

## דרכים בפרשה מטות-מסעי

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### אלה מסעי בני ישראל אשר יצאו מארץ מצרים

The first haftarah of the Three Weeks begins with a fascinating vision. Hashem asks Yirmiyahu:

מה אתה רואה ירמיהו? "What do you see?" Yirmiyahu answers: מקל שקד אני רואה. "I see an almond branch."

At first glance, this seems like a strange image. If Hashem was revealing to Yirmiyahu the impending destruction of the Beis HaMikdash, why specifically show him an almond branch?

The Seforim Hakedoshim point us to the Yerushalmi in Taanis (4:5) which explains: כ"א יום מיום שהובקעה העיר ועד יום שחרב בית המקדש אמר רבי אבונה סימנא מקל שקד אני רואה מה הלז הזה משהוא מוציא את ניצור ועד שהוא גומר את פירותיו כ"א יום כך מיום שהובקעה העיר ועד יום שחרב הבית כ"א יום

The Yerushalmi teaches that just as the almond takes 21 days from the time it blossoms until it completes its fruit, so too there are 21 days from the breaching of the walls of Yerushalayim until the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash.

But why was this the symbol chosen for these days?

The Rogatchover Gaon, in his sefer *Tzafnas Paneach*, points out a beautiful insight. There are different types of almonds. The *לוז* begins with sweetness and eventually becomes bitter. The *שקד*, however, follows the opposite path. It begins bitter and eventually becomes sweet.

This is why the pasuk specifically says: מקל שקד אני רואה.

The message of the *shaked* is not merely that it takes 21 days. The message is that the process itself is one of transformation. What begins with bitterness is destined to become sweet.

This is the message of the Three Weeks. These days begin with mourning. We remember the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash and the suffering that has followed throughout our long galus. Yet the *shaked* teaches us that bitterness is not the final chapter.

The Three Weeks are not merely 21 days of mourning. They are 21 days during which Hashem is transforming bitterness into sweetness.

The Seforim Hakedoshim further explain another detail in the words of the pasuk. מקל שקד אני רואה.

There is a difference between a *מטה* and a *שבט*. A *מטה* is a harder staff, while a *שבט* is a softer branch.

Even when a father must discipline his child, the purpose is never to hurt him. The purpose is to guide him, to help him grow, and to bring him closer. So too, when Hashem sends difficult times upon Klal Yisrael, they are never an expression of rejection. They come from the love of a Father who wants to bring His children closer to Him.

Even the "stick" that Yirmiyahu saw teaches us that the purpose of these difficult days is not destruction, but growth.

This perspective is reflected in one of the most powerful stories in Chazal: The Gemara (Makkos 24) tells us that after the *churban* of the Beis HaMikdash, Rabban Gamliel, Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah, Rabbi Yehoshua, and Rabbi Akiva were walking near the ruins of Yerushalayim. When they reached Har HaBayis, they saw a fox emerging from the place where the Kodesh HaKodashim had once stood. The other Chachamim began to cry. The holiest place on earth had become a place where animals wandered!

But Rabbi Akiva laughed. They asked him how he could laugh at such a sight. Rabbi Akiva explained that the same *nevuah* which foretold the destruction of Yerushalayim also contained the promise that Yerushalayim would one day be rebuilt. If the frightening *nevuah* had been fulfilled, then surely the comforting *nevuah* would also be fulfilled.

Rabbi Akiva was not ignoring the *churban*. He saw the same fox that everyone else saw. But he saw something more. They saw *churban*. He saw the beginning of the *geulah*.

Perhaps this is also the message of our parsha.

The Torah could have simply summarized Bnei Yisrael's forty years in the Midbar. Instead, it records every one of their 42 journeys. Why?

Because a journey cannot be understood while one is still traveling.

When Bnei Yisrael were in the middle of the Midbar, they could not understand the purpose of every stop. Some places were filled with joy, while others were filled with difficulty and disappointment.

Only after the journey was complete could the Torah look back and declare: אלה מסעי בני ישראל.

Every stop had been part of one continuous journey leading them closer to Eretz Yisrael.

Perhaps this is the connection between Parshas Maasei and the Three Weeks.

We often judge a moment while we are still experiencing it. We taste the bitterness and wonder why Hashem brought us there. But the *shaked* teaches us that the bitterness may only be the beginning of the process.

The journeys of Bnei Yisrael teach us that one stop never tells the entire story. We taste the bitterness. Hashem already sees the sweetness that is waiting to emerge.

We see the galus. Hashem sees the *geulah* that is already beginning to grow.

May we be *zoche* that the hidden sweetness of these days should soon be revealed, and that the tears of the Three Weeks should be transformed into the joy of the rebuilding of the Beis HaMikdash, במהרה בימינו.

**Good Shabbos, מרדכי אפפל**