

באהבה ובאמונה

בס"ד

מכון מאיר

ע"ש אליעזר מאיר לפישן ה"ד



Parashat Beshalach 5772



Rabbi Dov Bigon

Message for Today

The Sweet Fruits of the Land -- Among the Signs of Redemption

Regarding the well-known question of what sign there will be of Israel's redemption, Rabbi Abba answers that we have no clearer sign than that of Ezekiel 36:8: "But you, O mountains of Israel, shall shoot forth your branches and yield your fruit to My people Israel; for they will soon be coming." Rashi explains: "When Eretz Yisrael yields its fruit bountifully, the end will be near, and we have no clearer sign of redemption" (Sanhedrin 98).

In King Solomon's day as well, when Eretz Yisrael achieved one of its most bountiful periods, King Solomon said, "I planted vineyards, I made gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kinds of fruits" (Ecclesiastes 2:4-5).

Almost all the fruits of the world are found in Eretz Yisrael, because Eretz Yisrael has all the types of soil: "Out of Zion, the perfection [michlal] of beauty" (Psalm 50:2). All beauty is included [kalul] in it.

As of now, the custom has taken root that many Jews eat the fruits of Eretz Yisrael on Tu Bishvat. By doing so, we demonstrate our love and affection for the Land, thereby effecting a great spiritual improvement in the world. When we taste of the enormous assortment of fruits that grow in our land, there is almost no fruit on earth that cannot be found here, as in the days of King Solomon. We must show our gratitude to G-d, who is renewing our days as of old, for the fact that Eretz Yisrael is yielding its fruit bountifully to the People of Israel. Following two thousand years of exile, they are now gathering together in their millions. How fortunate we are and how good is our lot, that we are privileged to see all of this with our own eyes! The day is not far off when the continuation of the prophecy in Ezekiel 36 will be fulfilled as well, "I will gather you out of all the countries, and will bring you into your own land.... Then I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean.... A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.... I will put My spirit within you.... You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and you shall be My people, and I will be your G-d" (verses 24-28).

Longing for redemption,

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Rabbi Shlomo Aviner

The “Money Crusade”

(Newspaper Interview)

Q: What is the position of Halacha on accepting contributions from Christian bodies?

A: First of all, you’ve got to realize that we don’t have to accept money from non-Jews, even from non-Jews who aren’t Christian. The Talmud likens accepting such contributions to eating pork, because it profanes G-d’s name, and it constitutes behavior akin to a Jew eating pork.

To be a beggar, to be a *shnorrer*, is a very degrading thing, even more so when you’re being supported by money from non-Jews. What kind of thing is that to have the non-Jews support us? Can’t we manage by ourselves? Figure it this way: All the money from all the various organizations of the non-Jews doesn’t equal a half day of the budget of the State of Israel. True, after the State was established, there was terrible economic duress, and even in that situation it was degrading to accept money. But today, our country is wealthy. Imagine a wealthy person standing in the Kotel Plaza begging money! If a wealthy Jewish country accepts money from non-Jews, that’s even more of a profanation of G-d’s name.

As far as the organizations of the Christians, the problem is even worse. Since the beginning of history, the Christians have been trying to wipe us out. They tried to kill us and they failed. Then they tried to disperse us and to banish us, but we’re still around.

They tried to hurt us economically, and we’re still around. They tried to degrade and humiliate us, and we’re still around.

What’s happening now is being described in the Christian literature as the “Money Crusade”, as if to say, “With the help of money, we’ll wipe them out.” They sum it up with two words, “Hug and Strangle”. Their giving us money will make them our friends. That will enable them to increase their missionary influence. In Israel there are tens of thousands of missionaries, with a budget of hundreds of millions of dollars. Obviously, that doesn’t mean that the same person who accepts their money is destined to convert, but money gifts open doors for them. It gives them a ticket into Israeli society, the better to trap Israeli society by way of their missions. Already Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook wrote (Igarot Re’iya IV 61) that one cannot accept money from Christians when the one who’s going to pay for it is another Jew who will convert to Christianity. That’s immoral. The greatest rabbis have forbidden us to accept Christian money: the Chief Rabbinate, HaGaon

HaRav Avraham Shapira zt"l, HaGaon HaRav Mordechai Eliyahu zt"l, the rabbinical court of Chabad, the rabbinical court of the Eda HaCharedit in Meah She'arim, and more.

Q: What about the claims that Jewish lives depend on that money?

A: In the State of Israel, there is nobody dying of hunger. To claim otherwise is wrong. It's straightforward libel against the Jewish People. When someone is in economic distress, money can be attained for him. The welfare services pass along tens of billions of shekalim. There are also a lot of legitimate free-loan societies and charities.

I know of one charitable institution that, inter alia, accepts Chistian money, and eighty percent of the contributions they receive line the pockets of the fund's administrators. They talk all nice about how they're receiving donations for poor, downtrodden people, but the money is going to their own pockets. G-d have mercy on them and may He help them to repent.

When the "Ateret Kohanim" yeshiva was founded thirty years ago [note: the author is the head of that yeshiva], an affable American approached me and asked if we were building the Temple, and I answered no. He then asked, "But you do want the Temple to be built, don't you?" and I answered, "We certainly want it to be built! Who doesn't?" He then asked, "And what are you doing to advance it?" I answered that we study Torah and seek to refine our character. Then he said, "I am willing to organize a donation for you from Evangelical Protestants in the amount of fifty million dollars a year. Do you agree?" I gave him a one-word answer: No. I lost fifty million dollars times thirty years, which is 1.5 billion dollars. But I have no regrets.

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Rabbi Ya'akov HaLevi Filber

Sickness and Its Cure

A religious experience in and of itself does not provide a person with the ability to withstand life's trials. Israel had just completed their majestic song of faith at the Sea of Reeds, and already at their first test, at the Bitter Waters, they complained and expressed resentment to G-d. This shows that they had not yet internalized their faith. In response to the people's resentment, after He made the water drinkable, G-d said to them, "If you obey the L-rd your G-d and do what is upright in His eyes, carefully heeding all His commandments and keeping all His decrees, then I will not strike you with any of the sicknesses that I brought on Egypt, for I am the L-rd who heals you" (Exodus 15:26). Here, the question is asked: Were two promises made here, that G-d would spare them from illness, but that if they became ill He would cure them, or was only one promise made, that maintaining moral uprightness and preserving the commandments and statutes of the Torah would constitute preventative medicine? This second possibility appears in Midrash HaGadol:

"Moses asked G-d, 'If Israel will suffer no illness, what need will there be of cures?' G-d answered, 'The words of Torah that I have given you constitute life for you and a cure for you,' as it says, "For they are life for those who find them, and a cure for all their flesh" (Proverbs 4:22).

Sickness and its cure is one of the topics that has preoccupied mankind from the dawn of history. Man has struggled with various questions: What are the reasons for illness? What is its aim and purpose, and how can we relate to the ways of curing it? Man's illnesses have several causes. Some come from G-d as a punishment for man's negative ethical behavior, or as a test, or a means of purging man's sins through his suffering. Yet according to Vayikra Rabbah 16, the main cause of man's illnesses is his behavior:

"Man's avoiding illness depends on man himself, as it says, 'The L-rd will remove all sickness from you' (Deuteronomy 7:15). It is from you, yourself, that your illnesses will not befall you." And to what extent is man guilty of bringing on his own illnesses? That same Midrash teaches, "Ninety-nine percent come through negligence and one percent comes from G-d."

Our use of medicine arouses a question regarding faith: Does not a person's turning to physicians for help constitute his having weak trust in G-d? When King Chizkiyahu was dying, he turned his head toward the wall in prayer and asked G-d to remember that he had walked before G-d in truth and with a perfect heart, and he added the words, "I did that which was good in Your sight" (Isaiah 38:3). The Talmud asks (Berachot 10b) what was meant by this last phrase, and it answers, "That he hid away the book of remedies." Rashi comments, "In order that people should beg for mercy." This implies that the remedies in the book were beneficial, but that Chizkiyahu hid them away in order that people should beg for mercy. Rambam in his commentary on the Mishnah (Pesachim 4:9) quotes Rashi's interpretation yet sharply rejects it:

"We can see what is wrong and fallacious about this utterance. How could Chizkiyahu be blamed for foolishness such as the worst of the masses do not deserve to be blamed for.... According to the inaccurate and superficial logic [of this Rashi], when someone is hungry and he eats bread, no doubt recovering from that strong 'illness' -- his hunger -- he will immediately despair of ever again relying upon G-d. Let us reply to those who hold that way: 'Fools! Just as we thank G-d when we eat, because He provided us with what we need, removing our hunger so that we are sustained and survive, so shall I thank Him for providing me with the remedy to cure my illness, after I am cured.'"

Rambam therefore explains that the "Book of Remedies" that Chizkiyahu hid away was a book of "superstitious remedies" unconnected to medical science. By contrast, he says, we are obligated to avail ourselves of real medicine, as the Rabbis said, " 'He shall surely be cured' (Exodus 21:19): This teaches that physicians are allowed to cure the sick." The same has come down as a ruling in Shulchan Aruch (Yoreh Deah 336:1): "The Torah permitted the physician to cure the sick. In fact, what they do is a mitzvah and constitutes 'pikuach nefesh,' saving lives. If a physician abstains from curing the sick, he is shedding blood." See Ein Aya (Berachot Ch. 1, letter 143), in which Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook resolves the contradiction between the Rambam and Rashi, such that both would agree that a person must avail himself of human medicine.