

THE MOUNTAIN AND THE VALLEY

(CURRENT VALLEY OF TEARS)

Parshas Devorim

By Rabbi Menachem Rokeach

The ecstatic hymn LECHA DODI, chanted on Friday evening to introduce the receiving of the Shabbos, concentrates considerably on redemption. Based on the teaching that Shabbos contains the qualities to bring about redemption ("If the Jewish people would observe properly two Sabbos'n they would immediately be redeemed" - Shabbos 118b), the author, Reb Shlomo Alkabets, gives therein felicitous expression to this profound yearning.

On Shabbos CHAZON, when the craving for the long overdue redemption takes on a sense of greatest urgency, some sing this hymn melancholically to the tune of ELI TZION from the end of KINOS. Chasidim customarily take the more optimistic approach and sing it out as every other Shabbos with a joyous melody.

Commentators searched for sources for most of the choice phrases in this eloquent hymn. One phrase deserves particular attention. "Rav Loch Sheves... Long enough have you (Jerusalem) dwelt in the valley of tears", the author cries out. This expression "Rav Loch Sheves" seems to paraphrase a clause in this week's portion: "Long enough have you dwelt in this mountain" (Devorim 1:6). The author, seemingly, endeavored more than merely to borrow a phrase. He sought to draw a parallel of two areas, the mountain and the valley, each possessing qualities to earn the coveted redemption. In the Biblical passage the reference is to the mountains of G-d, Mt.

Sinai. "Long enough have you dwelt in this mountain," "So much reward has your dwelling in this mountain earned for yourselves. You have received the Torah on it, appointed a Sanhedrin, officers of thousands and officers of hundreds..." (Sifri, see also Rashi). Therefore: "Turn yourselves around and journey and come to the hill country of the Amorites... the land of Canaan, as far as the great river, the river Euphrates. Behold I have set the land before you, go in and possess the land..." (Devorim 1:7,8). It is clear that the Sinai achievement served as the springboard from which to launch the conquest of the Land of Israel, as it still remains today the everlasting claim of our people to the land, and to redemption.

A second approach in our claim to the Holy Land and redemption is the unbearableness of exile. When the cup of sorrow is filled to the brim, the tormenting heart overtaxed, and the valley is becoming a torrent of tears, as has been the experience of nineteen centuries, culminating with our generation's holocaust, it is high time to have compassion upon Zion and bring the Jewish people home. Even if the oaths on the mountain, SINAI, have not been kept as it should be, the hatred, SINAH, it evoked from the world to the chosen people is cause enough for deliverance. "Enough have you dwelt in the valley of tears."

In the last several decades, most Orthodox Synagogues include, in the traditional KINOS of Tisha B'Av, special lamentations crying out the pain of the holocaust, the greatest churbon in history. It is surely a credit to a Brooklynite, Reb Pinchas Herzka, z.l., who did not rest, traveled to many Geonim Tzadikim, who approved this inclusion. It is now printed in most KINOS.

The MISPALELIM at the Bercher Beth Medrosh surely remember Reb Pinchas z"l, a prominent member of Debritziner Beth Medrosh, who spent Shlosh Seudos for many years in Bercher Beth Medrosh.

The mourning today for all the current suffering enhances our supplication against the threat by enemies who seek and plan for our destruction. The prayers are more serious on this day of recollection of all the tragedies over the centuries, from the destruction of both Botei Mikdosh, through Beitar, the Crusades, the Spanish Inquisition, the expulsions of Jews from many lands, and finally the Holocaust. Our history has been a long cry "Eicho" How and why could such tragedy happen to us?

Did I say "finally"?! We are NOW in the midst of battle with Gaza, Hammas terrorists, a battle of "life or ...". At this writing the enemy already murdered sixty sons of Israel. The fact that the enemy suffered twenty times that number is no balsam to diminish our pain of our tragic losses. The fight goes on in the עמק הבכה, in the deep underground of dangerous tunnels filled with explosives. Who would dare to suggest a plausible reason why? Is it perhaps this recent statistics that only forty percent of Israelis believe that Hashem gave the Jewish people Eretz Yisroel? It is, then, our sacred task to inculcate a majority with that אמונה mentioned in the Torah numerous times.

The Talmud (Yevomos 64a) teaches, Hashem uses sometimes מדה רגונית (strict justice) in order to evoke a closer relationship to Him, through prayer and observance. "When one gives a piece of bread to a child, he should notify his mother. How? By smearing the child's face with some jam" (Shabos 10b). His mother will ask what happened,

child will tell of the bread, in order to promote friendship knowing about the giver (Rashi). Vaster numbers recognizing there is a Giver of Eretz Yisroel to us would diminish the need to stain our face in our desperate fight against the enemies.

The gift of Eretz Yisroel, as the gift of Shabos, the Menucha (rest) of truth and faith, of tranquility and security. "May Your children recognize and know that from You comes their Menucha" (Shabos Mincha).

No doubt that the prayers with broken hearts, Shabos and every day, can speed the long awaited redemption. From the Lecho Dodi stanza "Too long have you dwelt in the valley of weeping" we move on to our Parsha "Too long have you dwelt in this mountain". It is time to come to the Promised Land...

The stronger of the two fortresses is the experience of the mountain rather than the valley. The Jewish people can speed the GEULAH with much faster pace through the rejuvenation of Torah, studying it and practicing it. Redemption can come "today if to His voice you will hearken" (Tehilim 95:7). When the Torah reader sings out the AICHO (Devorim 1:12), to the sad tune of AICHO, Lamentations, and reminds us of the agonizing exile, he follows up with the stronger solution to our dilemma: "Get yourselves men of wisdom and understanding..." (ibid. 1:13), who will teach and expound the Torah to Israel.

