

We Can Rush the Redemption

INSIGHTS FOR SHABBOS PARSHAS DEVARIM - AICHA (5758)

WHO WILL COME FIRST - ELIYAHU HANAVI, OR MOSHIACH?

This year on *Motza'ai Shabbos* [after the Sabbath- Saturday night], we read *Megillas Aicha* [the Book or Scroll of Lamentations], authored by *Yirmiyahu Hanavi* [Jeremiah the prophet] (top of *Bava Basra* 15A). We might not believe that this *sefer* [book] contains much consolation and hope. However, it will become apparent that a great deal of comfort can be gained from its holy words.

After mourning about the enemies who attacked and ambushed us at the destruction of the first *Bais Hamikdosh* [Temple], *Yirmiyahu* predicts the *churban* [destruction] of the second *Bais Hamikdosh*. This occurred at the hands of Edom, the nation of Rome. *Rashi* on 4:21 points out that the words of the *Megilla* [scroll or book] indicate the temporary nature of Rome's victory and power. Eventually, the Roman empire would also suffer total defeat and meet their downfall. After this point, *Yirmiyahu* declares that the sins of *Bnai Yisroel* [the Children of Israel] will be completely forgiven. No exile will take place after this very last one, the long *golus* [exile] in which we still find ourselves. Of course, the actions of Rome to do away with the Jewish glory in Yerushalayim were just the beginning of *golus Edom* [Roman exile]. The other nations who have persecuted us since the destruction of the second *Bais Hamikdosh* have continued our exile up to today. As long as we exist without *Moshiach* [the Messiah] and the third *Bais Hamikdosh*, we are in *golus*.

"He will not continue to exile you..." (*Aicha* 4:22). This is the guarantee that *Golus Edom* is the last one (*Rashi*). Let us look at the *Targum*, Aramaic translation and commentary, on this *pasuk* [verse]. Hashem is promising that after this fourth exile, the transgressions which caused our suffering will be terminated. *Bnai Yisroel* will then be redeemed at the hands of "the *Melech Hamashiach* [King Messiah] and *Eliyahu the High Priest*".

Harav Alter Tuvia Wein, son of Harav Dov Wein, asks a question about the order of words in this *Targum*. (Incidentally, this sage was a forbear of my *Rosh Yeshiva* [head of religious school], Harav Berel Wein. The following comments are found in his *sefer, Yain Hatov* ["Good Wine"], a translation of Aramaic *Targum* back into Hebrew, including elucidation and commentary.) Why does the *Targum* list *Moshiach* before *Eliyahu Hanavi* [Elijah the prophet]? Do we not know so well that *Eliyahu* is going to precede *Moshiach*, announcing his arrival? For your information, one place it says this clearly is in the *Midrash Yalkut Shimoni* on *Yeshaya* [Isaiah] 52:7. Perhaps we will explore this *Midrash* in depth on a different occasion, but suffice it to say that *Eliyahu* will arrive three days ahead of *Moshiach*. So why does our Aramaic translation list *Moshiach* BEFORE *Eliyahu*?

Rav Wein answers by citing the *sefer S'dai Yehoshua*, in the name of the *Kraisi Uplaisi* section 110. When *Chazal* [our Sages] predict that *Eliyahu* will come BEFORE *Moshiach*, as in the above-mentioned *Yalkut Shimoni*, they are referring to the possibility that *Moshiach* will arrive in the predestined time, and not earlier. Then, *Eliyahu* will come ahead to bring tidings of the redemption. However, there is a chance that *Moshiach* will come early, based on our merits. If we are fortunate enough to experience this, Hashem will alter the prescribed order of arrival. **In that situation, it is accurate to list *Moshiach* first, since *Moshiach* will not be preceded by *Eliyahu*. If we rush the ultimate salvation with our merits, *Moshiach* will appear without *Eliyahu Hanavi's* announcement.** In the words of Harav Wein, "*Moshiach* will be the bringer of the good tidings plus the redeemer all in one."

You are probably familiar with the famous *pasuk* in *Yeshaya* 60:22: "I, Hashem, will hasten it in its time." The *Gemara Sanhedrin* 98A is essential for understanding this verse. Rabbi Alexandri said that Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Levi asked the following question on this *pasuk*. There seems to be a contradiction. It says, "I will hasten it", but it is also written, "in its time". If the *geula* [redemption] will be hurried, it cannot be stated that it will be transpiring "in its time"! Rather, this should be termed "BEFORE its time". Why does the *pasuk* say that "I will make it happen fast... in its time"? The answer: If *Bnai Yisroel* merit the deliverance, it will be rushed by Hashem - it will occur BEFORE the predetermined date. This is the meaning of "I will hasten it". If we do not actually deserve it, it will arrive "IN its time". Thus, there are two possibilities about the *geula* - either early or right on time. Using this, Harav Wein quotes the *Kraisi Uplaisi* that the order of *Moshiach* first or *Eliyahu* first, will depend on which situation will prevail, as explained above.

This is all up to Hashem. It is our job to serve Him devotedly, and hopefully this will speed up the redemption. Much can be said on this topic. Our purpose today was to show that even in the *Megillas Aicha*, Book of Lamentations, there are words of assurance and comfort. May it be Hashem's will to demonstrate His splendid predictions of salvation in the very near future, transforming *Tisha B'av* [historically, a day of Jewish mourning] into a festival.

By Rabbi Moshe Heigh

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