

Golus Mentality **Rabbi Pinchos Lipschutz**

We are now almost three months into the Gaza War, which began when thousands of Hamas terrorists crossed into Israel from Gaza and slaughtered 1,200 Jews, wounded many more, and took 240 hostages.

While the government says that it will examine what went wrong after they defeat Hamas in the current war, news agencies and others have done their own investigations and the results are damning.

Apparently, the Israeli army is as dysfunctional as many of the other Israeli government ministries and offices. Over the years, the army has built up a superman reputation, with Israelis and foreigners believing that this army is the strongest and the best anywhere.

On October 7th, their cover was blown and it became evident to the entire world that the Israeli army and intelligence are seriously lacking. The only reason they won battles and wars was because Hashem wanted them to. This time around, for reasons we are not yet privy to, Hakadosh Boruch Hu withheld His assistance and a terrible tragedy ensued.

The country had fallen into the belief that their enemies are powerless and they are all powerful, able to defeat them in one fell swoop. They failed to consider that their miraculous victories were just that – miraculous and brought about by Hashem. This hubris brings about defeat, as Hashem angers and removes His protective shield from those who believe that they can do everything without Him.

It also caused the commanders, generals and intelligence experts to ignore the many reports that Hamas was preparing an attack such as the one that occurred. They believed that there was no way the Arabs could even think of breaching their borders, let alone perpetrate the awful massacre and carnage that they carried out. So, as the information came in, it was ignored, and those who were delivering it were reprimanded for continuing to bother their superiors with evidence that couldn't be real.

When October 7th came along, the army was taken completely by surprise, undermanned, disorganized, deployed far from the area, and incapable of responding for many long hours. Meanwhile, the people they were charged to protect were getting killed.

Immediately, many of the people who survived and their relatives, as well as people across Israel and the world, recognized the Yad Hashem and began turning towards Him. People realized that Zionism is not their savior and living in Israel is not a substitute for geulah. Everyone grasped that we are still in golus. The events that have followed the massacre around the world have only reinforced that the Jewish people are in exile, awaiting the geulah.

How are we to achieve the geulah?

The Ramban, in his introduction to Sefer Shemos, writes that Shemos begins by retelling how the Bnei Yisroel went to Mitzrayim. This is because Sefer Shemos is the tale of golus and geulah, and going down to Mitzrayim was the beginning of the golus.

The golus did not end, says the Ramban, until they returned to the land and the high spiritual levels of their forefathers. When they left Mitzrayim, even though they were no longer enslaved, they were still exiled, for they

were in a foreign country. After receiving the Torah at Har Sinai, they built the Mishkon. When Hashem rested his Shechinah in the Mishkon, they had finally reached the levels of their fathers and were now also a merkovah for the Shechinah.

That was when they were redeemed. And that is why Sefer Shemos ends with the discussion of the Mishkon. The circle was completed.

We always understood that the Bnei Yisroel were redeemed when they left Mitzrayim, and they were certainly free once they had crossed the Yam Suf. They sang shirah, which would seem to indicate that at the moment of their celebration at the other side of the sea, they were completely freed from Mitzrayim.

Why was the circle of geulah incomplete until the construction of the Mishkon?

Rav Dovid Cohen, rosh yeshiva of Yeshivas Chevron, explains in his sefer Mizmor L'Dovid, based upon the Vilna Gaon (Shir Hashirim 1:4) and the Maharsha (Kesubos 7b), that the redemption of the Bnei Yisroel was accomplished in three stages.

Yetzias Mitzrayim was the foundation of the nation. Matan Torah then created a bond between Hashem and His people, similar to kiddushin, betrothal. The descent of the Shechinah to the Mishkon cemented the relationship, akin to nesuin, marriage.

Rav Cohen quotes the Medrash Tanchuma (Bechukosai 3), which states that the reason Hashem redeemed the Jews was for them to build the Mishkon and for the Shechinah to rest there.

Thus, until the Mishkon was completed and the Shechinah was among them, they were not geulim. Apparently, geulah, freedom, is not achieved until the exiled person returns to his pre-golus status.

Just to be freed from slavery is not redemption, because a person is not redeemed until he can freely perform the tasks for which he was created. If a convict leaves jail but is under house-arrest, then even when he is in his own home, he is not free, because he cannot go about his life and pursuits.

The purpose of Am Yisroel is to be a merkovah for the Shechinah. Until the nation returned to their forefathers' level of closeness and avodah, they were in exile. Although, superficially, it appeared that they were freed from bondage, they were captives until they could be spiritually where they were prior to being exiled in Mitzrayim.

Sometimes we think that we are free. After all, there are no constraints placed on us and we can live as we please. In addition, Jews in Israel have returned to our historic homeland. In truth, as we see now, we here, and them there, are golim until we reach the level of the avos and merit the Mikdosh and Shechinah among us.

To be carefree and aimless, with no values or direction, is not freedom. To be redeemed means to be put in a position to be able to take on your mission and complete it.

Yosef Hatzaddik singularly possessed the ability to maintain the spiritual level of his father, Yaakov, even in exile, but the rest of the Bnei Yisroel sank in the foreign land. Yaakov blessed Yosef for his fortitude, stating, "Becha yevoreich Yisroel." For all time, Jews will bless their children to be as Menashe and Efraim, loyal to their heritage even amidst the effects of golus.

Yosef's inherent ability to remain in an exalted state even in golus enabled him to battle the effects of Eisov and his descendants. Therefore, the first Moshiach will be from his offspring. Moshiach Ben Yosef will arrive and prepare the world for the redemption. When he completes his job, Moshiach Ben Dovid will reveal himself and bring the geulah we are all waiting for.

The ability to excel in golus that Yosef personified was inherited from his mother, Rochel. It is for this reason that of all the avos and imahos, she is buried alone along the road to Bais Lechem. Only Rochel could exist and fulfill her tachlis far from home, alone.

We learned last week in Parshas Vayechi that when Yaakov asked Yosef to bury him in Eretz Yisroel, he excused himself for not burying Rochel in the Me'oras Hamachpeilah or at least in Bais Lechem. Rashi explains that she was laid to rest along the road that leads into and out of Eretz Yisroel so that when the Jewish people would be driven into exile after the churban Bais Hamikdosh, they would stop and pray at her kever. She would rise up and beg for Hashem's mercy.

When that tragic period occurred, Hashem told Rochel, "Withhold your crying, for there will be a reward for your actions, and the children will return to their home." The language of the posuk seems strange. Why does it connect the reward for action with the return of her children to their ancestral home?

Perhaps Yaakov was telling Yosef that he buried Rochel along the road to Bais Lechem because she shared the ability he possessed, which would allow her to fulfill her mission while alone in golus. If someone else were buried there, the klipos of golus would envelope them and they would not be able to help the Jews as they were driven out of Eretz Yisroel after the churban Bais Hamikdosh.

Yaakov, as he was about to pass away, turned to his beloved son, Yosef, and told him that because he possessed the ability to fight Eisov in golus and maintain his level of kedusha, he can now appreciate the mantel that was being placed on him, which he inherited from his mother. "Know that she was placed there for a purpose," Yaakov said, "and that you and she embody that power throughout the ages." That is why when Yaakov completed his request of Yosef concerning his burial, he said that Am Yisroel would bless their children to be like Menashe and Efraim.

This is also the understanding of the response to the cries of Rochel at the time of Golus Nevuzaradun: "Minee koleich mibechi ve'ainayich min dimah ki yeish sochor lifuloseich... veshovu vonim ligevulon."

Hashem told her not to cry, because as a result of her strength and the traditions she passed on through Yosef of being able to survive alone in golus, the Jews would return from exile. The two concepts are intertwined, because in reward for maintaining that ability, her son, Yosef, would spawn Moshiach and begin the redemption that will return her children from exile.

Only Rochel would be able to receive that reward, and only she would be able to remain all alone on the side of the road. In order for the others to endure the golus, they had to be united together in the Meoras Hamachpeilah in Chevron.

To survive the golus and accomplish our missions, we must be united. If we splinter off and go out on our own, we can become enveloped by the kochos hatumah and sink. We must remain united, with common goals, determined to fulfill our missions, so that we can become geulim. If we want our condition to improve, we have to work on returning to the levels of our avos.

Chazal state that the Bais Hamikdosh was destroyed because of sinas chinom. We commonly understand this to mean that it was a punishment. Because this aveirah was prevalent among Klal Yisroel, they were punished with the removal of the Bais Hamikdosh.

We can also understand that in a spiritual but also physical way, the churban was brought about by infighting. There were the camps of the Tzedukim and the Perushim, and they were at each other's throats. The Tzedukim mercilessly killed the Perushim, starving them and causing them to die of thirst. Their acts of sinah, hatred, towards their brethren enabled the Romans to militarily defeat the Jews and destroy the Bais Hamikdosh.

Every generation in which the Bais Hamikdosh is not rebuilt is considered to be a generation in which it was destroyed. If it has not been rebuilt in our day, it is because sinas chinom is still among us. If Jews would love each other, care about each other, and be able to disagree without canceling those who don't agree with them, Moshiach would be here.

You don't have to be a prophet or a genius to see the sinas chinom that prevents Moshiach Ben Yosef from announcing that the end is near.

Each of us, in our own way, has the ability to end conflict, to bring people together, and to enable the sparks of kedusha that endure to be united in forming a large fireball that will burn through the golus.

We have to do more to support good people. And we have to remember that whatever we do and wherever we are, we are bnei Avrohom, Yitzchok and Yaakov, heirs to a golden tradition, bearers of an eternal torch. We must ensure that the flame endures and that the traditions continue, so that Rochel and Yosef will rejoin us soon.

If we would work to make the world a better place, we could overcome differences and spread goodness, holiness and Torah, lighting up the world so that we could all be geulim.

The golus mentality is one of separation and division, dissension and disagreement, derision and negativity.

Let us remain loyal to the traditions and teachings of our rabbeim, zaidehs and bubbehs. Built on foundations of Torah, avodah and mesorah, what motivated them was their desire to return to the levels of our avos and imahos, getting closer to Hashem and persevering until Moshiach would come.

Wherever we are and whatever we do, let us strengthen our emunah and bitachon in Hakadosh Boruch Hu and recognize that everything that happens is from Him. Let us strengthen our devotion to Torah study, shemiras hamitzvos, and remaining loyal to our mesorah.

Doing so will bring us protection and victories, communally and individually, and will bring about the geulah sheleimah speedily in our day.