

Parsha Ponders

Devarim/Tisha B'Av | Aug 8, 2024 | 4 Av 5784

Ending the wrath; ending the decree¹

ותרגנו באהליכם ותאמרו בשנאת ד' אותנו הוציאנו מארץ מצרים

They **grumbled** in their tents and said: “With Hashem’s hatred of us He took us out of the land of Egypt”²

We find a parallel verse in Psalms to the one in our *parsha*, which says: “They **grumbled** in their tents; they didn’t listen to the voice of Hashem. He raised His hand [in oath] against them to cast them down in the wilderness and to cast down their descendants amongst the nations, scattering them in the lands”³. Rashi there explains that at that very moment, the destruction of the Temple was decreed. That very night that the Jews cried in vain (believing the spies that the land of Israel isn’t worth conquering) was Tisha B’Av. Hashem said that since they cried for no reason, they will have a reason to cry for the generations.

It's clear from this that at the moment of the sin of the spies, two difficult decrees were declared: to cast down the Jews in the wilderness, and to cast down their descendants amongst the nations, scattering them in the lands. The latter is a reference to the destruction of the Temple. Once the Temple was destroyed on Tisha B’Av, consequently the Jews were exiled and scattered throughout the world⁴.

A verse we recite Friday night in *Kabbalas Shabbos*: אשר נשבעתי באפי אם יבואון אל מנוחתי, “That I swore in My fury, if they will go to My place of tranquility”⁵. Our Sages explain⁶ the intent. Hashem is saying, “When My wrath is removed”, only then “they will go to My place of tranquility”. The intent here is to tell us the limitations of Hashem’s oath⁷. So long as there is fury, the Jews will not enter the land of Israel. Once the wrath is removed, then they will enter.

This verse in fact is referring to the future, not to the generation that wandered in the wilderness. We don’t find anywhere that at that time Hashem’s wrath was abated. Rather, their forty-year decree was simply completed. Actually, this verse is continuing the admonishment in the previous verse: אל תקשו לבבכם כמריבה, don’t harden your hearts like at *Merivah*, כיום ארבעים, like the days when they travelled in the wilderness, אשר נסוני אבותיכם, that your ancestors tested Me... שנה אקוט בדור, I was angry with the generation for forty years...⁸ The intent is that we not harden our hearts like our ancestors did. Rather, we should repent from our ways, in order that Hashem remove His fury. Since He swore in His fury, so long as it’s there, we won’t enter the land⁹.

This could be the reason why that chapter also has the verse, היום אם בקולו תשמעו, Today, if you listen to His voice¹⁰. This verse elucidated by the *gemarra*¹¹, where we are presented a story with Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi, who chanced upon Eliyahu HaNavi. Rabbi Yehoshua asked Eliyahu when is Moshiach coming? Eliyahu responded that he should go ask Moshiach. Rabbi Yehoshua then found Moshiach and asked him when he is coming. Moshiach said **today**. Rabbi Yehoshua when to Eliyahu and said that Moshiach is a liar! He didn’t come! Eliyahu responded that this is what Moshiach meant: I’ll come **today**, if you listen to His voice.

It's clear from all the above that the decree of exile is dependent on Hashem’s fury. Once the fury is removed, when the Jewish people properly repent, the consequence is that Moshiach will come right away, without any further delay. It’s then incumbent upon us to know that everything depends on us. The original decree on the Jews was fulfilled by their wandering for forty years, and our decree of exile is solely waiting for us to end it. Good Shabbos

¹ Based on MiShulchan Eliyahu Baruch to Deuteronomy 1:27

² Deuteronomy *loc. cit.*

³ Psalms 106:25-27

⁴ See Chiddushei HaGriz *parshas Shelach*

⁵ Psalms 95:11

⁶ Toras Kohanim Introduction, *Baraisa D’Rabbi Yishamel* (end)

⁷ Ra’avad *ad. loc.*

⁸ Psalms 95:8-10

⁹ Ra’avad *loc. cit.* See there, and Chiddushei HaGriz *loc. cit.*

¹⁰ Psalms 95:7

¹¹ Sanhedrin 98a