



**Partners In Torah**

**San Diego-Los Angeles-Ventura**

**Take home Dvar Torah**

**תשפ"ה Parshat Vayetzei**

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*By: Rabbi Avi Cohen*

***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 joining us!***

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

Esav has vowed to kill Yaakov for stealing his blessing from Yitzchak, so Rivka and Yitzchak decided to send Yaakov to Rivka's brother, Lavan. This would both protect Yaakov from his brother's wrath and find him a wife. On Yaakov's way to Lavan's house, he passed the *future site of the Holy Temple*.

The Torah (Genesis 28:11) says:

יֵאָדָם וַיִּפְגַּע בַּמָּקוֹם וַיֵּלֶן שָׁם כִּי בָא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ

11. He encountered **the place** and spent the night there because the sun had set.

The Torah does not detail for us where this was, merely identifying it as "*the place*." How did the Sages know this was the future site of the Holy Temple?

The word "הַמָּקוֹם" – *the place* – was used once before: As Avraham Avinu was taking Yitzchak to the *Akeidah*, the Torah tells us, "*He (Avraham) saw the place from afar*." The *Akeidah* took place on הַר הַמֹּרְיָה, *Mount Moriah*, the future site of the Holy Temple. From this we learn that **the place** referred to here is the very same place, Mount Moriah.

Yaakov sensed a special holiness there. Being the place of the *Akeidah*, and the place where Avraham had previously prayed, Yaakov himself felt compelled to pray in this spot. What prayer did Yaakov say? Since the sun had set, it had to have been the *evening prayer* – מעריב (Maariv). We learn from here that Yaakov instituted *the evening prayer* – מעריב.

After Yaakov finished praying, he settled down to sleep. As Yaakov slept in this holy place, he had a dream.

The verse describes his dream:

יב) וַיַּחֲלֵם וְהִנֵּה סֵלֶם מְצֻב אֶרְצָה וְרֵאשׁוֹ מֵגִיעַ הַשָּׁמַיְמָה וְהִנֵּה מַלְאָכָי אֱלֹהִים עֹלִים  
וְיֹרְדִים בָּהּ

12. *And he dreamt and behold! A ladder was set in the ground and its top reached heavenward; and behold! angels of G-d were ascending and descending on it.*

The Midrash tells us what the angels were doing going up and down the ladder.

מדרש רבה ויקרא - פרשה בט פסקה ב

דאמר ר' שמואל בר נחמן מלמד שהראה הקדוש ברוך הוא ליעקב אבינו שרה של בבל עולה שבעים עווקים ושל מדי נ"ב ושל יון ק"פ ושל אדום עולה ולא יודע כמה באותה שעה נתיירא יעקב אבינו אמר אפשר שאין לזה ירידה אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא ואתה אל תירא עבדי יעקב אפילו הוא עולה ויושב אצלי משם אני מורידו הה"ד (עובדיה א) אם תגביה כנשר ואם בין כוכבים שים קנך

*Rav Shmuel Bar Nachmeini said: This teaches us that Hashem showed Yaakov the angel of Bavel go up 70 rungs [and come down], of Media go up 52 rungs [and come down], Greece go up 180 rungs [and come down], and Edom who just kept going up with no end. Yaakov became frightened and asked Hashem, "Is it possible this exile has no end?" Hashem told him, "Do not fear, my servant Yaakov. Even if he ascends high enough to sit right next to Me, I will take him down."*

Rav Shmuel teaches us that Hashem showed Yaakov the four exiles to which his children would be subjected. Nevuchadnetzar king of Bavel destroyed the first Holy Temple and sent the Jewish people into the Babylonian exile for 70 years. The Babylonians were defeated by the Medes and Persians, who took over for 52 years. The peak of the Persian exile was the Purim story, when Haman attempted to annihilate every last Jew. After the Purim miracle, Esther's son Darius granted permission to build the second Holy Temple. The Greeks then conquered the

Persians and ruled over us for 180 years. The peak of the Greek exile was when they instituted decrees against keeping Shabbat, Rosh Chodesh, Brit Milah, and learning Torah. This prompted Mattityahu the Kohen and his family to fight the mighty Greek empire, miraculously winning and creating the holiday, Chanukah. The Chashmonai Dynasty, which took over, lasted about one hundred years until Herod, a slave in the palace, wiped out the entire royal family and took over the kingdom. The Romans – also known as Edom – ousted the Greeks. The Roman king Titus destroyed the second Holy Temple in the year 3830 (70 CE), sending the Jews into the Edom exile that we are still in now, lasting, so far, 1,954 years.

(A word about the *angels* mentioned in the Midrash. There are *seventy* root gentile nations, each of whom has a unique “personality.” Hashem has appointed an angel who epitomizes the personality of each nation to tend to its nation’s matters. The Jewish nation has no angel. Hashem Himself takes care of us.

The concept of exile applies primarily to Hashem and His presence. The default position in the world should be that Hashem is recognized as the Master of the Universe. All creations are His subjects and must accept Hashem’s sovereignty and subject their wills and desires to His. The members of the Jewish nation are Hashem’s ambassadors in the world, charged with modeling His benevolent and righteous ways for all humanity to see and learn from. When the Jewish people, who are to live their lives according to Hashem’s Torah laws and thus represent Hashem, live amongst a nation that disdains and rejects their holy way of life, they are out of their element. They are in exile. And, because the Jewish people are connected so closely with Hashem, when they are in exile, Hashem is in exile. Hashem, along with His prescription for humanity, is rejected and considered foreign.

This is what Yaakov saw in his dream. The exile of Edom seemed to have no end, as its angel just went higher and higher with no end in sight. Indeed, we experience the same. It seems like there is no end in sight to our current situation. Things just seem to get worse and worse, as evil and antisemitism continue to intensify by the day.

The Maharal points out that Yaakov saw both the rise and fall of the first three exiles, whereas he was not able to see the fall of the fourth exile – Edom. This is because the first three had their downfall in a “this worldly” way as one empire defeated and took over the other. Therefore, Yaakov, who was in this world, was able to see it. However, the downfall of Edom will come only at the hands of the Mashiach, an “out of this world” source – Hashem Himself; therefore, Yaakov, who was in this world, could not see it.

What is the purpose of exile? Why would Hashem send His children to live among people who live their lives in ways that are antithetical to the Torah’s ways? Why subject His children to the wrong way of doing things?

From a superficial perspective, it seems that all the exiles were the same: A foreign nation subjugated the Jewish nation and prevented them from fulfilling their Torah obligations.

However, Harav Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler (1892-1953), in the book *Michtav MeiEliyahu*, teaches us that this is not the case. Each exile is tailor-made to correct a specific shortcoming in the Jewish nation, and the nation Hashem chose for each exile was chosen specifically because it had the necessary “personality” to help the Jewish people recognize and correct that flaw. The unique negative trait of the host nation challenges the Jewish nation to either follow their example and adopt their negative quality, or to adhere tenaciously to the Torah value and overcome the tendency to conform to the prevalent norm. When the

Jewish people overcome the tendency to adopt the negative quality, they strengthen within themselves the opposing good quality. The more they defeat the negative and strengthen the positive, the more they fulfill the purpose of the exile, and gradually work themselves out of it.

Applying this concept to our current exile, Edom, we must ask the obvious question. What is the flaw that we are in this protracted exile to correct, and what is the negative quality found in Edom that we are supposed to oppose and learn not to have?

At the end of the second Holy Temple, baseless hatred and arguments between Jews were rampant. Indeed, the Sages teach us (Yoma 9b) that this was the reason that the second Holy Temple was destroyed.

אבל מקדש שני שהיו עוסקין בתורה ובמצות וגמילות חסדים מפני מה חרב  
מפני שהיתה בו שנאת חנם

*The second Holy Temple where the Jewish people were fully engaged in Torah study and mitzvah fulfillment, why was it destroyed? **Because there was baseless hatred among them.***

The meaning of baseless hatred is that there is no real reason to hate my fellow Jew. The reason I hate him is because his very existence is an annoyance to me. I am so wrapped up in myself that I would feel better if no one else existed. I don't need anyone else, and I wish he would just get out of my way.

The deep psychological source for this attitude is haughtiness – גאוה. When my conception of myself is so compelling that I have no value or regard for anyone else, such that his very existence is a nuisance to me, I am in violation of every law of the Torah. How is that?

The reality is that every person is completely dependent on Hashem for his every need. There is nothing that anyone can do without

Hashem empowering him to do it. A haughty person, who thinks that he is the center of the world and that he is in charge of himself and his affairs, is in complete denial of Hashem.

The verse says (Deuteronomy 8:12):

וְרָם לְבַבְךָ וְשָׁכַחְתָּ אֶת יְיָ אֱלֹהֶיךָ

*And your heart will become haughty and you will forget Hashem your G-d.*

To the degree that one believes that he is everything, to that degree he denies Hashem. Since it is all him, it is by definition, NOT Hashem.

When one is haughty, with it comes חוצפה – (chutzpah) – arrogance. These are two sides of the same coin. Since I am everything, anything I do is worthy of doing and I don't have to take anyone else into consideration. So what if what I am doing is offensive to him? That is his problem, not mine. I can do whatever I want and everyone else must accept it.

The Talmud teaches us (Shabbat 119b):

אמר עולא לא חרבה ירושלים אלא מפני שלא היה להם בושת פנים זה מזה  
שנאמר הובישו כי תועבה עשו גם בוש לא יבושו

*Ula said, "Jerusalem was destroyed because people had no shame from each other"....*

At that time, people sinned publicly, without shame. This represents tremendous audacity – chutzpah.

This statement seems to contradict the previous one. Was it baseless hatred that destroyed the Holy Temple, or was it chutzpah? The answer is that haughtiness was the reason for the destruction. Baseless hatred and chutzpah are just different manifestations of haughtiness.



The prevailing personality trait of Edom – the Western society that we live in – is haughtiness and chutzpah. The general attitude is, “This world is all there is and we know how to master it; we are in control of our destiny!” There is no Hashem. With our advanced scientific knowledge, with which we have invented so many neat machines and gadgets to make life easier, we can solve any problem. With our superior medical research, we can cure any disease. With our state-of-the-art arsenal of weapons, we can handily defeat any enemy. With our super computers and futuristic technology, there is nothing we cannot do.

Because it’s all about this world, success is measured by how much money or “stuff” you have. The more money you have, the more “successful” you are. With money comes power and control, and the right to have more haughtiness and chutzpah. If you have a lot of money, there is almost nothing you can’t get away with.

Our test in this exile is to not allow the haughtiness and chutzpah of the world around us to affect us. We must always bear in mind that Hashem runs the world, not us. We do not have control of our destiny; Hashem does. It’s not about me, for I am nothing without Hashem. We must always remember that it is Hashem who gives us the intelligence and wherewithal to make the correct decisions in all our business deals and in life.

The verses say (Deuteronomy 8:17,18):

(יז) וְאָמַרְתָּ בְּלִבְבְּךָ בְּחַי וְעֶצֶם יָדֶי עָשָׂה לִי אֶת הַחֵיל הַזֶּה  
(יח) וְזָכַרְתָּ אֶת יְדֹוֹד אֱלֹהֶיךָ כִּי הוּא הֵנִיחַ לְךָ בָּח לַעֲשׂוֹת חֵיל

17) *And you may say in your heart, “My strength and the might of my hand made me all this wealth!”* 18) *Then you shall remember Hashem your G-d: that it was He Who gave you strength to make wealth....*

Onkelos translates the verse,

(יח) ותדכר ית יי אלקך ארי הוא יהב לך עצה למקני נכסין

*Remember that Hashem is the one that gives you the advice to buy property.*

You think you thought of that great deal? Hashem put it into your mind.

It is easy to get caught up in the buying frenzy. All around us, people are boasting about how much money they made. "Look what I did!" It looks like they did it themselves and that they are in control. This is the test of our exile. Don't let the haughtiness affect you. Remember, it's not you, it's Hashem.

As we go through life and identify the haughtiness in the culture surrounding us, we should become reviled by its ugliness and offensiveness. Seeing it in others should motivate us to do something about our problem, triggering a reaction within us to rid ourselves of that ugly trait.

With this, we can hopefully also correct the element of haughtiness within us that causes us to resent our fellow for no reason. To the degree that we rid ourselves of the erroneous perception that I am supreme, and I am everything, and adopt a humble attitude, we will be able to accept and love our fellow. This is the antidote to baseless hatred and chutzpah, the reasons for the destruction of the Holy Temple in the first place.

The Midrash teaches us (Vayikra Rabba 13:5):

ואת החזיר זו אדום והוא גרה לא יגר שאינה גוררת מלכות אחריה ולמה נקרא  
שמה חזיר שמחזרת עטרה לבעליה הדא הוא דכתיב (עובדיה א) ועלו מושיעים בהר  
ציון לשפוט את הר עשו והיתה לה' המלוכה

*And the pig [is forbidden to eat]. The חזיר – Chazir – is a reference to the Exile of Edom. Because after Edom there will not be another exile. That is why its name is חזיר, which also means “to give back.” Because Edom is going to return the kingdom to its original owner, Hashem.*

Here is another prophecy of the Sages that we see with our own eyes. Edom’s dominion will last until Mashiach comes. Not only that, but it is through the exile of Edom that Mashiach’s kingdom will emerge. When Edom meets its demise, the Kingdom of Hashem will become apparent.

How will this come about? When the world is brought to the point where it realizes that man does not control this world. All the claims about how science and technology can solve all our problems will be proven false. (Perhaps we had a taste of this with the Covid epidemic. In one second, the whole world was rendered powerless. No stock market, no sports, no movies, no nothing.)

Our world is becoming less and less safe by the minute. So many innocent men, women, and children have lost their lives at the hands of crazed gunmen. Anybody can own a gun and use it as he pleases. Nobody is safe anymore, especially Jews, in today’s climate. Jews around the world are in danger as antisemitism turns violent in places like Amsterdam and London.

The policy of equality that we thought would protect us is collapsing all around us. As in so many times before in our history, the Jew is simply not equal. A double standard is acceptable if it pertains to a Jew.

Could there be a more audacious claim than “Israel is an apartheid nation and is guilty of genocide”? But they claim it in public without the slightest shred of shame. We are seeing with our own eyes what the

Sages prophesied, over 1500 years ago. The Mishnah (Sota 49b) says that in the times of the Mashiach, חוצפא יסגא – “*chutzpah will be over the top.*”

When are we going to wake up? When are we going to get the message? We cannot depend on man, we can only depend on Hashem. This will lead to Mashiach. Only when we realize that we have no one to rely on but Hashem, will Hashem help us. However, as long as we think we have other options, Hashem says, “Okay, let’s see how that pans out. You’re on your own.”

There is a Mishnah (Sota 49b) that describes what the world will be like in the generation in which the Mashiach will appear. After a long list of dire predictions, the Mishnah concludes:

ועל מה יש לנו להשען על אבינו שבשמים

*And what do we have to depend on? Our Father in Heaven.*

At first glance, it seems that the Mishnah is consoling us, as if to say, “Don’t worry, Hashem will help us!” But our Sages explain that this is the final symptom of the era in which Mashiach will come. The proliferation of evil in the world will bring man to the conclusion that man cannot be depended on. Then, the Jewish people and subsequently all mankind will finally realize that it is only Hashem on Whom we can rely.

We don’t have to wait for things to get so bad to direct our trust to Hashem. He is here for us at all times. This is what needs to happen to bring Mashiach. Let’s get crackin!