

Insights from the Meshech Chochma

רב מאיר שמחה הכהן מדווינסק זצ"ל פרשת דברים-שבת חזון תשפ"ב

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על הר ציון נששמים שועלים הלכו בו. (איכה ה' יח)

(For this our heart was faint,...: for Mount Zion, which lies desolate, foxes prowl over it.

Although Rav Meir Simcha did not devote an entire Sefer to Eichah, he fortunately did leave us several pieces on this Megillah and specifically on this pasuk.

He begins the discussion with the well-known Midrash on this pasuk: "It happened that Rabban Gamliel, R' Elazar ben Azaria, R' Yehoshua, and R' Akiva... were ascending to Yerushalayim. When they arrived at Mount Scopus, they rent their garments. When they arrived at the Temple Mount, they saw a fox emerging from the place of the Holy of Holies. They began weeping, and R' Akiva was laughing. They said to him: 'Akiva, you always astonish us, we are weeping and you are laughing.' He said to them: 'Why are you weeping?' They said to him: 'Shall we not weep? The place in whose regard it is written, *וְהָזָר הַקָּרֵב יוּמָת* / *And the non-priest who approaches shall be put to death*, behold, a fox emerges from it. Whoa that the verse stated of it, *עַל הַר צִיּוֹן נִשְׁשָׁמִים שְׁוֹעָלִים*, *has been fulfilled!*' He said to them: 'It is for this reason that I am laughing. Behold Hashem says, *וְאֶעֱיֶדֶה לִּי עֵדִים נְאֻמָּנִים אֶת אוּרִיָּה... וְאֶת זְכַרְיָהוּ*... / *I had trustworthy witnesses testify for Me, Uriah... and Zechariah...* What does Uriah have to do with Zechariah? Uriah was in the First Temple and Zechariah was in the Second? Rather, what did Uriah say? *צִיּוֹן שָׂדֵה תִּחְרַשׁ וִירוּשָׁלַיִם עַיִים תִּהְיֶה* / *So said Hashem, 'Zion will be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem will be heaps.'* What did Zechariah say? *עַד יִשְׁבּוּ זָקֵנִים* / *Old men and old women will again sit in the squares of Jerusalem, each man with his staff in his hand, due to advanced age.'* And it is written afterwards, *וּרְחֻבּוֹת הָעִיר יִמְלְאוּ יְלָדִים וְיִלְדוֹת מִשְׁחָקִים בְּרַחֲבֵתֶיהָ* / *The city squares will be filled with boys and girls playing in its squares.'* HKBH said: 'I have these two witnesses. If the words of Uriah are realized, the words of Zechariah will be realized, and if the words of Uriah are void, the words of Zechariah are void.' R' Akiva continued: 'I was joyful that the words of Uriah were realized, for ultimately so will the words of Zechariah!' They said to him: 'Akiva, you have comforted us. *יִתְנַחֵם בְּרַגְלֵי מְבַשֵּׁר* i.e., may you be comforted by the feet of the herald, Eliyahu HaNavi.'"

Never quite satisfied with a superficial understanding of even the most straightforward interchange, Rav Meir Simcha (re)interprets this Midrash with a dramatic twist. R' Akiva was known to be a follower of the renegade warrior Bar Kochba, as we were told earlier,

in Midrash Eichah Rabba, “R’ Akiva, when he would look at Shimon bar Kochba, would say: ‘אֵינִי מְלֶכָא מְשִׁיחָא i.e., this is the messianic king.’ (To which R’ Yochanan ben Torata answered, ‘Akiva, grass will grow in your cheeks and (the Mashiach) will still not have come.’)” His three colleagues mentioned in the Midrash were suspicious that perhaps R’ Akiva’s “laughter” was out of a rejoicing that his Mashiach, Bar Kochba, will shortly ascend to power. Even when R’ Akiva was attempting to comfort them with his remarks that his happiness was because he felt that just as the prophecy of Uriah has come to fruition, so too, at some time in the future, will Zechariah’s, they were still wary. They told him **בְּרַגְלֵי מְבִשֵּׁר, תִּתְנַחֵם, נְחַמְתָּנוּ, עֵקִיבָא נְחַמְתָּנוּ**-why the two appreciations? One was for the consolation that Hashem has not forsaken his people-they will rise again, as per Zechariah’s prophecy. The second was to make R’ Akiva “understand” that the true **מְבִשֵּׁר** will be when the Mashiach arrives **בְּרַגְלֵי מְבִשֵּׁר**. This is a reference to **מג: עירובין**, where we are told that Eliyahu will arrive the day before the coming of the Mashiach. He is the **מְבִשֵּׁר**. And they were hinting to him, since Eliyahu has not arrived, Bar Kochba cannot be the Mashiach!*

We are fortunate to have Rav Meir Simcha’s printed thoughts on perhaps one of the most famous Midrashic “conversations” in all the Torah. His explanation of it gives a fresh historical perspective on an extremely poignant exchange which has become a source of hope for all of us. May we merit the coming of Mashiach soon, heralded by Eliyahu HaNavi, **יְשׁוּעוֹת וְנִחְמוֹת, בְּשׁוּרוֹת טוֹבוֹת, וַיְבִשֵּׁר לָנוּ בְּשׁוּרוֹת טוֹבוֹת!**

*Rav Kupperman ^{צ"ל}, in his **הגהות** on the Meshech Chochma astutely points out that Rav Meir Simcha clearly does not agree with the position of the G”RYZ who feels that the earlier presence of the **מְבִשֵּׁר** occurs *only* if the Mashiach comes at his preset time. If, however, the Mashiach presents himself at an earlier time, because **כלל ישראל** is deemed worthy, as Hashem tells us in **ישעיהו**, **אֲחִישָׁנָה, יִשְׁעִיהוּ**, *Hashem, will speed* (the final Redemption and Mashiach’s arrival) *in due time*, the **מְבִשֵּׁר** will not necessarily herald him.

לזכר נשמת אבי מורי ישראל מנחם בן ר' שלום ז"ל
לזכר נשמת אמי מורת רחל בת ר' אלחנן אביגדור הכ"מ
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