

And there was a famine in the land. (12:10)

Chazal state that the world will experience ten instances of famine overtime. The first was during Adam's tenure, followed by one during Lemech's generation. The third was the one which caused Avraham to move. According to *Pirkei D'rabi Eliezer*, the last famine will present itself prior to the advent of *Moshiach*. This famine, however, will be of a different nature. It will be a spiritual famine in which people will literally starve for *Torah* knowledge. This is consistent with the words of the *Navi* in *Amos 8:11*, "*Behold the days are coming . . . and I will send a famine in the land, not a hunger for bread, nor a thirst for water, but (a hunger) only to hear the word of Hashem.*" *Chazal* consider this final famine far more destructive than its predecessors. Why is this? We should be overjoyed that people will finally thirst for *Torah*.

The *Ponevezar Rav z.t.l.* offered a novel interpretation for this *Midrash*. During times of famine, people make do with much less than they would ordinarily use. Even crumbs of bread and a little water constitute a meal. People no longer concern themselves with the source of the food, its cleanliness or freshness. They simply want to eat whatever and whenever they can. This portrait regrettably represents the spiritual famine of the "*end of days.*" People will seek whatever *Torah* is available, regardless of who is the teacher and where it is taught. A little bit of *Torah* study will be sufficient. The toil and diligence consistent with *Torah* study will truly be a thing of the past. Such a spiritual famine is, indeed, a famine.