but not enough to tell them what to do, or what to prepare for. In the past, that has often been disastrous for many Jews who did not know to move on when the time came. While history told them to leave, their sense of security told them to stay and wait out the bad. Many who attempted to wait it out never survived to see history get better again. Why discuss this now, on this week's parshah? Because the Zohar does:

It is taught: The Ingathering of the Exiles will precede the Resurrection of the Dead by 40 years, as it says, "And Yitzchak was 40 years old." What will occur during the 40 years? Rav Kahana said in the name of Rebi Broka: Many troubles and many wars will be instigated against the Jewish people from the Ingathering of the Exiles until the Resurrection of the Dead. Happy is the person who will be delivered from them, as it says, "At that time Your people will be delivered, all who are found written in the book" (Daniel 12:1). (Midrash Ne'elam, Toldos, 139a)

Thus, the Zohar finds the 40 years of Yitzchak's life as a good lead-in to the 40 years between the beginning of the Ingathering of the Exiles and the Resurrection of the Dead. In other words, somewhere between the start of the Ingathering and the Resurrection of the Dead the Final Redemption will have had to occurred, since resurrection takes place after it. However, the Zohar does not stop there, especially while on the topic of the Resurrection of the Dead. It adds:

It says, "And many from those who sleep in the dirt of the ground will awake" (Daniel 12:2)—from those who sleep. This refers to the righteous who return to life before this. How many years will they precede [the others]? Rebi Yehudah says 210 years; Rebi Yitzchak says 214 years . . . (Midrash Ne'elam, Toldos, 140a)

This might not have been so interesting for those who lived a thousand years ago or more. But for

our generation, that is now only 227 years in advance of 6000, at which point history as we know it comes to an end:

For 6000 years the world will exist . . . (Sanhedrin 97a)

it is indeed interesting, because it is indeed relevant, as the Leshem explains:

The duration from death to resurrection will be the same for everyone, but the time of death will not be the same for all, and thus the period of time of the deaths and resurrections for the entire generation will continue for a long time. However, righteous people who have died previously will resurrect immediately after the 40 years from the Ingathering of the Exiles. This is what it says in Midrash Ne'elam (Parashas Toldos 140a): There will be many resurrections, and the duration of time will be, according to Rebi Yehudah, from 40 years after the Ingathering of the Exiles, at which time the first resurrection will occur, and the resurrections will continue from then until the last resurrection for 210 years. According to Rebi Yitzchak, 214 years . . . until the end of the 6000 years. (Drushei Olam HaTohu, Chelek 2, Drush 4, Anaf 12, Siman 9)

Thus, according to Rebi Yehudah, 40 years in advance of the Resurrection of the Dead would have been 1990, and according to Rebi Yitzchak, 1986. As a result, some see the unpredicted collapse of the USSR around that time, allowing millions of Jews to emigrate to Israel, and growing immigration to Eretz Yisroel before and since then, as the fulfillment of this prophecy in the Zohar.

Clearly others do not. That is because for some time now, the events of Jewish history have occurred in a manner that could be viewed either way. What determines which view a person takes? Each side accuses the other of being delusional. Given the nature of current events, it may not be too long before we find out which opinion is right, but in the meantime, it might not be imprudent for each side to calculate the cost of being wrong.

I did that, and now I live in Eretz Yisroel.

Text

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