

## **The Four Parshiyot of Redemption**

**by Dr. Meir Tamari**

Parshat Para is more relevant for our generations than any of the four special parshiyot which we read before Pesach, even more so than Zachor. The generation of those who were delivered from Egypt must have been exceptional to merit that miraculous geula. So too, ours must be special to see the redemption foretold by the haftara but denied to so many previous generations.

The special additional Torah reading for this Shabbat details the purification by the ashes of Para Aduma of a person rendered impure by contact with a dead body or part of one [tumat meit]. Other korbanot have their flesh, fat and blood offered while here everything is consumed by fire and only the ashes are used. Fat and blood are the life giving forces of the animal, its nefesh, while the ashes are powerless to give fruit or life; trumat hadeshen removes any life-giving element even from the ashes and then the dead ashes are removed. This is because the korbanot express the transformation of mankind's material desires and lusts into the worship and service of Hashem.

"Para Aduma, whose unfertile ashes are the sole use, reflects the trait of despair and spiritual malaise" (Chidushei Harim, Gur). R' Chaim Vital writes that this trait must be cast aside and cannot be transformed into holiness, since holiness is simcha-gladness and chedva-delight, while from the Zohar (part 3,8) we see that it is impossible to

draw closer to kedusha without simcha and the baal teshuva is assisted by the simcha and song of the Kohanim and the Levites.

Tumat meit personifies the despair and withdrawal from life whereby the dead cause deep sleep to fall so that the corpse becomes immovable stone or dead flesh. This impurity makes all our actions and spiritual behavior cold and mechanical, having neither ecstasy nor life-force. The tahara for this is the sprinkling of the mixture of the living waters and the dead ashes of self-negation in the avoda of the Para Aduma. "We must understand that the source of living water [is] Hashem (Yirmiyahu 17:13). Through the admixture of these living waters, the distraught heart and humbled spirit are brought to simchat hanefseh, chedva and life-giving ecstasy". (Shem Mishmuel).

The Korban Pesach may not be eaten in a state of tumah so this special reading before the Chag came to awaken the people to purify themselves so they will be able to eat the Korban Pesach. However, the haftara from Yechezkeil comes to add a startling and new concept to the whole subject of tumah and tahara.

The Navi expands the tumah to also include an impurity of Am Yisrael caused by their idolatry and other sins. Since the holy soil of Eretz Yisrael cannot tolerate any impurity the Land expels Am Yisrael, perhaps so that they may be purified by Galut as fire purifies gold and silver. However, Am Yisrael continues to sin even in the galut so postpones its own redemption.

It is significant that long after Israel

renounced the idolatry that caused the first churban it is still continued to sin by economic crimes. Chazal tell us that Bayit Sheini was destroyed because they loved their money (Yerushalmi) or because they all insisted on fully recovering their economic rights without any compromise (Bavli). Continuing their economic immorality lengthened their exile. "The length of Galut Edom can only be explained by the fact that Israel deals un-righteously with the nations. If their business and economic behavior would be in justice and morality, the nations of the world would demand that Hashem redeem them immediately" (Smag, Hilchot Hashavat Aveida).

Jewish though has always maintained that t'shuva will bring redemption but our haftarah sings of a promise that there will even be a redemption simply because its time has come. The ghettos, foreign graves and hiding places of the galut will open up and there will be redemption without Israel's t'shuva. The greatness of Harav I. H. Kook was to understand that the geulah of Parashat Para is the geulah of our own time. 🌸