

PROMISES

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

Promises, promises. There are so many places in Torah where it talks about the time that the Jewish people will finally overcome all of their enemies. This week's parshah is an example of this:

Ya'akov dwelt in the land of his father's sojournings, in the land of Canaan. (Bereishis 37:1)

The camels of a flax dealer [once] entered [a town], laden with flax. The blacksmith wondered, "Where will all this flax go?" One clever fellow answered him, "One spark will come out of your bellows, which will burn it all." So did Ya'akov see all the chieftains [of Eisav] mentioned above [in the previous parshah]. He wondered and said, "Who can conquer them all?" What is written after? "These are the generations of Ya'akov: Yosef," only, and it is written: "And the house of Ya'akov shall be fire, and the house of Yosef a flame, and the house of Eisav shall become stubble" (Ovadiah 1:18). One spark will emerge from Yosef, which will destroy and consume them all. (Rashi)

Wouldn't it be nice if it were so. No question it would be nicer if Eisav, and the rest of the enemies of the Jewish people for that matter, would simply come to like and respect the Jewish people and make peace. It would be ideal and wonderful if all of us greeted Moshiach together with tremendous joy. Nice, but not likely.

In the meantime, thousands of years later, the best we seem to be able to get is ambivalence from the nations of the world, and UN resolutions against the State of Israel. The worst we get is what happened in Har Nof a few weeks ago, and sometimes that is multiplied by a couple of million victims. It's been a long haul. We have certainly come a long way in the last couple of decades, b"H, setting up our own homeland and giving Jews a place to move to when they want to live amongst their own. No one says it's perfect but compared to what we've had to work with over the last couple thousand years, it's a big leap forward.

The problem is that many Jews over the years have lost their patience and have jumped ship. They see that the Jewish people have survived, but at great cost. They also see the world moving on and becoming more advanced, while the Torah world insists on not being a part of its advancement other than using whatever it can or must to function in the "modern" world.

So many Jews along the way just never received an adequate education to even be able to make a proper choice. It's as if some people get to know the tough side of Torah Judaism but not the part

that makes it all worthwhile. They certainly never really got much of a chance to develop a personal relationship with God and to feel His Presence in their lives. No wonder they left the fold.

What will happen in the end? That is a good question.

To begin with, some Jews may not actually be Jews, even after generations, and may be removed from the Jewish people one way or another. Others may be Jewish but belong to the "Erev Rav," those Jews who would rather fight than join, and may get a chance to do exactly that. Some Erev Rav may actually do teshuvah, but the more adamant ones, according to Kabbalah, will have to go. Others may simply be innocently secular, meaning that they haven't had much of an exposure to the real Judaism. Everything they know about Torah is either wrong or distorted, and have no idea that it is what they would want to do if they knew better. So many ba'alei teshuvah once-upon-a-time completely rejected Torah as being written by man and totally archaic.

For this category of Jew the events they may merit to witness will bring them up to speed. The Final Redemption is supposed to be far more spectacular than the first one from Egypt. When I say spectacular I don't just mean in terms of the technology that will be used, though that may also be the case. I mean in terms of the technology that won't be necessary because of the amazing miracles that will occur to redeem the Jewish people once and for all.

Movies have certainly upped the standard over the years in terms of what people find credible and yet awesome. That will be the whole point. If we're still around, we're going to see things happen that will overwhelm us because we will know that they are really happening, and not being faked using technology and computer software. Until now God has held back. When history requires it, He won't any longer.

Hard to imagine? It is. But imagine the following situation. Today, human flight is no big deal. There are airplanes or personal jetpacks that can lift a person into the air and allow him to fly from one location to another, even thousands of miles away. We even have rocket ships that can take man into outer space. We also have it better than birds because they do not have inflight service like we do.

Nevertheless, as second nature as flight is today, how would we react if we watched a flock of humans fly overhead by merely flapping their arms? In a movie it would be comical because we would assume that it is not really happening, just the product of trick photography. In real life, we'd stand there with our mouths open and rubbing our eyes in disbelief.

Likewise, military technology is amazing today. It really stretches the imagination and goes outside the box. Nevertheless, it is still only technology, ingeniously accomplishing amazing things but based upon known principles. We may not yet know how the technology works but we are confident that if someone explained it to us we'd understand.

However, once God decides that the charade is over and that it is time to go into the final mode of

Yemos HaMoshiach, amazing things will happen in ways that we won't understand. The "magicians" will be forced to admit that it is the "finger of God" making it all happen. This will strengthen the belief of the followers of God, and convince those who doubted either His existence and/or involvement in the affairs of man.

One of the reasons why Yosef brothers will be unable to respond once Yosef reveals himself to be alive in a few parshios from now is because they will be in shock and awe. They will find themselves having a very hard time imagining what it must have taken to manipulate history so that Yosef could go from slavery to second-in-command over Egypt. It was like watching humans fly like birds without an technological support.

Currently, the Jewish people are not very respected in the eyes of the nations of the world. They're not even respected in the eyes of their own people, the vast majority of which want little or no connection to their traditional past. We have a homeland but it is constantly threatened by enemies, and our citizens are constantly in danger from hostile neighbors. This is Point A.

We have to become the most respected nation in the world, and be free of any threat to our existence whatsoever. All of our people have to realize that Torah is true and return to its prescribed lifestyle, while all those who live in the Diaspora return to Eretz Yisroel. Hostile neighbors have to become a thing of the past. This is Point B.

The question is, how do we get from Point A to Point B? What will have to happen to make Point B a reality, which it must become? All the "natural" answers come up short. There is no logical plan of action to get from Point A to Point B without relying upon great miracles, certainly in the short run. Something dramatic, something outside the box will have to occur to change history and simply bring it up to speed.

The question is, how dramatic? The events that led to the reunion of Yosef and his family by which time everything had flip-flopped had been dramatic, and therefore, shocking enough. However, that had only been about getting 10 brothers to admit their mistake and properly respect the brother they had previously rejected.

Today we're talking about bringing seven billion people, who are either atheistic, agnostic, or religiously misguided, up to spiritual speed. That seems to be a much taller order than what had to be accomplished in Yosef's time, during which only a few miracles were necessary to accomplish the intended purpose.

The truth is, some of the miracles have already happened, and continue to happen. Logistically, the State of Israel should not be here today given the circumstances in which it came into existence, and those that continue as it struggles to maintain its survival. From where I sit, there are hostile Arab communities just over the ridge that would not think twice about wiping out my community, God forbid.

What keeps them back? The IDF? Not really. The UN? For sure not! Then what? One thing and one thing only. The same "Force" that keeps their brothers at bay outside the borders of Israel in spite of their best efforts to push the Jewish state into the sea: the will of God. The "wall" that separates us from terrible tragedy, God forbid, is the will of God.

Unfortunately, we don't appreciate how incredible a miracle it is. That is to our disadvantage in two ways. Firstly, a lack of appreciation can mean a loss of some of the miracle, God forbid. Secondly, once the more obvious miracles begin, we won't be as prepared for them as we ought to be. Yosef's brothers only had to stand there speechless once they recognized the miracles that led to Yosef's his survival and rise to power. What will it be like for the rest of us when we witness the awesome miracles of the Final Redemption?

Text

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