



Partners In Torah
San Diego-Los Angeles
Study Guide

Ekev
תשפ"ג

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Partners In Torah

Mission Statement:

Hello, Welcome!

Partners In Torah is a community-wide, independent and inclusive adult education program focusing on understanding Jewish relevancy to our lives by studying text most interesting to each participant. Through one-on-one discussion for 1 hour each week, friendships are forged between mentors and mentees.

Partners in Torah has proven to be effective at reclaiming the rich legacy of wisdom, inspiration, and guidance for many who have, until now, lacked access.

Thank you for coming!

Please encourage friends to join you in participating so that we may grow together as a community.

During a time in Jewish history when the gentiles did not permit the Jewish people to read the weekly Torah portion on Shabbat, the people would nevertheless continue to receive the important messages conveyed in the weekly Torah portion via reading at least 21 verses from the Prophets - the "*Haftarah*". A chapter from Prophets with a connection to a topic in that week's Torah portion would be selected to remind the people of what should have been read from the Torah. Seven blessings were recited corresponding to the seven people who ordinarily would have been called to the Torah, each reading a minimum of three verses. (Hence, the 21 verses.) When there was a holiday or other momentous event on the Jewish calendar that would be the topic of that week's *Haftarah*. When the Jews were once again permitted to read from the Torah, the Sages kept the custom of reading the *Haftarah* from the Prophets.

The destruction of Jerusalem and Holy Temples was such an important event that ten full *Haftarot* have special sections from the Prophets read on them.

The three *Haftarot* preceding Tisha B'Av are called the **שלוש דפורענותא** - "*Three of Retribution*" because in them the prophets warn the Jewish people of the impending danger to the Holy Temple and their future.

The seven that follow Tisha B'Av are called the **שבעה דנחמתא** "*Seven of Consolation*" because in them Hashem attempts to comfort the Jewish people.

The first of the Three of Retribution is from the opening chapter of Jeremiah where it says: (14-16)

(יד) וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֵלַי מִצָּפוֹן תִּפְתַּח הַרְעָה עַל כָּל יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ:
(טו) כִּי הִנְנִי קֹרֵא לְכָל מְשֻׁפְּחוֹת מַמְלָכוֹת צְפוֹנָה נְאֻם יְהוָה וּבָאוּ וְנִתְּנוּ אִישׁ
כְּסָאוֹ פָּתַח שַׁעֲרֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם וְעַל כָּל חוֹמֹתֶיהָ סָבִיב וְעַל כָּל עָרֵי יְהוּדָה
(טז) וְדַבַּרְתִּי מִשְׁפָּטֵי אוֹתָם עַל כָּל רַעְתָם אֲשֶׁר עָזְבוּנִי וַיִּקְטְרוּ לֵאלֹהִים
אַחֵרִים וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲווּ לְמַעֲשֵׂי יְדֵיהֶם

14) And Hashem said to me: "From the North the evil will be released upon all the inhabitants of the land. 15) For behold, I am calling all the families of the kingdoms of the North – the word of Hashem – and they shall come and each of them shall place his throne at the entrance of Jerusalem's gates and by all its walls roundabout and by all the cities of Judah. 16) I shall pronounce My judgments against Judah for all their evil, for they have forsaken Me and burned incense to the gods of other and prostrated themselves to their own handiwork."

The second Haftorah is from Jeremiah 2 where Hashem complains through the prophet: (5)

(ה) כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה מַה מָּצְאוּ אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם בִּי עוֹל כִּי רָחֲקוּ מֵעָלַי וַיֵּלְכוּ אַחֲרֵי
הַהֶבֶל וַיִּהְבְּלוּ

5) Thus said Hashem: "What wrong did your forefathers find in Me that they distanced themselves from Me and pursued futility and became futile?"

The third comes from the opening chapter of Isaiah where the Prophet declares: (4)

(ד) הוּא גוֹי חָטָא עִם כְּבֹד עוֹן זָרַע מִרְעִים בְּנִים מִשְׁחִיתִים עָזְבוּ אֶת יְהוָה
נָאצוּ אֶת קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל נָזְרוּ אַחֲרָיִם

4) Woe! They are a sinful nation, a people weighed down by iniquity, evil offspring, destructive children! They have forsaken Hashem; they have angered the Holy One of Israel and have turned their back to Him.

Unfortunately, the Jewish people did not heed Hashem's repeated warnings through the prophets, and the Temples and the City of Jerusalem were destroyed. The descriptions of the torment and pain that the people of the time suffered are too horrific to write, but suffice it to say, their suffering was no less than the that of the Holocaust.

The Jewish people were broken and didn't know how they would carry on as Hashem's people. They had been so disgraced by the destruction of the Temple and had being forced into exile. What would be their future? Would they even want to continue to be associated with Hashem?

In the Talmud (Sanhedrin 105a), the Sage Shmuel relates the following conversation after Nebuchadnezzar's takeover and destruction of the first Holy Temple between the Prophet and the elders of the generation.

שמואל אמר: באו עשרה בני אדם וישבו לפניו, אמר להן: חזרו בתשובה. אמרו לו: עבד שמכרו רבו, ואשה שגרשה בעלה, כלום יש לזה על זה כלום? אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא לנביא: לך אמור להן, אי זה ספר כריתות אמכם אשר שלחתיה או מי מנושי אשר מכרתי אתכם לו הן בעונותיכם נמכרתם ובפשעיכם שלחה אמכם.

Ten elders came and sat before the prophet. He said to them, "Repent!" They replied, "A master who has sold his servant or a husband who has divorced his wife, can they have any demands on each other?" Hashem responded to the prophet, "Go tell them, 'Where is your mother's divorce document indicating that I have sent her away, and who is the creditor to whom I have sold you? You have been exiled because of your sins.'" Hashem then tells them the following verses from Ezekiel (20:32,33).

והעלה על רוחכם היו לא תהיה אשר אתם אמרים נהיה כגוים במשפחות
הארצות לשרת עץ ואבן חי אני נאם ה' אלהים אם לא ביד חזקה ובזרוע נטויה
ובחמה שפוכה אמלוך עליכם

*32. As for what enters your minds – it shall not be! As for what you say, "We will be like the nations, like the families of the lands, to worship wood and stone," as I live – the word of Hashem Elokim – I swear that **I will rule over you with a strong hand and with an outstretched arm and with outpoured wrath.**"*

The Jewish people thought that because the Holy Temple was no longer and they were in exile, Hashem had "sold" them and they were no longer His servants. They thought that their covenant with Hashem, a bond like that of husband and wife, was severed, and that they were no longer bound to keep the Torah and its commandments. They thought that they were free to assimilate and adopt the customs and practices of their host country without consequences.

Hashem directed the prophet to set the record straight: He has not sold them, and the covenant is still binding. And even though we may have abrogated our side of the covenant, Hashem will never relinquish His side. When we venture too far from Hashem and the ways of His Torah, He uses His ***strong hand and outstretched arm and outpoured wrath*** to reel us back in; but Hashem will never allow us to assimilate into extinction because of the covenant that He made with Moshe. Our destiny is to be Hashem's nation no matter what. One way or another, we must fulfill our role as Hashem's ambassadors to the world. There is no way out.

Our very existence today as the Jewish nation, strong and flourishing, proves that Hashem has maintained His covenant with us to keep us alive against all odds.

In the seven Haftarot of consolation, Hashem reaches out to the Jewish people to console them and to give them hope.

The first Shabbat following Tisha B'Av is called *Shabbat Nachamu*, the Shabbat of Condolences, so named for the first words of the Haftarah (Isaiah 40), נַחֲמוּ נִימוּ עַמִּי אֲמַר אֱלֹהֵיכֶם – “*Be consoled, be consoled my nation, so has your G-d said.*”

Among many other examples of Hashem's might and divine providence, the prophet Isaiah tells us:

(יֵא) בָרְעָה עֶדְרוֹ יִרְעָה בְזָרְעוֹ יִקְבֹּץ טְלָאִים וּבְחִיקוֹ יִשָּׂא עֲלוֹת יִבְהֵל

11) *He is like a shepherd who grazes his flock, who gathers the lambs in his arm, who carries them in his bosom, who guides the nursing ewes.*

Hashem is our Shepherd Who tenderly tends to His flock.

The Midrash Tanchuma (Toldot 5) says,

אדריאנוס אמר לרבי יהושע גדולה הכבשה העומדת בין שבעים זאבים
אמר ליה גדול הוא הרועה שמצילה ושומרה ושוברן לפנייה הוי כל כלי יוצר
עליך לא יצלח

Hadrian said to Rabbi Yehoshua, "How great is the one little lamb who can exist among seventy wolves!" Rabbi Yehoshua responded, "How great is its Shepherd who saves it, protects it, and breaks down its enemies!"

This is of course when the sheep follow their Shepherd faithfully. But if they stray, Hashem treats them like a wayward sheep and gives them the medicine they need to heal.

In the next Haftarah, Isaiah 49, the Jewish people accuse Hashem (!) of abandoning them and forgetting about them. Hashem responds (14,15):

(יד) וַתֹּאמֶר צִיּוֹן עֲזַבְנִי יְדֹד וְאֵדֹנָי שָׁכַחְנִי
(טו) הֲתִשְׁכַּח אִשָּׁה עוֹלָה מִרֶחֶם בֶּן בֶּטֶן הֲגַם אֵלֶּה תִשְׁכַּחַנָּה וְאֵנֹכִי לֹא
אֲשַׁכְּחֶנּוּ

14) Zion said, 'Hashem has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me.' Hashem responds. 15) 'Can a woman forget her baby, or not feel compassion for the child of her womb?'

All of the Haftarot from now until Rosh Hashanah are from Isaiah and convey Hashem's condolences and encouragement to the Jewish people. He promises that He will always be there for us, no matter how far we stray from His ways.

We can actually bear testimony to this ourselves. What did the Jewish nation look like after the Holocaust? Who would ever have dreamed that the Jewish nation and Judaism would flourish and blossom as it has in the last 80 years?

This very idea must be the most comforting idea possible. We are all part of the miracle. There is no other way to look at it.

Rabbi Matityahu Solomon, may he live and be well, told the following story from his youth as a yeshiva student in the Gateshead Yeshiva in Gateshead, England. (That Yeshiva is still a thriving center for Torah study until today.)

One day a prestigious judge from the Rabbinical Court of England, Dayan Grunfeld, came to address the boys. He stated that he wasn't going to deliver a sermon, but that instead, he wanted to read to them from an article written in a magazine by an American journalist.

The Jewish American journalist was on a tour of Europe with other foreign journalists, and one of the destinations to visit was a place called Wallsend, England, about 10 miles from Gateshead.

Its claim to fame is that it is the end of a wall, hence the name “Walls-end.” What wall? When the Roman emperor Hadrian conquered England, he built a wall across England to keep out the Scottish soldiers, “The Picks,” who were very powerful fighters. That wall was called Hadrian’s Wall, but now, all that is left of it is a few feet of broken-down stones with moss growing over them. This is the sight that all come to see, a relic of the past, a remnant of the great Roman Empire in its heyday.

The journalist remembered that he had *yahrtzeit* (the anniversary of his father’s death) for his father that day and that he needed to say Kaddish in his memory. He asked the tour guide if there was a synagogue here where he could join in a service, and the tour guide told him, “There is nothing here in Wallsend, but if you go down the road ten miles, you will reach Gateshead, and there you will find what you need.”

The journalist got into a car and travelled to Gateshead and wound up in the Yeshiva. He wrote in the article.

I never saw a yeshiva in my life, and I was astounded. Here was a small room packed with young men, young, vibrant, alive, on fire, with the noise level very high because of the arguments that went on between one boy and another. The whole place was on fire. I didn’t understand a word they were saying, but I could see that they were on fire! Then, all of a sudden, I heard one student say to another, “But Rabbi Akiva says...” and then it struck me.

Rabbi Akiva... who was Rabbi Akiva? He was the great Tana (Rabbi) who Hadrian killed for teaching Torah. The Romans thought that even though the Holy Temple was destroyed, they still had to stamp out Torah learning, or all would be for naught. Hadrian had Rabbi Akiva killed. And I thought to myself, Here I have just come from Hadrian's wall. What's left of Hadrian? What happened to him? Where is his mighty empire? Where is his rich and powerful empire? What has become of them? A heap of stones with moss growing on them. Nothing! But, Rabbi Akiva and his Torah, whom he killed, and thought he stamped out, is alive and well. His Torah is being learned until today!

The journalist got it! As long as the Jewish nation has its Torah, the Jewish nation will always continue to live. Hashem has promised. We can be consoled.

Rabbi Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman זצ"ל (1886-1969) the Rosh Yeshiva of the Ponevezh Yeshiva in Bnai Brak, was a gentle and pure individual. How shocked was Dr. Moshe Rothchild, as the two of them travelled together in a taxi through the streets of Rome, to hear Rabbi Kahaneman saying over and over, "I am going to finish my account with him, once and for all." The mystery resolved when they reached the Arch of Titus, where the rabbi asked the driver to stop the cab. Rabbi Kahaneman exited the cab, and then, facing the carving of the Menorah carried by the captives leaving Jerusalem, straightened his hat, put his clothes in order, and proclaimed in a loud voice.



“Titus, Titus! 2,000 years ago you wanted to erase and annihilate the Jewish nation, not leaving them a remnant. See, Titus, who recognizes you today? When people walking here on the streets of Rome would ask a child, “Who was Titus?” the child wouldn’t even know how to say your name correctly. Is there any place in our world today where people see themselves as carrying on your legacy?”

But I come now from Bnai Brak, Israel, the country that you tried to destroy. At this time, there are more than 500 students studying the Torah that you tried to have us forget. And that’s just in my Yeshiva, and not counting the hundreds of other Yeshivot and institutions of Torah learning across the land, which have many more thousands of students learning Torah.”

By this time, a few young Romans had gathered around him; unfazed, he continued to settle his account with Titus.

“You disgraced the Holy of Holies and degraded it in a horrific way, but I would suggest that you come now to the Western Wall, the remaining wall of our Holy Temple, and see how day and night Jews stand there and cry about the destruction of the Temple, and yearn and hope for it to be rebuilt. They study and review building plans for the sanctuary and all its components. This is living proof that the Holy Temple will indeed be built soon.

You are forgotten forever, and your name is lost, but the Jewish Nation will continue to live and thrive!”

The seven weeks of condolences lead directly to Rosh Hashanah. They are designed to help us prepare ourselves for the great day of judgment. How? By bringing home to us loud and clear that Hashem runs the world, and that His will always prevails, against all odds. The Jewish people’s survival is the proof to that. Each of us is living proof that Hashem is alive and well and in charge of the world. He is the G-d before whom we appear for judgment on Rosh Hashanah.