



**Partners In Torah**  
**San Diego-Los Angeles-Ventura**  
**Take home Dvar Torah**

5785 Parshat Shelah  
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*By: Rabbi Avi Cohen*

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**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.**

## תשפ"ה Parshat Shelah

This week's portion relates the story of the 12 spies who Moshe sent into Israel to see the Land and report to the Jewish people. Ten of them, unfortunately, misinterpreted every sign that Hashem had provided to show them that He would be there for them to defend them against the powerful people whom they were observing, so they returned with the report that it is impossible to conquer the Land of Israel.

The other two, Yehoshua and Caleb, fervently protested and told the people not to believe them, and that, indeed, the Land was conquerable (Numbers 14:9).

(ט) אַךְ בִּידוּד אֶל תִּמְרְדוּ וְאַתֶּם אֶל תִּירְאוּ אֶת עַם הָאָרֶץ כִּי לְחַמְנוּ הֵם סָר צֶלֶם  
מֵעֲלֵיהֶם וַיִּדּוּד אֶתְנּוּ אֶל תִּירְאֵם.

9) *“But do not rebel against Hashem! You should not fear the people of the Land, for they are our bread. Their protection has departed from them; Hashem is with us. Do not fear them!”*

By this point, after having experienced the ten plagues in Egypt, the splitting of the Reed Sea complete with the drowning of the Egyptian army, the daily allocation of Manna from heaven, the travelling well for water, and the protective clouds, the people should have known that the all-powerful Hashem, Who was in complete control of the world, could and would easily subdue any foe. The Jewish people should have rejected the report. On the contrary, they should have stoned those who spoke blasphemy and said, that Hashem couldn't handily decimate any enemy no matter how powerful.

But they didn't, and as a result of this sin, the Jewish people were forced to wander in the wilderness for forty years until that whole generation had died out.

In a sense, we face the same challenge today with the situation in Israel. Currently and in the recent past we have witnessed *open miracles*, yet many still do not acknowledge Hashem's protective hand providing miraculous protection for the Jews living there.

Moreover, as we marvel at the stunning success of the IDF in Iran and how perfectly choreographed was the attack on the Iranian top brass as well as the nuclear sites, we tend to laud the brilliant military leadership who so carefully planned and executed these amazing attacks. What too quickly gets lost in all of the accolades, however, is the One Who helped it all to happen--Hashem.

Think about it. How often do even the most rudimentary of tasks that we engage in go awry? In real life, things almost never go as we expect them to! *"Even the best laid plans of mice and men often go awry"* (Robert Burns). And when they do go properly, we thank Hashem for it, because we recognize that without His involvement, it would not have happened. Here, too, where everything went swimmingly well, we need to thank **Hashem** for making it happen.

The Talmud (Avoda Zara 2a) teaches us:

דרש רבי חנינא בר פפא ואיתימא רב שמלאי לעתיד לבא מביא הקדוש ברוך הוא ספר תורה [ומניחו] בחיקו ואומר למי שעסק בה יבא ויטול שכרו

*Rabbi Chanina bar Papa, and some say Rav Simlai, taught. "After the Mashiach comes and all humanity recognizes Hashem as the Creator and Master of the world, Hashem is going to hold a small Torah scroll in His*

*bosom (so to speak) and announce, 'Whoever has been involved with the Torah should come and claim his fair reward!'"*

Rome is the first to arrive. After stating their claim, Hashem shows them how they are not entitled to anything. The Talmud then continues with the Persians.

מיד יצאו בפחי נפש יצאת מלכות רומי ונכנסה מלכות פרס אחריה ... אמר להם  
הקדוש ברוך הוא במאי עסקתם אומרים לפניו רבונו של עולם הרבה גשרים גשרנו  
הרבה כרכים כבשנו הרבה מלחמות עשינו וכולם לא עשינו אלא בשביל ישראל כדי  
שיתעסקו בתורה

*The Romans then leave feeling humiliated, and the Persian Kingdom enters. Hashem says to them, "What did **you** do for the Torah?" They answer, "Master of the Universe, we built many bridges, we conquered many cities, and we waged many wars. And everything we did, was just so the Jewish people should learn Torah!"*

אמר להם הקדוש ברוך הוא כל מה שעשיתם לצורך עצמכם עשיתם תקנתם גשרים  
ליטול מהם מכס כרכים לעשות בהם אנגריא מלחמות אני עשיתי שנאמר ה' איש  
מלחמה

*Hashem responds, "Everything that you did you did for yourselves! You built bridges to collect tolls, you conquered cities to use the people for your work and for soldiers. And as far as the wars are concerned, I made the wars, not you! As it says in the verse (Exodus 15:3), Hashem is Master of war – His name is Hashem.*

From here we learn a great lesson. Hashem is the One behind wars. It is *He* who guides the leaders to adopt their positions and it is *He* who causes them to enter into conflict with an opposing force.

The following verse in Proverbs (21:1) expresses this concept.

(א) פִּלְגֵי מַיִם לֵב מֶלֶךְ בְּיַד יְדֹד עַל כֵּל אֲשֶׁר יַחְפֹּץ יִטְנוּ.

*1) Like streams of water is the heart of a king in the hand of Hashem, wherever He wishes, so He directs it.*

Although we have a hard and fast rule that Hashem does not meddle in our personal freedom to choose, when it comes to world leaders who control the fate of millions, maybe billions, of people, this rule does not apply. As far as their personal decisions are concerned, they are like any other person; but as far as decisions that will affect the lives of many people, they are merely puppets in Hashem's hands. Hashem does not entrust the fate of millions in the hands of an individual who may be an egomaniac, or worse. In those decisions, only Hashem decides which country is going to war with which country. If Hashem has decided that there needs to be a war between two countries, He will put an egomaniac in power to execute His plan.

This sounds very difficult to understand. At any given time throughout mankind's history, so many wars were fought between so many different countries. What could be Hashem's reason for so many wars?

Perhaps the following analogy may give us a clue.

Hashem created the world with a purpose and a goal. The world's purpose is to serve as a playground for man to hone his skills and perfect himself in his service to Hashem. Man accomplishes this by making the right choices and following Hashem's commandments. The world's ultimate *goal* is that all mankind recognize Hashem as the world's Creator and Master. This is what the Mashiach, for whom we all wait with bated breath, will accomplish. He will bring all humanity to say, "Hashem, He is

Elokim!” This is the end game. This is where we are headed, full steam ahead!

Think of it as a game of chess. The goal of the game is to checkmate – destroy - the king of the evil forces in the world. In the course of the game, the various types of pieces will be moved all over the playing board, often clashing (warring) with other pieces and removing them from the game, sometimes being eliminated themselves. The game may go on for hours, but every move made comprises part of an elaborate stratagem to achieve the goal of putting the opposing king in checkmate.

To someone who doesn't understand chess and its goal, the chess master's moves have no meaning. They appear to be random pieces moving to random spots on the playing board for no apparent reason. The reality, though, is that the chess master has a *clear plan* as to how each move will bring him closer to his goal of conquering the King of evil.

This is what Hashem has been doing throughout history. The world is Hashem's chess board, and the leaders of the different countries are the chess pieces. At Hashem's discretion, Hashem moves them across the board to clash with other pieces, changing the world's landscape for a time, but then, perhaps at some later point, He moves a different piece into that spot, taking it over. To the uneducated, things look random and unguided, but the reality is that Hashem is behind every move, and He has a plan and a purpose for that move. Each move is another premeditated step in the myriads of steps necessary to bring the world to the exact configuration it needs to be in for the Mashiach to come. This is what we are witnessing now.

King David in Psalm 124 foresaw the struggle that we would have with the descendants of Yishmael. He writes:

(ב) לוֹלִי יִדּוֹד שְׁהָיָה לָנוּ בְּקוּמִים עָלֵינוּ אָדָם

*Had Hashem not been with us when a man (adam) rose up against us (we would surely have perished.)*

Harav Chaim Vital (1542-1620) explains that the *man – adam*-- in this verse refers to Yishmael, the father of the Arab nations. His source for this notion comes from a verse in the Torah.

When Hagar became pregnant from Avram when Sarah couldn't, she started treating Sarah disrespectfully. As a result, Sarah caused Hagar to run away. An angel found Hagar and told her that she should go back to Sarah and humble herself to her. At that time, the angel also told her that she was expecting a child and he gave her some information about the child (Genesis 16:12).

(יב) וְהוּא יִהְיֶה פָּרָא אָדָם יְדוּ בְּכָל יָד כָּל בּוֹ וְעַל פְּנֵי כָּל אֶחָיו יִשְׁבֵּן

12) *And he shall be a **wild-ass of a man** ...*

Even though he is called a *wild man*, he nevertheless acquired the name **man**. R' Chaim Vital gives two reasons for which he merited to be called an *adam*, man. The first is that he was the child of the great and beloved Avraham, and, secondly, at the age of 13 he received a *brit milah* – circumcision.

R' Chaim reveals the deeper meaning behind the words “*when a man (adam) rose up against us.*”

From the beginning of time, the Jewish nation was destined to be exiled under four empires. The second verse in the Torah alludes to them, and the Midrash on that verse lists the four; the Babylonians, the Persians, the Greeks and the Romans. An exile places the Jewish nation

under a foreign king. Hashem's intention was that the Jewish nation be under the Kingdom of David so as to model Hashem's kingdom to the world. And, indeed, this took place during the golden era of the Jewish nation under King David and his son King Solomon. During the 80 years that these two holy and righteous kings reigned, the Jewish nation was recognized by all other kingdoms as Hashem's kingdom. King Solomon built the first Holy Temple, and, for 410 years, it stood as a testament to Hashem and his special holy nation. Unfortunately, the Jewish people abandoned Hashem's Torah and mitzvot and the Babylonians then arrived to destroy the Holy Temple. At this point, the Babylonian Empire usurped the kingdom from King David, and the Jewish people became subjects of a foreign kingdom (exile), the Babylonian Empire.

The same pattern followed with the other empires. Hence the Jewish people were the subjects of a foreign empire – in exile.

Although we are suffering greatly at the hand of Yishmael, Yishmael is *not* an exile because he has no empire. They have no king or kingdom and never did. On the contrary. For thousands of years they were bedouins who lived alone in tents in the desert leaving their tents only to plunder travelers.

This verse also clearly refers to Yishmael's descendants. "*When they rose up against me*" implies that they suddenly rose from being the lowest of the low to a position of prominence. They used to be a non-entity, but suddenly, when Mohammad came on the scene, they became a force to contend with.

The next verse in the psalm is also very telling.

(ג) אֲדֹי תַיִם בְּלִעֹנֵנוּ בְחָרוֹת אֶפְסֵם בְּנוּ

3) *Then they would have **swallowed us up alive**, when their anger was kindled against us.*

R' Chaim explains that Yishmael is different than the four exiles. The four empires sought to subjugate us and to convert us to their religions. Yishmael wants to swallow us up so that we no longer exist. Just as when you swallow something it virtually disappears, so too, that is what they want: Nothing less than our complete eradication from the surface of the earth.

If Yishmael isn't an exile, why is Hashem allowing him to oppress us? What is his role in history?

It is worthy to note that unlike Catholicism, Islam does not constitute idol worship. On the contrary. When they prostrate themselves on their carpets, they are praying to the very One and only Hashem that we pray to. They also believe in Hashem Echad, *viz*, that there is only one G-d (Monotheism). Mohammad was a false prophet who taught that his teachings superseded Moshe's, but he is still telling them to serve the One and Only Hashem.

Knowing that, we can easily connect the dots and understand the lesson Hashem is trying to teach us through Yishmael.

The job of the Jewish people in this world is to teach the world about Hashem. Looking at the world today, one could mistakenly say, that there is a small "fanatic" sect of Jews called the "Ultra-Orthodox" who keep the archaic laws of the Torah. They are kind of like the Amish who won't come out of their antiquated world. The majority of Jews today, however, embrace the "modern world" and reject the "outdated" traditions of old. "Those rules and regulations," they say, "are irrelevant in today's high-tech fast-paced world."

So who is making the world aware of Hashem? I am sorry to say that it is the Arabs who are prepared to kill themselves (and others) in His name. "Allah Akbar!!" is their cry! The Koran teaches them that they must rid the world of all unbelievers, and they are prepared to readily give up their lives to accomplish that goal. They see themselves as Hashem's messengers more than we do. This creates a strong critique against the Jewish people and gives the Arabs an edge over us allowing them to rise up against us and kill us.

So, what is the antidote to Yishmael? That we, instead of the Arabs, increase belief in Hashem in the world. This applies to us - to increase our relationship with Hashem- and to our fellow Jews, by making them more aware of Hashem and His amazing kindness.

This is why the psalm about Yishmael concludes:

(ח) עֲזָרְנוּ בְּשֵׁם יְדוּד עֹשֵׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ

8) *Our help is through the Name of Hashem, Maker of heaven and earth.*

R' Chaim explains:

*Therefore, we don't know what we should do to deal with him. We have no other hope other than to have trust in Hashem's great name that He will save us from their hands. This is why King David ended the psalm with these words. That*

נקרא שמו ישמעאל. ואם כן אנו לח  
נדע מה נעשה. ואין לנו תקוה אחרת  
זולתי שנצטח בשמו הגדול יתברך שיושיענו  
מידם. והו אומר עורנו צס ד' וכו'.  
כלומר סיבת צטוננו צו יתברך הוא. לפי  
שהוא אשר עשה את השמים ואת הארץ.

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*means to say that the reason that we put our trust in Hashem is because He created the heavens and the earth.*

R' Chaim goes on to explain that since heaven and earth are dependent on the existence of the Jewish people, if we perish, so, too, do the heavens and earth. Therefore, Hashem must save us to save His world.

The Midrash teaches us.

פרקי דרבי אליעזר ונציה ש"ד - פרק לב

ששה נקראו בשמותן עד שלא נולדו ואלו הן יצחק וישמעאל משה ושלמה ויאשיהו ומלך המשיח ישמעאל מנין שנ' ויאמר לה מלאך ה' הנך הרה ויולדת בן וקראת שמו ישמעאל ולמה נקרא שמו ישמעאל שעתיד לשמוע הב"ה באנקת העם ממה שעתידין בני ישמעאל לעשות בארץ באחרית הימים לפיכך נקרא שמו ישמעאל

*Six people were named before their births: Yitzchak, Yishmael, Moshe, Shlomo, Yoshiahu, and the Mashiach. How do we know that Yishmael was given his name before he was born? Because the angel told [his mother] that she was expecting a child and that she should call his name Yishmael. Why Yishmael? **Because Hashem is destined to hear the cries of the people from what the children of Yishmael are going to do to them in the end of days, and ישמע קל - Hashem will listen - and bring the salvation.***

We see that Yishmael's mission in the end of days is to cause the Jewish people to turn to Hashem and cry out because of the pain that they are causing us. And we are doing that!

However, in light of the current events, this may be a very daunting task. With the Israeli army so well trained and their tactics so sophisticated, it is easy to think and believe that they are the reason for

their exceptional success. Who needs Hashem, when *they* have it so well planned out?

The reality is without Hashem blessing their endeavors, they could accomplish nothing. As we said, the “best laid plans” are so often ruined by the silliest things. When everything goes as planned, you know that Hashem is behind it.

On the home front as well. With the hundreds and hundreds of missiles that were shot into Israel, there should have been so many more casualties. Hashem is protecting His people every second, and, with all that has happened, and as tragic as it is, very few have been killed.

Hashem is helping us to see Him. We must take the cue and increase our trust in Him. We can demonstrate this by increasing our prayers and mitzvot. We should also be Hashem’s ambassadors to spread this message to our fellow Jews. This is what this is all about! The more people who come around and recognize Hashem, the closer we get to an end to the war. And with more people that believe in Hashem, the closer we get to the coming of the Mashiach, may we merit to see his coming speedily in our times.