Meshech Chochma

- Dr Jacob Solomon

When (in exile) all these things come upon you, the blessings and the curses that I have put before you... [with you being] among all the nations where G-d dispersed you. You return to G-d... then G-d will bring back your captivity and have mercy on you. He will return and gather you in from all the nations in which He has dispersed you... (30:1-3)

Moshe's warning to the Israelites of their future exile and dispersal amongst nations finishes with words of comfort. G-d, Moshe says, will heed the people's repentance there, and reunite them together in the Promised Land. However, his assuring that G-d will eventually return the Israelites to the land of their fathers (30:5) is not expressed in the HIFIL (causative, with the word V'HEISHIV) "He will bring back", but with simple form of the verb, V'SHAV, meaning "He will return" - G-d Himself will return.

Rashi explains that the meaning is, indeed, that G-d Himself will return with the Israelites, stressing that the miracle of the return of the exiles will appear to be so great that it will be as though G-d Himself will be returning together with His People. The Meshech Chochma (1843-1926), looking at the double use of word V'SHAV suggests that the return of the Israelites to the Promised Land will happen in two phases; those with a great passion to return will come first, and then the rest of the dispersed of the Israelite nation will follow.

These elements may be combined into the following, which do fit in with the events of the last century, as well as in the days of Zerubavel, Ezra, and Nechemiya:

First, G-d will return His Presence to the Holy Land. That, and only that, will make Jewish resettlement possible against all the odds: physical barriers, political barriers, and economic barriers. G-d will be with them at the time and "have mercy on them" despite their shortcomings.

But the verse continues: eventually G-d "will return, and gather you in from the all the nations in which He has dispersed you".

After the early waves of settlement by those who want to return, G-d will bring events together so that the rest of His People will return to the Land.

That second phase did not happen in the days of Ezra. But whilst writing this, the waves of Jews embarking on settling in Israel continue...