

Aloh Naaleh

Rabbi Sholom Gold

Har Nof, Jerusalem

One verse is tucked away quite unobtrusively within the 29 Verses of Admonition- the Tochachah- that is read in a low and mournful tone. There, amidst the litany of frightening and terrifying expressions of Hashem's wrath and anger that speaks of pestilence, plague, hunger, desolation, exile and death, lies a pasuk of such consolation and encouragement that impacts on every one of us even until the present day.

It is very fortunate that Rashi made certain we wouldn't miss it- a verse that is not a curse, nor admonition but rather good news of historic proportions that speaks of G--d's profound love for His people. I will make the land desolate and your foes who dwell upon it will be desolate." (Vayikra 26:32.)

Rashi comments "This is a good measure (i.e. a matter of benefit) for Israel that the enemies will not find contentment in the land, for it will be desolate for its inhabitants.

Interestingly enough, Rashi makes his comment on the first part of the pasuk on the words "I will make the land desolate" and not on the second half in order to emphasize that the very act of desolating the land is for our benefit so that our enemies will never be able to put down roots here.

I once wondered (very briefly) whether Rashi, after having written this, was ever concerned with the possibility that at some time in the future Eretz Yisroel would be conquered and settled by an industrious, clever and highly motivated people who would drain the swamps, remove the stones, clear the debris, build irrigation canals and turn it into a veritable Garden of Eden. Rest assured Rashi never hesitated for a second, since Torah is the ultimate truth and the pasuk says "and your foes who dwell upon the land will be desolate" That's it. Period!!

Now we can bear testimony that in 2000 years of our exile, the Land did not shine its countenance on any other people. Sitting at the crossroads of the world, the bridge between east and west, with mighty nations and empires waging many wars to conquer her, no one succeeded in settling her. Nations devastated, destroyed, razed and burnt- but could not take root . All because of that little pasuk in the Tochacha.

There is an eternal covenant between Eretz Yisroel and Am Yisroel to remain faithful to one another through all time.

The land will only respond to the ministering hands of her people Israel. The Land even knew to anticipate our return and shake off the dust of history and spring to life in full bloom "but you, O mountains of Israel will give forth your branch and bear your fruit for my people, for they are soon to come" (Yechezkel 36:8).

Rabbi Abba said, “There is no clearer indication of the End than this.” (Sanhedrin 98A)

The Land has kept its covenant and hopefully many more of us will keep our part of the bargain!