

SICHA SUMMARY

PROJECT LIKKUTEI SICHOS | 5783 - YEAR OF HAKHEL



Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 15

Asara B'Teves

The Context:

The central theme of parshas Vayigash is the interaction and synergy between Yehuda and Yosef. Yet the Haftorah clarifies that ultimately, in the end of time, Yehuda will be dominant. The fast of the tenth of Teves often coincides with this parshah, and so we find that this same pattern is present in the biblical fast days, the first of which is the tenth of Teves. Concerning these fasts the Rambam writes that in the Messianic future, they will be transformed into days of rejoicing “for the house of Yehuda, and they shall love truth and peace.” Meaning, the primary joy will belong to Yehuda, yet as a result of the truth and peace that will then reign, this joy will be shared by all the tribes. To understand why Yehuda will primarily experience the joyous transformation of the fasts, we need to further examine the passage of the Rambam:

The Rambam:

“All these fasts will be nullified in the Messianic era, not only that, they will be transformed into holidays and days of

rejoicing and celebration. As it says, “...The fasts of the fourth [month]... will be times of happiness and celebration and festivals for the house of Judah. And they shall love truth and peace (*Zechariah 8:19*).”” (*Hilchos Taanis, 5:19*)

The Questions:

1. Why does Rambam divide this statement into two clauses, a) “these fasts will be nullified; b) they will be transformed...” Why not state it succinctly and simply, that the fasts will be transformed?
2. Why did Rambam choose this verse that highlights Yehuda’s joy, and not other verses that speak of the future joy of fasts that do not single out a single tribe?

The Explanation:

There are three stages in the transformation of a fast day into a day of celebration: 1) The reign of peace in the world necessarily nullifies the need to fast and mourn. 2) The absence of fasting then leads to a celebration of this new reality. 3) The fasts themselves become cause for celebration, not a celebration of the new, suffering-free reality, but a celebration of what was once thought of as the suffering itself.

Fasting is one of the main themes of repentance. These three stages reflect the process of transformative repentance as well: 1) The sin is abandoned (the fast itself is nullified) 2) Additional mitzvos are performed in the new exuberance of repentance (celebration of the new reality). 3) The sins themselves are transformed into merits (the fasts themselves become celebrations).

Rambam's two clauses refer to these three stages: "All these fasts will be nullified in the Messianic era." When the fasts are nullified, the celebration of the cessation of the suffering is natural. Thus, the Rambam is referring to the first two stages here. "They will be transformed into holidays and days of rejoicing and celebration." This refers to the transformation of the sadness and suffering itself into cause for rejoicing.

Elsewhere, Rambam implies that the Messianic era will comprise two stages. The first will see the natural world preserved, yet the Jewish people will have political autonomy. The second will see the upending of the natural order. The first two stages of the fasts' transformation will take place in the first era of the Messiah, as the reason for fasting will be nullified, and natural celebration will follow. The third stage, which transcends the logical, linear world where suffering can not, itself, be redeemed, will take place in the second, miraculous stage of Messiah.

Yehuda vs Yosef:

The ten tribes (represented by Yosef) who were forcibly exiled by Sancheriv did not experience the subsequent, graphic suffering of exile as did Yehuda. Commensurate with the suffering of exile will be the joy of the fasts' transformation. Yehuda, therefore, will be the primary celebrant of the new holidays.

This also aligns with the mystical definitions of Yehuda and Yosef. Yosef represents Torah study and enlightenment bestowed from "above"; Yehuda represents deed and engagement with the material "lowly" reality. Yosef can illuminate certain spheres of the world, but cannot penetrate the deepest darkness. Yehuda is embedded in those darkest places and transforms them through simple deed. This ability to transform the farthest place from G-dliness is derived from G-d's essence, which transcends light and dark. This truth of G-d will be revealed in the second, miraculous stage of the Messiah. Therefore, Yehuda takes center stage at that time.

This is alluded to in the theoretical law that if the tenth of Teves would coincide with Shabbos, it would still be observed. Eating alludes to a degree of G-dliness which can be "consumed" and broken down. Fasting alludes to an apprehension of G-d which cannot be integrated, the essence of G-d. The tenth of Teves, the fast that begins the tragedy of the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash, holds the potential for the transformation of fasts which will reveal G-d's "non-consumable" essence. This is higher than the consumption of Shabbos, a level of Divinity that can be appreciated.
