

Shabbat Chol HaMoed Pesach, 5783, 2023:

Yechezkel's Prophecy of Hope

Rabbi David Etengoff

Dedicated to the sacred memories of my mother, Miriam Tovah bat Aharon HaKohane, father-in-law, Levi ben Yitzhak, sister, Shulamit bat Menachem, sister-in-law, Ruchama Rivka Sondra bat Yechezkel, Chana bat Shmuel, Yehonatan Binyamin ben Mordechai Meir Halevi, Tikvah bat Rivka Perel, Gittel Malka bat Moshe, Alexander Leib ben Benyamin Yosef, the *Kedoshim* of Har Nof, Pittsburgh, and Jersey City, the *refuah shlaimah* of Mordechai HaLevi ben Miriam Tovah, and the health and safety of our brothers and sisters in Israel and around the world.

This week's *haftarah* is focused on Yechezkel's well-known *nevuah* (prophecy) of the "Dry Bones," that begins:

The hand of Hashem came upon me and carried me out in the spirit of Hashem and set me down in the midst of the valley, that was full of bones. And He made me pass by them round about and behold! they were exceedingly many on the surface of the valley and behold! they were exceedingly dry. Then He said to me; "Son of man, can these bones become alive?" And I answered, "O' Hashem Elokim, You [alone] know." (*Sefer Yechezkel 37:1-3*, this and all Tanach and translations, *The Judaica Press Complete Tanach* with my emendations)

Hashem commands Yechezkel to prophesize over the dry bones and declare in His Name that they will live once again:

And He said to me, "Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O' dry bones, hear the word of Hashem." So says Hashem Elokim to these bones: "Behold, I will cause spirit to enter into you, and you shall live! And I will lay sinews upon you, and I will make flesh grow over you and cover you with skin and put breath into you, and you will live, and you will then know that I am Hashem." (37:4-6)

Yechezkel obeys the Almighty's command, with the following miraculous outcome: "And I prophesied as He had commanded me, and the spirit came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, a very great army, exceedingly so." (37:10) *Chazal* differ in their understanding of the nature of this resurrection:

This is as it is taught in a *baraita*, that Rabbi Eliezer says: "The dead that Yechezkel revived stood on their feet and recited song to G-d and died. And what song did they recite? Hashem kills with justice and gives life with mercy..." Rabbi Yehuda says: "Yechezkel's depiction of the dry bones that came to life was truth and it was a parable (*mashal*)." Rabbi Nehemiah

said to Rabbi Yehuda: "... In truth, it was a parable." Rabbi Eliezer, son of Rabbi Yossi HaGelili, says: "Not only was it not a parable, the dead that Ezekiel revived ascended to *Eretz Yisrael* and married wives and fathered sons and daughters." Rabbi Yehuda ben Beteira stood on his feet and said: "I am a descendant of their sons, and these are *tefillin* that my father's father left me from them." (*Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 92b, Koren Talmud Bavli*, translation, Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz *zatzal* with my emendations)

Whether we accept the position that the dry bones actually came to life, or the perspective that this description is a *mashal*, we are left with the question, "Who were the members of this "very great army?" Hashem tells Yechezkel: "Son of man, these bones are all the house of Israel. Behold they say, 'Our bones have become dried up, our hope is lost (*avdah tikvatainu*) ...'" (37:11) In response to the abject hopelessness of the phrase, "*avdah tikvatainu*," Hashem comforts and promises:

"Behold! I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves as My people and bring you home to the Land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am Hashem when I open your graves and lead you up out of your graves as My people. And I will put My spirit into you, and you shall live, and I will set you on your land, and you shall know that I, Hashem, have spoken it and have performed it," says Hashem. (37:12-14)

May the time come soon, and in our days, when Yechezkel's vision will be realized and we will witness the ultimate resurrection of the dead and the ingathering of the exiles to *Eretz Yisrael. V'chane yihi ratzon.*

Shabbat Shalom and *Chag Kasher v'Sameach*

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*** I have posted 164 of Rabbi Soloveitchik's English language audio *shiurim* (MP3 format) spanning the years 1958-1984. Please click on the highlighted link: [The Rav](#)