

PRAYER POINTS

INTERPRETING THE SIGNS

In our times, so many individuals and families suffer tragedies and illness. What does this all mean? People fearfully wonder where it will all lead and when it will all end. The suffering and fear, however, are themselves signs of hope, for they foretell the imminent arrival of the *Geulah*/Final Redemption. We are not helpless as we “wait it out,” because through the power of our prayer, we can hasten the Ultimate Redemption, when Hashem will turn all the suffering and fear into happiness and security.

The prophecies of Uriah and Zechariah were mentioned together. Uriah prophesied the destruction during the era of the first Temple, and Zechariah prophesied about the redemption to come.

As long as the prophecy of Uriah had not been fulfilled, the prophecy of Zechariah would not come to be. However, now that the prophecy of Uriah has been fulfilled, and Jerusalem and the *Beit HaMikdash* are totally desolate, it is obvious that the prophecy of Zechariah, of the Final Redemption, will also be fulfilled.

The opening line of the final lamentation recited on *Tisha B'Av*, provides a ray of hope. “Wail, O Zion and her cities, like a woman suffering from birth travail.” Israel’s suffering is not in vain; rather, the Destruction of the Holy temple and exile should be viewed as a period of embryonic development and gestation leading to the rebirth of our nation. No pain is more excruciating than giving birth, yet the mother accepts it because it announces the joy of a new life. Similarly, Israel’s suffering has been indescribable, but we must accept it as the travail that precedes the glorious rebirth of the nation of Israel.

Numerous verses remind us that Hashem is waiting for our prayers and outcries in order to redeem us: *And then we cried out to Hashem, the God of our forefathers, and Hashem heard our voices and saw our affliction, our travail and our oppression. And Hashem said, “truly, I have seen the affliction of My people in Egypt, and I have heard their outcry because of their cruel masters; for I have known their suffering.” God heard their moaning, and God remembered His covenant with Avraham, with Yitzchak, and with Yaakov.*”

The Rabbinic writings teach that when the Holy Temple was destroyed, all the gates of heaven were closed – except for the Gate of Tears. Thus, even while we are suffering, we need not despair. Just as in Egypt, our prayers, borne by tears of deep sincerity, are precisely the vehicle that will bring about the Final Redemption.

POINTS TO PONDER

The challenges of our times are indicative of the Coming Redemption.

Hashem promises that He will answer when we cry out to Him in our times of need.

Even while we are suffering, our heartfelt prayers are the vehicle that will effect the Final Redemption.

Psalm 111:9 He sent redemption to His people; He ordained His covenant for all time; His name is holy and awesome. (TNK)