

SICHA SUMMARY

PROJECT LIKKUTEI SICHOS | 5783 - YEAR OF HAKHEL



Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 23

Balak, Sicha 2

The Verse:

In Bilaam's final prophecy, he foretells what will transpire in the "end of days," with the coming of Moshiach:

"A staff will arise from Israel which will crush the princes of Moab and uproot all the sons of Seth." (Bamidbar 24:17)

Two interpretations of this prophecy are offered: 1) Onkelus translates this as "he will rule over all people." That is, Moshiach will be a king whose rules will extend over all people of the world. 2) Ibn Ezra and others explain the verb "crush" literally, that there will be a large-scale destruction of the nations of the world.

The Question:

There are many prophecies about the Messianic era which discuss the role of the nations of the world, their newfound devotion to G-d, and their assistance to the spiritual service of the Jewish people. How is it possible, then, to read this prophecy of destruction literally?

The Explanation:

Rather, both opinions agree that the nations of the world will continue to exist in the Messianic era, the dispute concerns the extent of their participation in the redemption.

Will the nations of the world become subservient to the Jewish people's spiritual mission, will they no longer possess an independent existence? Or will they also experience a spiritual redemption, maintaining their individuality, and discovering the reality of G-dliness within the world?

Ibn Ezra, who maintains that the nations of the world will be "crushed," corresponds to the notion that they will lose their independent existence, and become wholly devoted to the Jewish people's spiritual task.

Onkelus, who maintains that the nations of the world will still exist, corresponds to the notion that they, too, will merit redemption from the darkness and concealment of exile.

Chassidus aligns with this interpretation, for the redemption is not complete if there is

still some part of existence that doesn't independently experience the revelation of G-d's reality. The nation's enlightenment is therefore essential to redemption.

On a deeper level, the decimation of the nations of the world alludes to this enlightenment, when the reality of G-d is revealed, all sense of selfhood is "crushed," and only the recognition that G-d is the essence of all things remains.
