

ספר  
בעקבי הצאן

In the Footsteps  
of the Flock

**The Views of the Gedolei Hatorah  
on Exile, Redemption and Eretz Yisroel,  
Arranged According to the  
Weekly Torah Readings**



A Natruna Publication

# IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE FLOCK

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183 Wilson Street PMB #162

Brooklyn, NY 11211

(718) 841-7053

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Translated and arranged by:

YIRMIYAHU COHEN

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Layout and Cover Design by:

The logo for CREARTIVE features the word in a stylized font. The 'C' is orange, 'R' is blue, 'E' is orange, 'A' is blue, 'R' is orange, 'T' is blue, 'I' is orange, 'V' is blue, and 'E' is orange. A thin blue line underlines the letters.

199 Lee Avenue, Suite #538

Brooklyn, NY 11211

718.522.1628



**Meyer Weberman**  
Rabbi, Cong. Nesevos Olum

**מאיר וועבערמאן**  
רב דביהמ"ד נתיבות עולם

187 Hewes St. • Brooklyn, N.Y. 11211 • Tel. 718-387-6904

### בעזהשי"ת

הנה זה כבר כמה שנים אשר באתי בכתובים בדבר המפעל החשוב "נטרונא", אשר נתייסד ע"י כמה תלמידי חכמים ויראי ד', במטרה אחת ויחידה להודיע ולפרסם קבל עולם ומלואו דעת תורה האמיתית, בדבר לקיחת גאולה קודם ביאת המשיח. וברבות הימים זכה המפעל ע"י מעשיהם הכבירים של פירסום על כמה וכמה אופנים, כי יצא דבר המלך מאן מלכי רבנן למאות אלפי בני ישראל, לפקוח עיניים עוורות בדבר ד' זו הלכה ברורה, בענין ציונות והמסתעף.

והנה בהמשך לפעולות חובקות זרועות עולם ע"י הפצת אורה זו תורה, אמרו להדפיס ליקוט נאה דברי תורה וענינים נחמדים על פרשיות השבוע, בשפת ענגליש המדוברת בארה"ב, אשר תוכן רצוף ענינים חמורים של גלות וגאולה, בדעת רבותינו צדיקי הדורות הקודמים ולאחריהם גדולי הדור האחרון זי"ע, כאשר מפורש יוצא מפייהם ומפי כתבם.

על כן אמינא לפעלא טבא ויישר חילם לאורייתא, להפיץ על פני תבל דעת תורתנו הק', להתודע ולהגלות האמת הצרופה, בדברים העומדים ברומו של עולם.

ואליכם אישים אקרא ידידים אהובים אחינו בני, משכו וקחו ברכה לתוך בתיכם, ללמוד לקח דברי אגדה, עובדות והנהגות מגדולי ישראל האמתיים, המושכים לב על פרשיות השבוע, מסודר באופן נאה ובלשון קל וצח השוים לכל נפש, ובחדא מחתא לשנן לבניכם ובני בניכם את דרך האמת עפ"י הוראת מרנן ורבנן נ"ע.

ובזכות זה במהרה נזכה לגאולתנו האמיתית בביאת משיח צדקנו בב"א.

וע"ז בעה"ח יום א' לסדר ואתם תהיו לי ממלכת כהנים וגוי קדוש, שנת תשס"ז לפ"ק.

**מאיר וועבערמאן**

*Rabbi Yaakov Shapiro*

*1403 Bay 28<sup>th</sup> Street  
Far Rockaway, N.Y. 11691  
718.868.1901*

**יעקב אהרן שפירא**

**רב דביהמ"ד דבעיזוואטער  
פאר ראקאוויי, נוא יארק**

בעז"ה

הנה מקדמת דנא נודע לי המוסד הקדוש נטרונא העוסק במלאכת שמים בפרסום דעת תורתינו הק' מצוות האברים וחובות הלבבות איך להתנהג בזמן הגלות, שקיומם פיקוח נפש לכלל ישראל כי הם גם היסוד והדרך איך להינצל בגלות מהעומדים עלינו לכלותינו, כמבואר בדברי חז"ל וראשונים ורבתינו במשך הדורות.

והנה כבר הי' רגיל הגאון רבי מאיר אריק הגאב"ד דטורנא זצ"ל לדרוש באסיפות של גדולי ישראל, לפרש מאמה"כ (ירמי' ב:ח) הפְּהָנִים לֹא אָמְרוּ אֵינָהּ ה' וְתִפְשֵׁי הַתּוֹרָה לֹא יִדְעוּנִי וְהָרַעִים פָּשְׁעוּ בִי וְהִנְבִּיאִים נִבְּאוּ בְּפֶעַל וּגו', דר"ל הכהנים שהם מנהיגי ישראל אין דורשים להעם את דרך ה', אבל הנביאים נבאו בבעל, ר"ל דנביאי שקר דורשים הרבה, ולכן כל מה ששומעים העם הוא היפך דעת התורה. וככה הוא בענינים אלה, כי יודע היצר היכן לכוון את החיצים, ולעומת גודל נחיצות הענין לשמור את דרך התורה בזמן הגלות, מדפיסים ומרביצים ומפרסמים דעות כוזבות שמעורים עיני פקחים ומסלפים דברי צדיקים הקודמים, אבל לעומתם, כמעט אין אומר ואין דברים, וכואב הלב עד כמה אין חדורים בהבנה זו כי יש לנו דרך משלנו, דרך התורה מסורה לנו מדור דור איך להתנהג עם האומות.

ולכן דבר גדול עושים בזה חברי נטרונא, שמדפיסים בלשון צח ונקי, בשפת לע"ז שמובן לכל, בסדר מסודר על פרשיות התורה, דברי אלקים חיים מגדולי ישראל במשך הדורות, מאסף מכל מחנות צבאנו, חסידים ומתנגדים, אשכנזים וספרדים, אמונות ודעות בענין הנהגתנו בגלות. והנה בעיני ראיתי איך שכבר הצליחו חברי נטרונא ללמד לטועים בינה ולהציל נפשות יקרות ע"י הרבצת דברי תורה המלמדים דעה בינה והשכל. ולכן הנני תפילה שיצליחו גם בחיבור זה לפקח עיני עורים, להכניס אורות לאופל, ולהאיר אור חדש על ציון, עדי נזכה כולנו במהרה לאורו האמיתי בב"א.

והנני דוש"ת באהבה רבה ואהבת עולם, ומצפה צביונם ותפארתם בכך מילי דמיטב לאי"ט,  
ט"ז שבט תשס"ז לפ"ק

**יעקב אהרן שפירא**

Beth Midrash - Od Yossef Hai

143/145 S. La Brea Ave.

Los Angeles, CA 90036

(323) 931-0333

ה"ק ונס ה' השלח יוד' למודש שבת תשס"ג לפ"ק  
פ"פ צ"כ לנס אנ"לס במדינת קליפורניא י"א  
לכבוד העסקנים החשובים של המוסד נטרוניא ה' עליהם יחיו

קבאתי בדבברי תורה על הפרשיות שלשם אנ"לס ומאד נהנית.  
הכל נכתב בטוב טעם ודעת ושמו "הזקני פזאן" מאד תואם י"ש  
הפסוק בסיר השירים אמ לא תבצי לך היפה הנשים ופי' רש"י ז"ל  
אם לא תבצי לך כפי"ת וצד"ת היפה הנשים בשאר אומות אינה תבצי  
ותנצ"ל איך המצניקים לך, להיות ביניהם ולא יאבדו בנך, התבוננ  
בדרכי אבותיך בראשונים, שקבלו תורתם ושמו משמית ומצות, וא"כ  
בדרכים צ"ע.

כמה כואב לראות בחורי חמד ואברכים חשובים שחסי להם הידיעות  
על מלחמות גדולי ישראל והשקפתם בעניני נסיונות הצאן ומודרניזם  
וציוניזם וכל האיצי"מ למיניהם. ואיך צרכים לקשת לענינים האלו  
עם האזים אשר אנן חיים ביניהם. ומה פאמת ומה שקר.  
ישני הרבה ראשי ושיבות ורבו קהילות אשר הכבי שלא לעורר כעסם  
של הקהל בתים ופציבור ושימו יד לשה, וצד"ת לא לדבר, ובינתיים  
לודל דור של עומרי תורה ושומרי ת"מ אשר לא ידעו כלל מהו האמת  
ומה צשו אבותינו המצב כזה. ומה יעני עיוס בפני.

ומה שצ"תם לפרסם עובדות ומצגי גדולי ישראל של הדור העבר  
השפ" נע"מה וברורה, מחזק מאד את העם הצמאים לדברי חיצוק  
ובפרט המרתקים ממרכזי התורה כמו לנס אנ"לס הוא תועלת  
בפורה ומכופלת ושכרם גדול מאד, ואני יודע וראית לפעולתכם  
צושה פירות אבל צדין צריק הרבה יותר וגודאי המוסד שלכם  
הנקרא "נטרוניא" יגדל וכל בעוצרים והעסקנים והרבהים החשובים  
יתברכו ולכות הרבים תלוי כמ, וחפ"ה ה' הידכם יצליח ע"ד ביאת  
גואל צדק בה"א

פבו"ל למען התורה ולומדים וצוסקים  
לצילא אליהו ד"ר רחמים הכפ"ן דוויק י"ב



## הסכמת הרה"ג ר' עוזר יונה קושנער שליט"א

הנה מקדמת דנא נודע לי מוסד הקדוש נטרונא העוסק במלאכת שמים בפרסום האמונה הטהורה וחיזוק בני ישראל בדרך הישן של חיכוי להגאולה ושלא לעשות שום פעולות והשתדלות מעצמינו. והרבה עשו כבר והצליחו ללמד טועים בינה ולהציל נפשות יקרות מרוח המינות המנשבת בזמנינו. ואחת מפעולותיהם היא להוציא לאור דברי תורה על הפרשה מידי שבת בשבתו, מלוקטים מדברי חז"ל ראשונים ואחרונים שמפיהם אנו חיים ובעבקותיהם אנו הולכים, המלמדים לנו דרך התורה בזמן הגלות, האיך צריכים להתנהג עם האומות, איסור השלש שבועות, וענין התבדלות מרשעים. לפי שבעוה"ר נדפסים היום הרבה דברי תורה שרוח הציונות ניכרת בהם, ויש שנעשו בכוונה להפיץ דעות כוזבות, והכירו עסקני המוסד נטרונא שצריכים להלחם עם אלה בדרך זה לעומת זה. ולמלאכת הליקוט והכתיבה בחרו באחד מהאברכים החשובים הרב ר' ירמיהו קאהן שליט"א, שכבר יצא שמו בספרו הקודם "ראה מעשה ונזכר הלכה", והוא בקי בענינים אלו ויודע להסבירם בשפת לע"ז בלשון צח וקל להבין. ועתה כשלם שנה אחת של דברי תורה אלה עלה על דעתם לכרוך את כולם בכרך אחד ולהוציאו לאור כדי להנות בהם בני אדם. ובזה הנני מברכם שיצליחו ושילמדו בני ישראל בספר זה וידעו דעת תורה האמיתית, ונזכה לעמוד איתן בכל הנסיונות של תקופתינו, עד ביאת גואל צדק בב"א.

עוזר יונה קושנער



# SEFER BEREISHIS



# Bereishis

בראשית ברא א-להים את השמים ואת הארץ (א,א).

*In the beginning G-d created heaven and earth. (1:1)*

Rashi says: The Torah should have begun with the words, “This month will be for you the first of months” (Shemos 12:2), which was the first commandment given to the Jewish people. Why does it start with the creation of the world? So that if the nations say to Israel, “You are robbers, for you conquered the lands of the seven nations of Canaan” they can reply, “All the earth belongs to the Holy One, blessed is He. He created it and gave it to whomever He wanted. He gave the land to the Canaanites, and then He took it from them and gave it to us.”

The Kli Yakar asks: So what if they accuse us of being robbers? Is that so important that it warrants a change in the order of the Torah? He explains that the accusation of robbery would lead to a complete denial of G-d and the Torah. The nations would say, “How can your G-d and His Torah be true if He did nothing to stop you from stealing the land?” This, says the Kli Yakar, is why robbery was the sin that sealed the decree on the generation of the flood. Thus without the preface of creation, the rest of the Torah and all the fundamentals of emunah would be worthless to the nations.

The Satmar Rav says that even if we were to dispute the Kli Yakar’s contention that robbery in general implies denial of G-d, in the case of the Jewish people taking Eretz Yisroel he is certainly correct. The exile and redemption of the Jewish people are processes that must be left to the control of G-d, with no physical effort on our part. All areas of life are under G-d’s control, yet the Torah teaches that we may work for a living, as it says, “So that Hashem your G-d may bless you in all the works of your hands that you do” (Devarim 14:29). We may

consult doctors, as it says, “He shall surely heal” (Shemos 21:19). We do not sit back and leave these things up to G-d. But in the matter of occupying our land, the Torah gives us no such permission to make efforts on our own. (See pp. 89, 99.) “Because of our sins we were exiled from our land,” we say in the Musaf prayer for festivals, and the Torah promises that we will be redeemed only after we repent (Devarim 30:2).

Thus, all other sins do not necessarily imply a denial of G-d. Sometimes a person follows his desires and commits a sin, but still recognizes G-d. The fact that G-d does not prevent him from sinning will not lead to denial of G-d, for everyone knows that G-d grants humans free will. And even regarding robbery we could say, in contrast to the Kli Yakar, that it is nothing more than an effort to make a living in a forbidden manner, by exercising one’s free will. But the redemption from exile and restoration of the Jewish people to the Holy Land is strictly G-d’s domain, and any effort in that area is a direct affront and denial of His mastery over the world. This is why it was crucial to begin the Torah with creation – to teach that the Jewish people did not take the Holy Land on their own, but rather G-d created it, took it from the Canaanites and gave it to them. (Vayael Moshe 1:44).

As an analogy, if a person evades taxes or violates the traffic laws and is caught, he will be punished or fined, but the punishment will not be too severe. Even as he was committing the crime, he was not denying the legitimacy or authority of the government; he was just attempting to save himself money or time. But if he gathers together an army and, in the name of his country, declares war on another country, this is an offense of the greatest severity. Declarations of war are strictly the government’s domain, and when this person claims to declare war in the name of his country, he is thereby denying the legitimacy of the real government.



והארץ היתה תהו ובהו וחשך על פני תהום ורוח א-להים מרחפת על פני  
המים (א,ב).

*And the earth was emptiness and nothingness, and the darkness was on the face of the deep, and the spirit of G-d was hovering on the face of the waters. (1:2)*

The Midrash says that Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish explained these verses as referring to different exiles: “And the earth was emptiness” – this is the exile of Babylonia, as it says, “I saw the land and it was emptiness” (Yirmiyahu 4:23). “And nothingness” – this is the exile of Media, as it says, “And they hurried to bring Haman” (Esther 6:14). “And darkness” – this is the exile of Greece, who darkened the eyes of Israel with their decrees, for they said to them, “Write on the horn of the ox that you have no part in the G-d of Israel.” “On the face of the deep” – this is the exile of the Evil Kingdom [Rome], which has no calculable end like the deep ocean. Just as the depths of the ocean cannot be fathomed, so too the wicked. “And the spirit of G-d was hovering” – this is the spirit of the king moshiach, as it says, “And the spirit of Hashem will rest upon him” (Yishaya 11:2). In what merit does this hovering spirit come closer? “On the face of the waters” – in the merit of repentance, which is compared to water, as it says, “Pour out your heart like water” (Eichah 2:19). (Bereishis Rabbah 2:4)

Thus the decree of exile is not something secondary or ephemeral, but is a major part of the Jewish people’s role, and part of G-d’s plan when He created the world. Only through the fulfillment of this plan can we achieve our success.

Rabbi Avigdor Miller said, “Some people make a very great error. They think that what happened to us was a big misfortune. We’re supposed to be in our land all the time. A landless people is not a people. And all the history of the Jewish people since leaving their land is just an unfortunate appendage added to the real Jewish history. Jewish history is only when we were a nation with a land and were all together, independent and proud. Now that we’re in exile, we can only hope for the days when we will get it back again. In the meantime it’s just a tragedy. This approach is fundamentally wrong, and based on atheism: on a lack of understanding that Hashem is King, and that whatever happens in this world is only His plan. Hashem would not make such a plan.

“Somebody writes a book, and after it’s printed, he wants to make a second

edition. He sees he left out a few things, so he puts in some addenda at the end – a few pages in the back of the book. But did you ever see a book in which the addenda are longer than the book itself? So can we say that Hashem, the Author of history, would keep us in Eretz Yisroel for a limited time, and then when we are expelled for 2000 years, that's just a misfortune, an addendum to history? Don't make this serious error. This exile is our history. Even today, we're fulfilling that history, whether in Yerushalayim, Bnei Brak, Williamsburg, Borough Park or Flatbush. In Oshkosh, Wisconsin where there's a single Jew fighting the environment - he is also making history. History is not only up to the destruction of the Temple. The Jewish people is creating history today, and who knows what part of history is greater?" (Tape #533)



# Noach

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' לְנֹחַ בֵּא אִתְּךָ וְכָל בֵּיתְךָ אֶל הַתֵּבָה כִּי אֶתְךָ רֵאִיתִי צַדִּיק לְפָנַי בְּדוֹר  
הַזֶּה (ז, א).

*And Hashem said to Noach: Come, you and your entire household, into the ark, for I have seen you to be a righteous man before Me in this generation. (7:1)*

The Mishnah in Bava Metzia (44a) says that a person who goes back on a transaction after the money was given but before the kinyan takes effect is cursed with the following words: “He Who punished the men of the generation of the Flood and the men of the generation of the Dispersal, will punish whomever does not stand by his word.” What is the connection between the sins of those wicked generations and the sin of not standing by one’s word? The Satmar Rav explained this based on the Midrash Tanchuma (Re’eh 3), which says that there were many people in Noach’s generation who were as good as he, but were wiped out in the Flood. Why then was Noach chosen to be saved? The Gemara in Sanhedrin 108a says that Noach tried to rebuke the wicked people in his time. But in another place (Midrash Rabbah 29:1) the commentators on the Midrash say that Noach did not rebuke the people. The answer is that for many years he rebuked them, but then he saw that the other tzaddikim were keeping quiet. Noach decided to follow the majority and keep quiet as well. This is the reason why, at the beginning of the Parsha, Noach is called “a righteous man in his generations” – i.e. he rebuked the people for many generations, whereas later Hashem calls him “a righteous man before Me in this generation” – i.e. during that last generation prior to the Flood, he was only righteous in private, before Hashem, but in public he kept quiet. Since his intentions in following the majority were good, he was saved, but the others who were wrong for holding back their rebuke were punished along with the wicked people in the Flood.

When a righteous person holds himself back from telling the truth to others in his generation who are mistaken, he is forced at many times to contradict himself – to say words that contradict his actions, or to answer questions in a forced way in order to keep from saying certain things. This is called “not standing by his word.” Thus, one who does not keep his word is cursed like the “men” – i.e. the righteous people – of the generation of the Flood, who were punished for not rebuking the wicked of their time. (Divrei Yoel, p. 189)

**ותבא אליו היונה לעת ערב והנה עלה זית טרף בפיה וגו' (ח,יא).**

*And the dove came to him at the time of evening, and behold, it was grasping an olive leaf in its mouth. (8:11)*

Rashi, quoting the Gemara, explains that the dove meant to say, “Let my food be bitter like an olive in the hand of the Holy One, blessed is He, rather than sweet like honey in the hands of a human being.” Rabbi Hillel of Kolomaya in Maskil El Dal (published in 1871) explained that the words “at the time of evening” in this posuk allude to the period immediately before the coming of moshiach. We find this same phrase used in Zecharia 14:7 in reference to that period. And the Midrash (Bereishis Rabbah 3:8) says that “and there was evening” refers to the deeds of the wicked, who will be powerful in the period before moshiach. Chazal (Sotah 49b) tell us that in that period “the truth will be absent, and those who fear sin will be despised.” The dove symbolizes the Jewish people. If the “dove” at that time will have to take support from the table of the transgressors of the Torah, she will come and complain: “At such a time of ‘evening,’ when the wicked are powerful, let my food be bitter like an olive in the hand of the Holy One, blessed is He, rather than sweet like honey in the hands of human beings like these.” (Maskil El Dal v. 4, 1:1:9)



**ויהי כל הארץ שפה אחת ודברים אחדים (יא,א).**

*And all the earth was one language, and of the same words. (11:1)*

Reb Shmuel Kraus of Los Angeles, formerly of London, related that when the Satmar Rav was returning from a visit to Eretz Yisroel in 1960, he decided to join him on the ship for part of the journey so as to have a chance to speak with him. He took a ship from England to another port along the way, and then boarded the Rebbe's ship for the return trip to England. On the ship, he asked him about his views on the situation in Eretz Yisroel. The Rebbe quoted the Gemora in Avodah Zarah 18b, which praises Avraham for not following in the counsel of the builders of the Tower of Bavel. "They were such wicked people, so obviously Avraham had nothing to do with them. What is so great about that?" asked the Rebbe. "But the answer is that there were actually three groups of people who built the Tower. Rashi in his commentary to the Torah (Bereishis 11:1) mentions two of them. The first group said, 'Let us go up to the heavens and fight a war against Hashem!' The second group said, 'Once every 1656 years the sky falls in. Let us make support pillars for the sky!' And the Midrash Osyos D'Rabbi Akiva tells of a third group, who said, 'Let us go up to the heavens, far from the pleasures of this world, and live there like angels!' Now, we understand why Avraham did not join the first group or even the second group - it's foolish to think that the Flood was a natural event, or that we have to help Hashem support the sky. But why didn't he join the third group? The answer is, Avraham decided that one may not join the first and second groups even for the sake of becoming like an angel. And so it is in Eretz Yisroel - there are three groups. The first group are the people who recently printed a new Bible that contains no mention of Hashem's name. They are truly fighting a war against Hashem. The second group says, 'We believe in Hashem, but we need to help Him with our army and our weapons.' And the third group says, 'Let us go and built Torah centers in Eretz Yisroel.' This third group is also wrong, since they have to join the first two groups in order to accomplish their goal. Rather, we must stay completely separate from all groups of Zionists."



ויהי כל הארץ שפה אחת ודברים אחדים (יא,א).

*And all the earth was one language, and of the same words. (11:1)*

Rashi explains that the people saw that a flood had come to the world and killed millions of people, and they feared it would happen again. Their wisest men gathered and came to the conclusion: "Once every 1656 years the sky falls in. Let us built support pillars for it!"

Rabbi Avigdor Miller said: The Gemora in Yevamos (63a) says, "No misfortune comes upon the world except because of Yisroel." If an accident occurs in some faraway land where there is not even one Jew, it is a principle of Torah that it happens only because of the Jewish people. Rashi adds, "To scare them so that they will repent." We are obligated to look from afar and learn fear of Heaven, and not wait until catastrophe strikes closer to home. If we learn fear of Heaven from the misfortunes of faraway lands, then we will be spared misfortunes close to us, G-d forbid.

Scripture states, "You smite a scoffer, and the simpleton becomes wise" (Mishlei 19:25). Here are two types of people: the scoffer and the simpleton. The scoffer refuses to hear any rebuke. He avoids rabbis and scholars, because he doesn't want anyone to tell him of his faults. The simpleton (pesi) is a person who talks himself (mefateh) into sinning, but he is ready to listen when others speak to him. For a scoffer, no amount of rebuke helps; he must be smitten. Hashem smites the scoffer and he is taken to the hospital, and still he does not change. But the simpleton sees what happened to the scoffer, and learns from it.

Today people read the newspaper, hear the news, but it makes no impression – a terrible waste! Blood is being shed for nothing, with no positive result. If we would gain awareness and fear of Hashem, then all the world with its events would be serving a purpose. But the blood of the nations is shed, and we learn nothing. We gain no fear; we say that it just happened that way, for various reasons, and we need not fear. This is the way of those who lack emunah.

This was the sin of the generation that built the Tower. They saw the Flood as a natural phenomenon, and took steps to prevent it. They failed to recognize that if Hashem caused so many people to die, He must have done it for a good reason. "He Who chastises nations, is He not thereby rebuking them?" (Tehillim 94:10) Hashem punishes only in order to teach those who remain and all future

generations. “He is the one Who teaches man knowledge” (ibid. 11) – the entire purpose of all misfortunes and wars is only to teach man knowledge. The purpose of the Flood was only to teach the later generations, and these people showed that they had learned nothing – to them the Flood was a mere accident. If so, Hashem had killed all those people for nothing, and He considered it as if the builders of the Tower had shed their blood.

In our time we have experienced a flood of fire, a flood that has no equal since the creation of the world. What happened to the Jewish people in Europe should terrify us and arouse us from now until the redemption. We should be speaking constantly of the judgment of Hashem – “what is this G-d has done to us?” (Bereishis 42:28) The crematorium and all the other kinds of slaughter and torture that took place should be constantly before our eyes. But instead, a great silence has descended upon the earth. Worse yet, they learn the opposite of the lesson they were supposed to learn. The Jewish world is ruled by wicked atheists who write the newspapers; the Jewish populace, including the religious, read their words and see only the heretical meaning of the Holocaust. They say, “How can we speak critically of that great generation of holy martyrs? The Jews of Europe, as is well known, were all righteous and pious, G-d-fearing and wholesome.” If even on such righteous people Hashem brought a flood of fire, then what good does it do to be righteous? “It is vain to serve G-d.” (Malachi 3:14)

But this great lie could only be propagated by men with closed eyes. We must reveal the truth, the same truth that the Chofetz Chaim spoke when he said that a terrible tragedy was about to come upon the world because they had cast away Judaism. Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman wrote in a letter that most Jewish children were being raised like gentiles, and a great catastrophe was on its way. Today’s American Jews did not see the world of Europe and they refuse to hear the truth, but the gedolim then looked with open eyes and saw what was happening. The general populace had cast away their Judaism. The largest Jewish party in Poland was the Socialist Bund; in Lithuania most Jews were Zionists. Jewish Europe was rotten at the core. Of course there were gedolim and holy men whom we lost, but they were the atonement for the majority.

Today, when an Arab throws a bomb and kills 10 or 20 Jews, isn’t that a hint? Some hint! Once upon a time when one Jew was killed it was a hint. But today –

nothing. Hundreds have been killed but they ignore it. They're waiting for bigger hints, G-d forbid. They're going to come. Bigger and bigger. And when the hints come, they still won't get the message; they'll say, "It's the fault of the Orthodox who didn't come to Eretz Yisroel and strengthen the Medinah. You kollel people who are wasting your time, why didn't you come and join the army?" And they'll find other ways of corrupting the hint. But we have to find the chest of gold, which is when a Jew learns to take a hint from Hakadosh Boruch Hu. And we don't wait for big hints. (Lecture in yeshiva; R-57)

וַיֹּאמְרוּ הִבֵּה נִבְנֶה לָנוּ עִיר וּמְגִדָּל וְרֵאשׁוּ בַשָּׁמַיִם וְנַעֲשֶׂה לָנוּ שֵׁם פֶּן נִפְּוֹץ  
עַל פְּנֵי כָל הָאָרֶץ (יא,ד).

*Come, let us build a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make ourselves a name, lest we be scattered over the face of the whole earth. (11:4)*

In 1904, Rabbi Dov Aryeh Ritter of Rotterdam published (in the periodical Hapeles) a collection of letters from gedolei hador expressing their opinion of Mizrachi, the new religious Zionist organization. One of them, Rabbi Chaim Berlin, son of the Netziv, used a posuk in Parshas Noach: "And they said, come, let us build a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make ourselves a name, lest we be scattered over the face of the whole earth." He explained that the wicked king Nimrod and his advisors who were building the tower were trying to rebel against Hashem. But they decided it would be unwise to make this goal public, because the majority of the people would be against it. So instead they told everyone that the purpose of the tower was so that they should not be scattered over the face of the earth. This is the meaning of the words: "A tower with its top" – i.e. its purpose – "in heaven" – to rebel against Hashem – "and let us make ourselves a name" – let us make a good name for ourselves in the eyes of the masses by saying that our purpose is – "lest we be scattered over the face of the whole earth." (Mishkenos Haro'im p. 243)



הבה נרדה ונבלה שם שפתם אשר לא ישמעו איש שפת רעהו (יא,ז).

*Let us go down and mix up there their languages, so that each man will not understand the language of his fellow. (11:7)*

The Gemora in Sanhedrin 109a says that a third of the tower was burnt and a third sank into the earth. The worst of the people were transformed into monkeys, evil spirits and demons. The Midrash says that the sea rose up and overran part of the world. The remaining people were swallowed up by the mountains. If so, the question arises: After making all these miracles to destroy them, why did G-d have to mix up their languages as well? Furthermore, of all the miracles, the only one mentioned explicitly in the Torah is the mixing of the languages. Why was this the most important action taken by G-d?

This problem is addressed in the Zohar: “Why did He have to confound their languages? Because they were all speaking the Holy Tongue, and that language gave them help, for these things depend on actions and words of the mouth...Once their language was changed, their actions had no success. For the powers above do not know or recognize any language but the Holy Tongue, so when their language was confounded their power was weakened and their strength was broken. Come and see that whenever a word is spoken below in the Holy Tongue, all the powers of heaven know about it and are strengthened through it, but if it is spoken in another language, they do not know or recognize it. Therefore, as soon as their language was confounded, ‘they stopped building the city.’ For their power had been broken and they did not know how to carry out any of their plans.” (Zohar 75b)

Thus, it is the greatest misfortune when wicked men speak the Holy Tongue, for this was the only way the builders of the Tower were able to succeed in leading the entire world to rebellion against G-d, bringing bitter punishments upon the world. Although righteous men such as Avraham Avinu, Noach, Shem and Ever were alive at the time, G-d saw that there was no way of stopping the wicked men from success, except by taking the Holy Tongue away from them. (Vayoel Moshe 3:19)



וימת הרן על פני תרח אביו בארץ מולדתו באור כשדים (יא,כח).

*And Haran died in front of Terach his father, in the land of his birth,  
in Ur Kasdim. (11:28)*

Rashi in his commentary to this posuk brings the story of how Nimrod cast Avraham Avinu into the furnace for refusing to bow to the idols. This is counted as the first of Avraham's Ten Trials (Bartinura to Avos 5:3). The Satmar Rav once asked: why did this trial show the greatness of Avraham Avinu? Didn't thousands of Jews throughout history - even simple, unlearned Jews who were far below Avraham Avinu's level - willingly stick out their necks to be killed rather than worship idols? But the answer is that Avraham Avinu's yetzer hara told him, "You are the only one in the whole world who is teaching the existence of Hashem. If you die, there will be no one left to spread the truth. Better pretend to bow to the idol just this once, and then go on teaching the world about Hashem for your whole life." Avraham Avinu replied to his yetzer hara, "No! I do not want to bow down to an idol even once, even if by so doing I can correct the whole world!" (Toros V'uvdos Mibeis Raboseinu)



# Lech Lecha

וה' אמר אל אברם אחרי הפרד לוט מעמו שא נא עיניך וראה מן המקום  
אשר אתה שם צפונה ונגבה וקדמה וימה (יג,יד).

*And Hashem said to Avram after Lot had separated from him: Lift up your eyes and see from the place where you are, north and south and east and west. (13:14)*

Rashi comments that Hashem waited to speak to Avram until the wicked Lot had left. An editor of Rashi's commentary adds in parentheses that at the beginning of the parsha Hashem did speak to Avram although Lot was with him, because at that time Lot was good. The question is: what did Lot do to become "wicked" in such a short time?

The Torah relates several pesukim earlier (13:7), "And there was a quarrel between the herdsmen of the Avram's cattle and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle, and the Canaanite and the Perizite were then living in the land." Rashi, quoting the Midrash, explains that Lot's herdsmen were letting their cattle graze on other people's land. When Avram's herdsmen rebuked them for this, they replied that the land had already been given to Avram, and Lot was his heir. But the Torah tells us the truth: the Canaanite and the Perizite were still living in the land, and the time had not yet come for Avram to get it. Avram then said to Lot, "Separate from me," and Lot went to live near Sodom. We must ask: why did Avraham, who was so wealthy, have to separate from his relative over such a petty monetary issue? The answer is, Avraham was not bothered by the money, but by Lot's dangerous reasoning. Avraham knew that although Hashem had promised to give Eretz Yisroel to his seed, the actual fulfillment of the promise had to be prompted by a Divine command, given through a prophet. Yehoshua's conquest, the building of the First Temple, and the return to the Second Temple in Ezra's

time were all mandated by specific prophecies. In our time as well, we must wait for Eliyahu Hanavi; until then any attempt to take the land is forbidden under the Oaths. Foreseeing all this, Avraham saw no alternative but to stay as far as possible from Lot and his wrong view, in order to set an example for his progeny in all times. This is why Hashem only spoke to Avraham after Lot had left him.

With this in mind, we can explain another difficulty. In the story of Eliezer going to betroth Rivka, Rashi mentions in two places (24:10,32) that Avraham's camels wore muzzles so that they should not graze in other people's fields. But in the Midrash, there is actually a dispute about this. One view held that Avraham's camels did not need muzzles; they were careful on their own not to steal the grass. Weren't Avraham Avinu's camels at least as good as Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair's famous donkey, who refused to eat forbidden food? The Midrash does not tell us what the other side of the dispute, who held that they did wear muzzles, replied to this argument. And Rashi prefers the opinion that they wore muzzles, so he must also have had a reply.

The answer is that certainly Avraham Avinu was greater than Rabbi Pinchas ben Yair, and his animals would not eat forbidden food. But after the episode with Lot, Avraham realized that he lived in a dangerous time, when the yetzer hara to take possession of Eretz Yisroel before the time was especially strong. In such a time, one must take extra precautions, to stay as far as possible from anything that resembles taking the land from its current owners.

Chazal tell us (Avodah Zarah 14b) that Avraham Avinu had a tractate on idolatry that contained 400 chapters, while ours has only five. How did all those laws go lost? The answer is that in ancient times, the yetzer hara of idolatry was very strong; it was the main yetzer hara of the times. Therefore, it presented itself in many different forms, in order to tempt people. Avraham Avinu lived in a world full of idolatry. In whatever area of life one looked, there was always some connection to idolatry. In order to combat this, he needed many more laws. But when Chazal wrote our tractate Avodah Zarah, that inclination had been diminished by the Anshei Knesses Hagedolah to a shadow of its former size. There was not so much idolatry in the world, so it could be covered in only five chapters. In the same way, in our generation the yetzer hara to take possession of Eretz Yisroel before the proper time is the prevailing yetzer hara of the times.

Wherever one looks – news, business, music, language, advertisements, yeshivos, Chassidus, seforim, mitzvos – one meets up with this yetzer hara. In such a time, one must follow Avraham Avinu's example and take special precautions to stay far away from all such things. (Divrei Yoel, pp. 317-321)



ויאמר אברם אל מלך סדם הרמתי ידי אל ה' א-ל עליון קנה שמים וארץ,  
אם מחוט ועד שרוך נעל ואם אקה מכל אשר לך וגו' (יד, כב-כג).

*And Avram said to the king of Sodom: I have raised my hand to Hashem, the supreme G-d, Creator of heaven and earth, that I will not take anything from you, even a string or a shoestrap. (14:22-23)*

Once the head of a school in Jerusalem came to the Satmar Rav and said, "Until now I have withstood the trial and refused all government funding. But expenses are growing higher, the institution is going into debt, and so the trial gets harder and harder all the time. How can I know if I will always be able to withstand the temptation?" The Rebbe replied, "You must constantly pray to Hashem that you should not take money from them. Perhaps you think it strange to pray for something that is your own choice. But we find that Avraham Avinu offered just such a prayer. When he refused money from the king of Sodom, he said, 'I have raised my hand to Hashem.' The Targum of Onkelos explains, 'I have raised my hand in prayer before Hashem.'" Many years later, the head of that school said, "Ever since I heard those words from the Rebbe, I have been praying that I should withstand the trial, and my tefillos have been answered." (Toros V'uvdos Mibeis Raboseinu)



וירד העיט על הפגרים וישב אתם אברם (טו,יא).

*And the birds came down on the carcasses, but Avram chased them away. (15:11)*

Rashi explains that the birds symbolized David ben Yishai, and the carcasses symbolized the kingdoms of the nations of the world who, Avraham Avinu saw in this vision, would someday rule over the Jewish people during their exile. David ben Yishai would come to destroy those nations, but Hashem would not let him until the king moshiach comes. Avraham acted this out by not letting the birds devour the carcasses.

It seems that Rashi means David ben Yishai literally: that during his reign he would try to destroy the nations that would one day rule over the Jewish people. But we do not find that King David fought any nations besides the ones in his immediate surroundings – the Phillistines, the Amonites, the Aramites and so on. The nations that subjugated the Jewish people in exile – Bavel, Madai, Yavan, and Rome – were not powerful at that time. Furthermore, why should King David have thought that by fighting the nations in his time, he would prevent the Jewish people from going into exile years later? Surely David knew that if they would someday deserve exile, Hashem would find a nation to carry out the task of exiling them. The Torah warns, “Hashem will bring upon you a nation from afar, from the end of the earth, as the eagle flies, a nation whose language you do not understand.”

The Abarbanel explains that Rashi means not King David, but his descendant, the moshiach. Moshiach will come and try to destroy the nations, but Hashem will not let him until the time comes. Actually, preventing moshiach from coming too early was Avraham’s own initiative. In the Abarbanel’s own words: “Avraham foresaw the length of this exile and the great misfortunes it brought, and he feared that his descendants would rise up to leave the exile before the time set by Hashem, just as the children of Ephraim left the Egyptian exile before the time, whereupon Hashem became angry at them and killed thousands of their best. So Avraham, knowing the time of the End, chased away the birds - the son of David - preventing them from coming down on the carcasses - the nations - until evening, i.e. the time of redemption and the end of exile, as it says, ‘And at the time of evening there will be light.’

“And there is no doubt that it was in reference to this that Shlomo said (Shir Hashirim 2:7), ‘I have adjured you, daughters of Jerusalem, with the deer and the hinds of the field, that you not awaken nor arouse the love before it desires.’ And in Kesubos 111a, ‘Rabbi Yossi bar Chanina said: To what do these three oaths refer? One, that Israel should not go up as a wall. One, that the Holy One, blessed is He, adjured Israel not to rebel against the nations of the world. One, that the Holy One, blessed is He, adjured the nations not to subjugate Israel too much.’ The prohibition on ‘rebellious against the nations’ means that we must bear the yoke of the exile and live under them until the time of the End, when they will pass on. And this is what the prophet Tzefaniah meant when he said (3:8), ‘Therefore wait for Me, said Hashem, for the day when I arise,’ i.e. He commands them to wait until the time of the End, and not rebel and leave the exile before the time set by Him.” (Yeshuos Meshicho v. 1, p. 11b)



The second chapter of Tehillim speaks of the nations who will plot against the Jewish people: “Why have the peoples made an uproar, and the nations speak vainly? The kings of the earth stand, the leaders have met together, against Hashem and his moshiach: ‘Let us cut their reins and cast off their ropes.’ He Who sits in heaven will laugh, Hashem will mock them. Then He will speak to them in His anger, and in His rage He will confound them: ‘And I appointed My king on Zion, My holy mountain.’” What is the meaning of this last verse and what is its connection with the foregoing verses?

The Alshich explains this based on the Midrash (Bereishis Rabba 44:21), which teaches that Avraham Avinu chose exile for his descendents in order to save them from Gehinom: “Hashem showed Avraham four things: Gehinom, the exiles, the giving of the Torah and the Temple. He said to him, “As long as your descendents are busy with the last two, they will be spared the first two. But if they leave the last two, they will get the first two. [Since the Temple will one day be destroyed, they will have to get one of the punishments.] Which punishment do you choose for them?” Rabbi Chanina bar Papa said: Avraham chose the exiles. Rabbi Yudan, Rabbi Idi and Rabbi Chama bar Chanina said: Avraham chose Gehinom, but Hashem chose for him the exiles...” (See p. 162.)

When Avraham did not let the birds devour the carcasses, i.e. did not let King David destroy the nations, this means that he chose exile for his descendents and therefore the nations had to be in existence in order to carry out the decree of exile.

The Talmud says that Avraham called the Temple a mountain, Yitzchok called it a field, and Yaakov called it a house (Pesachim 88a). The Alshich explains that Avraham spoke about the First Temple, and foresaw that it would be destroyed and become a mere mountain. Yitzchok spoke about the Second Temple and foresaw that it would be plowed over like a field. Yaakov spoke about the Third Temple, which will never be destroyed.

Now we can explain the verse in Tehillim: “And I have appointed My king...” The word is “nasachti” – I appointed as a prince – rather than “himlachti” – I appointed as a king. Hashem is speaking here and explaining why He allowed the nations to make an uproar and speak against the Jewish people. He says: “I took My king, David, and appointed him as a mere prince over his own small kingdom rather than a king over the whole world as he should have been. Why did I do this? “On Zion My holy mountain” - because Zion must be a mountain, as Avraham called it. In other words, the Temple must eventually be destroyed and there must be an exile, when the nations rule over the Jewish people, as Avraham chose. Therefore the nations must remain in the world and David cannot be permitted to subdue them. (Romemos Keil, Tehillim 2)



**וַיֹּאמֶר לְאַבְרָם יָדַע תְּדַע כִּי גֵר יִהְיֶה זְרַעְךָ בְּאֶרֶץ לֹא לָהֶם וְעַבְדוּם וְעָנּוּ אֹתָם  
אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה (טו, יג).**

*And He said to Avraham, “Surely know that your seed will be a stranger in a land not theirs, and they will serve them, and they will afflict them, four hundred years.” (15:13)*

The Rambam writes in his letter to Yemen: The Egyptian exile was foretold

to last 400 years, and yet the way these years were to be counted was unclear. We did not know the end had come until Moshe and Aharon came and said the words ‘pakod pakadti’ which proved that they were the redeemers sent by Hashem. (And the children of Ephraim, who miscalculated the end and did not wait for Moshe and Aharon, were punished. See pp. 78-80.) All the more so in this present exile, which has no foretold number of years, that we cannot claim to know anything about when its end will be until moshiach is revealed.



ותקח שרי אשת אברם את הגר המצרית שפחתה מקץ עשר שנים לשבת אברם בארץ  
כנען ותתן אתה לאברם אישה לו לאשה (טזג).

*After Avram had lived in the Land of Canaan for ten years, Sarai, wife of Avram, took Hagar the Egyptian her handmaid and gave her to Avram her husband as a wife. (16:3)*

The Gemora (Yevamos 64a) explains that this is a reference to the halacha that if a man is married for ten years and has no children, he must marry a different wife in order to fulfill the mitzvah “be fruitful and multiply” (Bereishis 1:28). In connection with this rule, the Midrash tells the following story: Once there was a couple in Sidon who were married for ten years and had no children. They came to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and asked him to arrange a divorce. He said, “By your life, just as you got married with food and drink, so too you will separate with food and drink.” They followed his advice and made a great feast. She induced him to drink too much, and then he said to her, “My daughter, choose whatever good thing of mine you want in the house, take it and go to your father’s house.” After he fell asleep, she told her servants to lift him on a bed and carry him to her father’s house. In the middle of the night he awoke and the drink had worn off. “Where am I, my daughter?” he asked. “In my father’s house,” she said. “What am I doing in your father’s house?” “Didn’t you tell me to choose any good thing I wanted from your house? There is nothing better in the world for me than you!” They went to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, he prayed for them and they were blessed with a child.

The Midrash concludes, “One human being said to another human being, ‘There is nothing better in the world for me than you,’ and then they were answered. Then the Jewish people, who are waiting for the redemption of the Holy One blessed is He every day, and saying, ‘We have no other desire in this world but You,’ all the more so!” (Midrash Rabbah on Shir Hashirim 1:4)

The woman had waited many years to have children and was now ready to give up and go marry someone else. But once she expressed her true thoughts that she wanted nothing other than her husband and she refused to give up, G-d answered her. In the same way, the Jewish people have waited hundreds of years for G-d’s redemption. Now some of them are ready to give up and go look elsewhere for their redemption. In this difficult time we must remain faithful, express our true dedication to G-d and declare that we want no substitute, nothing else but Him. Then and only then will our redemption come.



# Vayeira

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אִם אִמְצָא בְּסֹדֵם חֲמִשִּׁים צְדִיקִים בְּתוֹךְ הָעִיר וּנְשֵׂאתִי לְכָל  
הַמְּקוֹם בְּעִבְרוֹם (יח,כו).

*And Hashem said, "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous people in the midst of the city, then I will forgive the entire place for their sake." (18:26)*

Someone once asked Rabbi Avigdor Miller: "If Hashem was willing to save Sodom if ten good people could be found, or two in each town, then why didn't He save those towns in Europe where at least two or ten righteous people lived?" Rabbi Miller said, "The answer is, you must understand what Hashem and Avraham were arguing about. It states that if there will be found 'ten tzaddikim in the midst of the city' – why doesn't it just say 'in the city'? The answer is, if you have righteous people who are hiding in their houses, they are righteous but nobody knows about them, that wouldn't save them. No. They have to go out in the midst of the city. And they have to fight the city, they have to buck, they have to show opposition to the city, that's 'in the midst of the city.' Like it says, 'And to Jerusalem Your city may You return in mercy, and dwell in its midst as You spoke.' What does it mean, 'in its midst'? It doesn't mean that the Shechina should be there invisible, it's there invisible now, too. The Shechina should show itself. That's what we want, that the Shechina should demonstrate itself. The Shechina should dwell openly in its midst. Now, Hashem said, 'Yes, if you show Me ten people who went out in the street and protested when Sodom made a law against welcoming wayfarers, then I'll save the city for their sake.' Ten people who protest are very hard to find. In Europe you didn't have so many people who would come out and fight openly. You had frum Jews, like we're frum Jews, but we don't fight back. We sit quietly in our shtiblach, in our shuls, we don't fight back. Where's our opposition that we show to the wicked?" (Tape #288)

\* \* \*

On 6 Elul 5717 (1957) the Satmar Rebbe organized a demonstration against religious persecution in Eretz Yisroel, in Union Square in Manhattan. Several days before the demonstration, members of the Agudas Harabbanim came to the Rebbe to convince him to change his mind and not make such a demonstration before the eyes of the gentile world. The Rebbe said, “Look at the Ibn Ezra in Parshas Vayeira. He notes that the Torah says Sodom would be saved for the sake of tzaddikim who are in the midst of the city, and he explains, ‘This means that they fear Hashem in public.’ So we see that the problem in Sodom was that the tzaddikim among them were afraid to publicize their opinions in the streets of the city.” After this the rabbanim had nothing to say, and they left. On the way out, one said to the others, “I can’t believe it! I have been learning the Ibn Ezra for many years, but I forgot about that comment.” (Toros Ve’uvdos Mibeis Raboseinu, p. 27.)



וישכם אברהם בבקר אל המקום אשר עמד שם את פני ה' (יט,כז).

*And Avraham rose early in the morning, to the place where he had stood before Hashem. (19:27)*

The Gemora (Chullin 91b) learns from this verse that a Torah scholar must not go out alone at night, because of the evil spirits. This is why Avraham waited till the morning to go out and pray for the city of Sodom. Tosafos explains, “He went to pray concerning the destruction of Sodom, which took place in the morning, and he should have prayed earlier, at night. But he did not want to go out alone at night. He was going alone to pray for them, and he did not want any person to be present during the prayer.” Why was it so important that no one be present to watch Avraham pray for Sodom? The Satmar Rav explained, “Avraham was going to offer arguments in favor of the wicked people of Sodom. This prayer was directed only at Hashem, but no person was allowed to hear it, lest he think that Avraham’s arguments represented the real truth, and thus be

led astray after the people of Sodom. We see from this a great principle – that in private with the Holy One, blessed is He, everyone is permitted to speak in favor of the wicked, saying that they are much better than the gentiles, and so on. But when speaking to people, Heaven forbid to try to find redeeming qualities in them! Rather, we must expose them and put the blame on them, so that Jews should know to keep far from them.” (Toros V’uvdos Mibeis Raboseinu, p. 25)

It should be noted that even in tefillah, there must be both elements: blaming the wicked, and arguing in their favor. We learn this from the Mechilta in Parshas Bo (brought by Yalkut Shimoni Yirmiyah 325), which contrasts the three prophets Eliyahu, Yonah and Yirmiyah. Eliyahu, when speaking to Hashem, had only bad things to say about the Jewish people (Melachim I 19:10). Therefore Hashem did not want him anymore as a prophet (ibid. verse 16). Yonah went to the other extreme: he was so concerned about the welfare of his people that he refused to obey Hashem’s command. So his career as a prophet was ended as well. “Hashem spoke to Yonah a second time” – but not a third time. But Yirmiyah combined both elements when he said (Eicha 3:42), “We were sinful and rebellious; You did not forgive.” He admitted the sins, but at the same time he argued that Hashem should forgive them.



**ותאמר לאברהם גרש האמה הזאת ואת בנה כי לא יירש בן האמה הזאת עם בני עם יצחק (כא,י).**

*And she said to Avraham, “Send away this maidservant and her child, for the child of this maidservant will not inherit together with my son, with Yitzchak.” (21:10)*

The Chofetz Chaim said: There is no doubt that had Yishmael been brought up together with Yitzchak, he would not have become such a “wild one among men,” for a person’s environment has a great impact on him. But since Yishmael’s company could have been a bad influence on Yitzchak, Sarah decided that the danger to Yitzchak was more important. And who knew if before Yitzchak would

have a chance to make Yishmael better, Yishmael would ruin Yitzchak? So she told Avraham to send Yishmael away, and Hashem told Avraham to follow her counsel. “The actions of the fathers are a sign for the children,” and so we learn from this to keep good children and bad children apart, lest the bad influence the good. “If you pour hot water and cold water together, the hot water gets cooler.” (Chofetz Chaim on the Torah)

In the late 30’s when some proposed that Agudath Israel join the Zionist Vaad Haleumi, Rabbi Elchonon Wasserman wrote a letter against it, in which he quoted his rebbe, the Chofetz Chaim: “As to the suggestion to join the Vaad Haleumi, the law is well known that one may not join such people even for the sake of a mitzvah (Yalkut Shimoni Yehoshua 3, Orchos Tzaddikim Shaar 5), and I have nothing to add to this. But you must tell those who agree to this proposition that they are causing the multitudes to sin and desecrating the Name of Hashem... And if they imagine that their opinions will be given equal weight, this is the counsel of the evil inclination, for we must remember the great difference between the religious and the irreligious: the irreligious are completely irreligious, but the religious are not completely religious, for within every one of us there is a certain amount of irreligiosity – this I heard from the holy author of Chofetz Chaim, of blessed memory – and therefore if the numbers are equal, the decision will always be made in favor of the irreligious.

“I also heard the following [from the Chofetz Chaim]: Chaggai the Prophet tested the kohanim and said, ‘If a man holds holy meat in the corner of his garment and touches bread, soup, wine, oil or any food, will it become holy?’ And they said, no. ‘And if one defiled by a dead body touches any of these, will it become defiled?’ And they said, yes. And Chaggai said, ‘So is this people and so is this nation before me, said Hashem.’ (Chaggai 2:12-14) The Gemora derives many halachos from these verses, but the simple meaning is also true: one who touches the holy does not become holy, but one who touches defilement becomes defiled.

“If the irreligious agree that we should join them, then we must know and understand that they are spreading a net to catch souls, and who is foolish enough to walk into their trap? Certainly if the tzaddik Reb Chaim Zonenfeld were alive now, they would never have made this suggestion, but since we are left orphans,

everyone wants power.

“I remember five years ago the suggestion was made that the Agudah join the [Zionist] Agency, since the heads of the Joint who were supporting all the yeshivos wanted this, and it was hard to say no to them. At that time I heard from the holy [Chofetz Chaim], of blessed memory: ‘Better a third of Torah learning should stop, rather than join them.’” This means that even if most of the yeshivos will have to close down, Heaven forbid, this is not a good enough reason to join them.” (Kovetz Maamarim V’igros, p. 154)



# Chayei Sarah

ויקראו לרבקה ויאמרו אליה התלכי עם האיש הזה ותאמר אלך (כד,נח).

*And they called to Rivkah and said to her, “Will you go with this man?”*

*And she said, “I will go.” (24:58)*

The Midrash (Yalkut Tehillim 795) says that Hashem took Israel out of Egypt as a reward for the deeds of the Imahos: Sarah, Rivka, Rachel and Leah. For each of the Imahos, it mentions a great deed that she did, and when it comes to Rivka, it says because she said, ‘I will go.’ What is the connection between Rivka’s willingness to go to marry Yitzchak and the Exodus from Egypt?

On the words “I will go,” Rashi comments, “On my own, even if you do not want.” Lavan was willing to let Rivka go; he had already told Eliezer, “We cannot speak to you evil or good. Behold, Rivka is before you, take her and go, and let her be a wife to your master’s son, as Hashem spoke.” But Rivka realized that when a wicked man gives something or accomplishes something, he has a certain power over it. When one receives a gift from another, he becomes obliged to the giver. Rivka’s marriage to Yitzchak was destined to give rise to the entire Jewish people. She did not want Lavan to play any role in this great accomplishment. Therefore, she said, “I want to go on my own, even if you don’t want.”

In this vein, we can explain the words at the beginning of the Haggadah, “If the Holy One, blessed is He, had not taken our fathers out of Egypt, we and our children and our children’s children would be enslaved (meshubadim) to Pharaoh in Egypt.” Seemingly, this is obvious – who would have taken us out if not Hashem? But the answer is that after suffering through the first five plagues, Pharaoh would have let the Jewish people go, if Hashem had not hardened his heart during the sixth plague. The reason Hashem hardened his heart is that He

did not want the wicked Pharaoh to have any hand in the great beginning of our holy people. Hashem made sure that we left not through Pharaoh's graciousness, but "with a strong hand," against Pharaoh's will. "If the Holy One, blessed is He, had not taken our fathers out" – i.e. had He allowed Pharaoh to be the one to let us out – then we would be "meshubadim" – obliged, grateful, under the influence of – Pharaoh, even today.

Thus, the Midrash tells us that in reward for Rivka's concern that Lavan not have a hand in creating the Jewish people, Hashem made sure that Pharaoh did not have a hand in the Exodus from Egypt; rather, Hashem Himself took us out with a strong hand. (Divrei Yoel, p. 492)

\* \* \*

Just as a gift from the wicked influences a person to be wicked, a gift from a good person influences a person to be good. Based on this, Rabbi Avigdor Miller once explained the meaning of the verse in Mishlei (15:27), "He who hates gifts will live." The only way to succeed in this world is by exercising one's free will, doing mitzvos and avoiding sins, and thus earning reward in the World to Come. So the essence of life is really free will; without free will, life would have no meaning. When one accepts gifts, even from good people, the gift takes away part of his free will, because he is now under the influence of the giver. So, only someone who hates gifts will have true life. (Tape 59)

\* \* \*

Reb Moshe Shmuel Shapiro relates that when he was young, at one point he was not sure if he should open a yeshiva or become a dayan within the Zionist system. He went to speak to the Brisker Rav, and he found him sitting together with his son Reb Berel. The Brisker Rav told him, "To be a dayan in their system is much worse than taking their money for yeshivos!" "Is there any prohibition to take money from them?" asked Reb Moshe Shmuel. "I'm not saying that it's a prohibition," said the Brisker Rav, "but would you be able to take money for a yeshiva from someone who owns a pork store?" Then he looked at his son and Reb Moshe Shmuel and said, "I promise you that as long as you take money

only from clean sources, you will never lack money.” (Uvdos Vehanhagos Leveis Brisk, v. 2 p. 181)

\* \* \*

Reb Dovid Soloveitchik later expressed his father's position in another way: How can one take money for the support of Torah from those who are trying to destroy Torah? Chazal say, "One who causes another to sin is worse than one who kills him." (Sifri quoted by Rashi, Devarim 23:9) If Hitler, yimach shmo, had proposed to support the yeshivos at the same time that he was murdering the Jews of Europe, would they have accepted it? ("Today, maybe they would..." he added.) So why is this any different? The Zionists are working as hard as they can to destroy whatever remains of Torah-observant Jewry. (ibid. p. 179)

\* \* \*

The Poneveczer Rav built many yeshivos using money from the Zionist government. Every time he made a gathering to celebrate the laying of the cornerstone of one of his buildings, a small group of Neturei Karta members would attend, holding signs saying that they protested against the acceptance of the money. Their protests often disturbed the festivities. Someone asked the Poneveczer Rav, "Why don't you do something about it? Make sure they don't come!" "If they wouldn't come on their own," answered the Poneveczcer Rav, "I would pay them to come! I want everyone to know that what I'm doing is only bedieved - not the right way to do things, but necessary because of the difficulty of the times."

\* \* \*

The Midrash (introduction to Esther, based on a rule mentioned in the Gemora, Megillah 10b) says that the words, "And it came to pass in the time of Achaz..." (Yishaya 7:1) indicate that a tragedy is about to be described. What was it? Aram was in front and the Phillistines behind (ibid. 9:11). The wicked king Achaz hated the Torah and its scholars, continues the Midrash, but he was afraid to kill them directly, so he reasoned, "If there are no kids, there will be no

goats. If there are no goats, there will be no flock. If there is no flock, there will be no shepherd. So too, if there are no students, there will be no Torah scholars. If there are no scholars, there will be no elders. If there are no elders, there will be no Torah, no shuls and houses of study, and Hashem will not cause His presence to rest in the world.” He went and closed all the shuls and houses of study, so that no one should study Torah. Rav Huna in the name of Rabbi Elazar said, Why was he named “Achaz?” Because he held onto the shuls and houses of study.

Rabbi Yosef Chaim Zonenfeld asked, doesn't the word achaz (held onto) sound like a positive word, that he supported the houses of study? He answered that yes, Achaz supported the houses of study, because he wanted them to become dependent on him so that he could control them and force them to follow his ideas. His cold calculation told him that power over all of the Jewish people begins with control of the yeshivos. This is what Chazal say in the continuation of that Midrash, “Once he supported the shuls and houses of study, everyone began to cry out, Woe!” The Jewish people knew that such crafty support, designed to exert control, is reason not to rejoice but to cry out. Furthermore, said Reb Yosef Chaim, look how the Midrash begins. Before it starts telling about Achaz's plot to uproot Torah, it says, “Aram was in front and the Phillistines behind.” What is the connection between this and Achaz's plans? The answer is, he said, that Achaz convinced the yeshivos to accept his support by telling them of the dangers the kingdom faced from Aram and the Phillistines. Now is not the time for lofty ideological refusals to take money from an anti-religious government. We are in danger! Accept my leadership for now so that we can face the common enemy. Reb Yosef Chaim concluded: Let us not repeat the mistake of the yeshivos in the time of Achaz. (Chochmas Chaim, p. 29)



# Toldos

ויעקב נתן לעשו לחם ונזיד עדשים ויאכל וישת ויקם וילך ויבז עשו את  
הבכרה (כה, לד).

*And Yaakov gave to Esav bread and lentil soup, and he ate and drank,  
and arose and left; and Esav despised the birthright. (25:34)*

The Brisker Rav once said to Reb Zalman Sorotzkin, “Why does the Torah say, ‘And Esav despised the birthright,’ implying that that was his main sin? The Gemora (Bava Basra 16b) says that he committed five sins that day: he violated a betrothed girl, he murdered, he denied the revival of the dead, he denied Hashem, and he despised the birthright. How could despising the birthright be considered the worst of those sins? The answer is that it is understandable that a person can stumble in sin. But to sell a birthright for lentil soup – that shows that all service of Hashem is worth nothing to him. The same is true of Zionism and the State. The Jewish people has lived throughout history relying on the promise of Hashem through true and just prophets, and on their faith in the coming of moshiach and the open miracles that will take place then. The founding of the state came to destroy all of that, like lentil soup in place of the birthright. There is no other sin like it!” (Teshuvos Vehanhagos, v. 2, siman 140)



ויעתק משם ויחפר באר אחרת ולא רבו עליה ויקרא שמה רחבות ויאמר כי  
עתה הרחיב ה' לנו ופרינו בארץ (כו, כב).

*He called its name Rechovos, and said, “For now Hashem has made  
space for us, and we will be fruitful in the land.” (26:22)*

The Kli Yakar explains that the three wells dug by Yitzchak Avinu symbolize the First, Second and Third Temples. In accordance with the principle that “the actions of the fathers are a sign for their descendants, he explains that the first well, about which the Torah tells that “the shepherds of Gerar fought with the shepherds of Yitzchak,” corresponds to the First Temple, which was destroyed because of the struggle between the “shepherds” of the Jewish people – the kings of Yehuda and the kings of the Ten Tribes. The second well was called simply “Sitnah” – opposition – and it corresponds to the Second Temple, which was destroyed because of causeless hatred among all the people, not only the leaders. The third well, called “Rechovos,” corresponds to the Third Temple and the Days of Moshiach, when there will be perfect peace and the Jewish people will be able to spread out in the Holy Land. This, says the Kli Yakar, is in contrast to the Second Temple era, when “due to the fighting, many good people left the Land because of the evil of its inhabitants. The Torah therefore says that when peace is achieved, we will be fruitful in the land, and we will not have to leave it.”

\* \* \*

When the Brisker Rav came to Eretz Yisroel [in 1941] they asked him if he planned to go back or to stay. He replied, “Do I plan to go back?? I plan to run away!!”

After the Brisker Rav came to Eretz Yisroel someone remarked to him, “The Rav is certainly happy now that he merited to fulfill the mitzvah of living in Eretz Yisroel.” He replied, “If not for the great destruction that the Germans, yimach shmam, have brought on the Jews of Europe, I would have stayed there until the coming of Moshiach. I had no specific desire to come to Eretz Yisroel. Only need and desperation brought me here.”

Reb Yaakov Rosenheim visited the Brisker Rov and discussed with him the situation in Eretz Yisroel. The Brisker Rov said that one must leave the State because it is a place of danger. “Isn’t there a mitzvah to live in Eretz Yisroel today?” asked Rosenheim. “There definitely is, but from such a state one must flee,” said the Brisker Rov. He then quoted the Rambam in Hilchos Deos (6:1): “The nature of man is that his character traits and actions are influenced by his neighbors, friends and the people of his country. Therefore... if one is in a

country whose practices are bad, and whose citizens do not walk in the straight path, he should go to a place whose residents are righteous and follow proper practices.”

Rabbi Ahron Katzenellenbogen once related in a speech, “The Brisker Rov said that the Zionist State was the most dangerous place for Jews, both physically and spiritually. I asked him, ‘If so, perhaps we should go and live outside Eretz Yisroel.’ He replied, ‘Yes, according to halacha perhaps we are obligated to do that. But since there is no place as good as Yerushalayim for the proper Jewish education of boys and girls, for it is the only place in the world where there are no secular studies, we must be moser nefesh for the education of our children, and Hashem will help us.’” (Uvdos Vehanagos Leveis Brisk, v. 4 p. 207-8)

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Rabbi Pinchas Biberfeld, rov of Munich, said to the Brisker Rov, “The Gemora says - and the Rambam codifies it as halacha – that a person should rather live in Eretz Yisroel, even in a city of mostly gentiles, than in the Diaspora, even in a city of mostly Jews.” The Brisker Rov replied, “It says a city of mostly gentiles, not a city of mostly heretics!” (ibid. v. 2, p. 189)

\* \* \*

The Satmar Rav said, “The Gemora (Kesubos 111a) says that if the Jewish people violates the Oaths and conquers the Holy Land before the proper time, Hashem will permit their flesh like the deer and the hinds of the field. A person who lives in Eretz Yisroel nowadays should recite the blessing “Hagomel” every single day, to thank Hashem that he woke up alive and did not see the fulfillment of this terrible curse!”

\* \* \*

During the War of Independence, when there were many casualties, one of the Zionist leaders visited the Brisker Rov. The Brisker Rov rebuked him, crying that the number of Jews dead had reached twenty thousand, and no one seemed

to care. The Zionist replied that the number was only ten thousand. “And ten thousand dead is nothing?!” said the Brisker Rov. “Nu, birthpangs,” said the Zionist. (Uvdos Vehanhagos, v. 4 p. 191)

(The number of Jews killed in all the Zionist wars should be noted: In 1948, 20,000. Between 1949 and 1956, 1,300. In 1956, 171. In 1967, 600. In the War of Attrition (1970), 900. In 1973, 2,500. In 1983, 2,000. In the violence since the year 2000, about 1,000. The total is more than 28,000.)

\* \* \*

Rabbi Meir Berlin, a Mizrachi leader, related that his nephew Reb Chaim of Brisk once said, “The Zionists attract Jews to their movement by dressing it up as ‘the mitzvah of settling in Eretz Yisroel.’ Eretz Yisroel is indeed the Holy Land. But consider: a synagogue is a holy place; nevertheless if it is a Reform synagogue, it is forbidden to go inside. Who knows if it will not come to the point where, despite its holiness, Eretz Yisroel will be ‘reformed’?” (Uvdos Vehanhagos, v. 4 p. 206)



# Vayeitzei

ויהי בבקר והנה היא לאה ויאמר אל לבן מה זאת עשית לי הלא ברחל  
עבדתי עמך ולמה רמיתני. ויאמר לבן לא יעשה כן במקומנו לתת הצעירה  
לפני הבכירה (כט, כה-כו).

*And in the morning, behold, it was Leah, and he said to Lavan, “What have you done to me? Did I not work for you for Rochel? Why did you trick me?” And Lavan said, “It is not done so in our place, to give the younger before the elder.” (29: 25-26)*

Earlier (29:12) Rashi tells us that Yaakov Avinu said, “If he is a swindler, I am his brother – his equal - in swindling.” But it seems that in the end Yaakov did allow Lavan to trick him, and not only that, he let him off easy. He should have demanded Rochel for free, but instead he asked Lavan why had he tricked him, accepted his reply, and agreed to work an extra seven years for Rochel. Rabbi Gershon Ribner explained that Yaakov, in his great wisdom, saw that the wicked Lavan wanted to be one of the Avos of the Jewish people, alongside Avraham and Yitzchak. Yaakov knew that Lavan’s influence would have had a devastating effect on his descendants forever. In order to swindle Lavan out of that role, Yaakov on his own proposed to work seven long, hard years in exchange for Rochel. Thus she would be “sold” to him (31:15) and Lavan would have no part in the building of the Twelve Shevatim. On the morning after the wedding, when Yaakov realized he had to marry Leah as well, he knew that he could not ask for two wives for the price of one, because then Lavan would again be giving something for free, and he would have a part in the Jewish people. So he gave Lavan the opportunity to justify himself – to say that we do not marry off the younger daughter first - and willingly worked another seven years.

Later, when Hashem commanded Yaakov to leave Lavan’s house, he called

his wives and explained to them that he had worked with all his might for Lavan, Lavan had tricked him many times, and only with Hashem's help he had succeeded. His wives replied with similar words, "Do we have any portion anymore in our father's house? Weren't we considered by him as strangers, for he sold us?" (31:14-15). If Hashem commanded them to leave, why did they seek rationalizations? The answer is that if they had just left without understanding why, they would still have felt connected to Lavan, as if their Twelve Shevatim were built on Lavan's generosity. Yaakov had to make them understand that Lavan had contributed nothing to the family. May we learn to emulate Yaakov Avinu and not allow the wicked to have a share in building Klal Yisroel!



**וירא יעקב את פני לבן והנה איננו עמו כתמול שלשום. ויאמר ה' אל יעקב  
שוב אל ארץ אבותיך ולמולדתך ואהיה עמך (לא,ב-ג).**

*And Yaakov saw the face of Lavan, and behold it was not with him as in previous days. And Hashem said to Yaakov, "Go back to the land of your fathers and your birthplace, and I will be with you." (31:2-3)*

Why does the Torah place these two sentences side by side? Rabbi Shlomo Kluger explained: We find that when a tzaddik joins a rasha, Hashem causes him to fail, as the prophet told Yehoshafat, "When you joined Achazyahu, Hashem ruined your endeavors." (Divrei Hayamim II 20:37) If so, we can infer that when a tzaddik separates from a rasha, he will become greater and more successful. This is all the more so because of the principle that reward is always greater than punishment (Rashi on Shemos 20:6). One instance of this is Avraham's separation from Lot. The Torah says (Bereishis 13:14), "And Hashem said to Avraham after Lot had separated from him..." Avraham was privileged to hear the words of Hashem only after he parted with Lot.

Here too, Hashem spoke to Yaakov only after he saw that Lavan's face was not with him as in previous days. Afterwards (31:5), Yaakov spoke to Rochel and Leah, to convince them that their father was wicked and it was not worth staying

with him any longer. He said, “I see the face of your father, that it is not towards me as in previous days, and the G-d of my father has been with me.” In other words, your father must be a wicked man, for as soon as he ceased to be friendly with me, Hashem spoke to me. (Tuv Hapninim, p. 184)



ויען יעקב ויאמר ללבן כי יראתי כי אמרתי פן תגזל את בנותיך מעמי  
(לא, לא).

*And Yaakov answered and said to Lavan, “Because I was afraid, because I said, lest you steal your daughters from me.” (31:31)*

The words “because I was afraid, because I said,” seem to be repetitious. Yaakov could have said, “Because I was afraid lest you steal...” or “Because I said, lest you steal” – but why did he need to say both? The Satmar Rav explained: we know that it is forbidden to live with a wicked person, for Chazal say (Succah 56b), “Woe to the rasha, woe to his neighbor.” So when Lavan asked Yaakov, “Why did you run away secretly?” Yaakov should have replied honestly, in accordance with his attribute of truth: “Because it is forbidden to live with you.” But like most good people when confronted by the wicked, Yaakov was embarrassed to speak so boldly. He instead looked for another, less offensive justification for running away from Lavan – lest Lavan steal his wives. But at the same time, Yaakov knew this was not really the right way to speak, and he feared that Hashem would punish him for hiding the truth. For when one speaks against the wicked using secondary reasons, neglecting to say openly the main reason, the end will be that someone will be misled, thinking that when those secondary reasons are not present, there is no longer a problem. This is what Yaakov meant when he said, “I was afraid” of being punished “because I said, lest you steal your daughters” – I am afraid of being punished for not saying the whole truth. (Toros V’uvdos Mibeis Raboseinu, p. 64)

At the time of the establishment of the Zionist state, talmidim asked the Brisker Rav, “Should we stress the fact that the leaders of the State are wicked people whose whole purpose is to uproot Torah, or should we stress the serious prohibition of establishing any Jewish state at all before the coming of Moshiach and the Sanhedrin in the hewn chamber?” He replied that they should stress the prohibition of establishing any Jewish state, lest anyone think that if the state were run according to Shulchan Aruch it would be permitted to establish it.

The Brisker Rav once said to Rabbi Amram Blau, “We must stress that the problem with the State is not just the chillul Shabbos and other aveiros that they do. For even if you would be the prime minister, it would be forbidden to establish the State.” (Uvdos Vehanhagos Leveis Brisk, p. 196)

Once activists who were working for the observance of Shabbos in the Zionist state came to discuss an issue with the Brisker Rav. He said to them, “You are happy with the state; you see it as an achievement and a place of refuge for the Jewish people. Only, you want to make it better, that it should at least have a religious character. But in my book the whole thing is wrong. When it comes to pork, it makes no difference if there is a lesion on the lungs or not!” (ibid. p. 198)

He was referring to the story of the girl who became fatally ill, and the doctors said the only cure was to eat the meat of a pig. She was a very religious girl, however, and she said to her father, “I would rather die than eat from a pig!” Her father brought her to the rav of the town, who explained to her that when a life is in danger, the laws of the Torah are pushed aside. Finally she relented, but said to the rav, “There is one thing that would make me feel a little better about this. Please ask the shochet to slaughter the pig according to the laws of shechitah.” The rav was surprised at this request, but promised to fulfill it. So the shochet slaughtered the pig, and then the girl asked him to examine the lungs. He found a questionable lesion on the lung, and he sent it to the rav for his ruling. The rav looked it over for a long time, and then said, “I don’t know what to say. If this question had been found on a kosher animal, I would not hesitate to say, ‘Kosher, kosher.’ But how can I say the word ‘kosher’ when the animal is a pig? No matter what reasons I can think of to permit it, a pig remains a pig.” (My Uncle The Netziv, p. 130)

# Vayishlach

ויירא יעקב מאד ויצר לו ויחץ את העם אשר אתו ואת הצאן ואת הבקר  
והגמלים לשני מחנות (לב,ח).

*And Yaakov was very afraid, and he was in distress; and he divided the people who were with him, the sheep, the cattle and the camels into two camps. (32:8)*

This passage is a guideline for all generations, because everything that happened to Yaakov Avinu with his brother Esav happens to us continually with Esav's descendants. We must therefore adopt the righteous Yaakov's approach, to prepare ourselves in three ways: tefillah, gifts, and saving ourselves by way of war – to flee to safety. (Ramban)

We must follow in the footsteps of the Avos and prepare ourselves to approach the gentiles with gifts, with soft speech and with prayer before Hashem. But war is impossible, for it is written (Shir Hashirim 2:7), "I adjured you, daughters of Jerusalem..." Hashem made the Jewish people swear not to wage wars against the nations. (Rabbeinu Bachya)

Just as Yaakov used prayer, gifts and war, so do we approach Esav's descendants in our times. Our power is only through our mouth, to pray to Hashem in difficult times. But war – to fight with the nations – does not apply to us. Our "war" with them means activism – that Jewish activists must boldly face kings and leaders and work for the good of the Jewish people. Even if the leaders throw them out angrily, they must keep coming back; this is our pillar of existence in exile, until Moshiach comes. (Shelah)



וַיֹּאמֶר אִם יָבוֹא עֲשׂוֹ אֶל הַמַּחֲנֶה הָאֶחָד וְהִכּוּ וְהָיָה הַמַּחֲנֶה הַנּוֹשָׂאֵר לְפָלִיטָה  
(לב,ט).

*And he said, "If Esav comes and attacks one camp, the remaining camp will escape." (32:9)*

This passage foretells that Esav will never completely wipe us out; rather they will do evil to some of us in some of their lands. One of their kings will make a decree against us or our property in his land, while another king will have mercy on us and save the refugees. (Ramban)

The Holy One, blessed is He, did kindness with the Jewish people when He scattered them among the nations. Once a gentile said to Rabbi Chanina, "We are better people than you. For in your days of power, King David's general Yoav wiped out the Edomites. But now you are living under our empire for many years, and we have done nothing to harm you." Rabbi Chanina said, "One of my students will give you a reply." Rabbi Oshaya told him, "You want to kill us, but you don't know how to do it. You can't kill us all, because not all Jews live under your empire. And if you kill only the Jews in your domain, the rest will make you famous as a murderous kingdom." He said, "By the wall of Rome, these are our thoughts always." (Pesachim 87b)

Once there was a wicked man who wanted to take revenge on his enemy by burning down his house and property, and he hired a clever criminal to carry out the plan. The criminal came to the man's house one night, pretending to be a wayfarer seeking a place to stay. The kind-hearted man gave him a room to sleep in. In the middle of the night, when he was sure that the family was asleep, he set the house on fire and then went back to his bed. When the flames began to consume the house, the host and his family woke up and tried to save whatever they could. But they were in such a panic that they didn't know what to do first. The criminal pretended to wake up, and rushed to help the family save their property. Since he was not in a panic – everything was going according to plans – he was able to do a better job saving property than the host himself. The next

morning the host told his friends about his great loss, and added, "But thanks to my mitzvah of taking in a guest, some things were saved." They asked him who the guest was, and when he described him, the friends said, "That man is a criminal! If not for him, you would not have had any fire at all! Beware of him, don't let him near you again, or it may cost you your life next time!"

This parable depicts the role of the Zionists in the safety of the Jewish people. Yaakov Avinu promised us that if we spread out among the nations, some of us will always be safe. But the Zionists made sure that Jews around the world have no rest. Countries expelled their Jews and closed their doors to Jews, saying that the Jews already have their own state to live in. Then the Zionists took in those Jews, saying that they were "saving" them. In Eretz Yisroel itself in the pre-war years, many more Jews would have been granted refuge, were it not for the Zionists. The Arabs saw that the Zionists were planing to take over their country, so they exerted pressure on the British to limit immigration. If the Jews had had no political aspirations, the British would have allowed much more immigration. (Vayoel Moshe 1:111)

The State of Israel solves nothing. All "problems" remain the same, and new ones are created: 1) The Arabian lands have been rendered uninhabitable for Jews; 2) constant wars with neighbors must be waged, incurring huge military expenditures and loss of many lives, in addition to constant peril; 3) it has exacerbated Jew-hatred in the nations, due to Arab influence and also to embroilment with the foreign policy of the nations; 4) and the proponents of the State of Israel attempt to kindle a fire under the Jews in all lands in order to make their position untenable so that they emigrate to augment the population of the new State. (Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Sing You Righteous, p. 25)



וירץ עשו לקראתו ויחבקהו ויפל על צואריו וישקהו ויבכו (לג,ד).

*And Esav ran toward him and hugged him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they cried. (33:4)*

Esav and his army had been coming to attack Yaakov, but now his heart was turned around in a moment because of Yaakov's subservience. Yaakov taught us a lesson here, to be used in all generations: that we will escape Esav's sword through subservience and gifts. The Gemora (Gittin 56a) relates that during the Roman siege of Jerusalem, there were militant elements among the Jews. The Rabbis said to them, "Let us go out and make peace with the Romans." The militants did not let them; instead they said, "Let us go out and make war with them." The Rabbis said to them, "It will not be successful." Had the militants listened to the Rabbis and followed in the footsteps of Yaakov Avinu, our Temple would not have been destroyed. (Seforno)

Reb Shmelka of Selish was once traveling with his student Reb Moshe Jungreis. The town of Selish was at the base of the Carpathian Mountains, and they passed through a certain forest. Usually Reb Shmelka was careful never to whip his horses, because he held this to be a violation of the prohibition on causing pain to an animal. On the uphill sections of road, he would get off the wagon and walk to make it easier for the horses. But as they passed through this forest, he told the wagon driver to whip the horses and make them go as fast as possible, until they were out of the forest. Then he began breathing deeply and heavily. "Why is the Rebbe so out of breath?" asked Reb Moshe. "Don't you know what was in that place we just passed?" said Reb Shmelka. "No," replied the student, "I saw nothing more than mountains and hills." Reb Shmelka then told him: "You must know that the forest through which we just passed was full of souls of the zealots from the time of the destruction of the Second Temple, who refused to listen to the Sages who told them to surrender to the Romans. They fought until the bitter end, thus causing the destruction of the Temple and the exile of Israel. To this very day, their souls have not been repaired. Therefore I told the wagon driver to drive fast, because it was a place of impurity and I could not stand the air there.

"And I heard the souls begging the Holy One, blessed is He, to let them come into the world again in order to rectify themselves. The reply was, 'I know that you will not do any better the second time, but since everyone is given free will, I am giving you the opportunity.' Reb Moshe, you must know that in forty years from now, they will come into the world again. You will be a rav then, and you must act wisely."

Later Reb Moshe Jungreis became rav of Kasho, and he told his congregation to notify him in advance when any public gathering was to take place. Once a group of Jews came to Kasho to raise money for a fund to buy land in Eretz Yisroel, which was then ruled by the Turks. The leaders of the congregation told them, “We cannot do anything without the rav’s approval.” They told the rav, and he immediately remembered what his rebbe had told him. He checked his records and found that it had been exactly forty years since that day. “No!” he said to the leaders of the congregation. “Heaven forbid to join them! We must keep the Rabbi Meir Baal Hanes collection boxes and send our money to the kollelim of Jerusalem.” And with that, he expelled the new group from the city. (Mishkenos Haro’im p. 193)



# Vayeishev

וישנאו אותו ולא יכלו דברו לשלם (לז,ד).

*And they hated him, and could not speak to him peacefully. (37:4)*

The Chasam Sofer writes that the words could be read differently: “lo yachlu” – they could not stand – “dabro leshalom” – that Yosef spoke to them peacefully. Yosef had been telling their father about aveiros they had done. “If we are really bad,” said the brothers, “then why are you talking peacefully to us? You should hate us – it is a mitzvah to hate resha’im (Pesachim 113b). Your talking peacefully to us is an aveirah, according to your own line of thought. So we have a right to hate you for this aveirah.”



ויאמר יהודה אל אחיו מה בצע כי נהרג את אחינו וכסינו את דמו, לכו  
ונמכרנו לישמעאלים וגו' (לז,כו-כז).

*And Yehuda said to his brothers, "What gain is there if we kill our brother and cover his blood? Let us sell him to the Ishmaelites..."*  
(37:26)

The Torah makes it sound as though Yosef's brothers wanted to make money by selling him. The brothers were great tzaddikim, and however we explain their decision to get rid of Yosef, monetary gain was certainly not a factor! The Satmar Rav explained that Yehuda was speaking prophetically about the money the Jewish people would take with them upon leaving Egypt. The Egyptians

were wicked and their land was a place of great spiritual defilement, so their money would surely have a negative effect on the Jewish people. Yehuda said, “What gain is there?” and the Targum translates, “What money will we benefit?” What benefit will we have from the Egyptians’ money? Let us rather sell Yosef down to Egypt, and he will purify their money. During the years of famine, Yosef collected all the money in Egypt (47:14), and with his great kedusha was able to make it clean. Thus when the Jewish people left, they were able to take the money without any negative consequences. (Toros V’uvdos Mibeis Raboseinu, p. 75)



ויהי אחר הדברים האלה ותשא אשת אדניו את עיניה אל יוסף ותאמר  
שכבה עמי (לט,ז).

*And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife lifted up  
her eyes to Yosef... (39:7)*

Rashi says (39:1) that the Torah places the story of Tamar and the story of Potiphar’s wife side by side in order to teach us that just as Tamar had good intentions, so too Potiphar’s wife had good intentions: she saw through astrology that she would have children from Yosef, but she was not sure if it would be through herself or through her daughter. We must ask: the prohibition on adultery is among the Seven Mitzvos of the Bnei Noach, so how could one say that she had “good intentions”? Seeing the future through astrology does not give a person the right to transgress. And maybe the vision would be fulfilled through her daughter, involving no transgression! The Satmar Rav explained that in fact, Potiphar’s wife was wicked and wanted to do the aveirah. But she knew that Yosef Hatzaddik would never agree, so she came to him with a justification of “lesheim shomayim.” (The exact wording of the Midrash quoted by Rashi is, “Af zu lesheim shomayim” – this one also for the sake of Heaven. It does not say “this one also had intentions for the sake of Heaven” so it could mean merely that when speaking to Yosef, she claimed to be acting for lesheim shomayim.) Still, even these lofty reasons did not convince Yosef; he knew that a vision of the

future does not give one the right to do an aveirah. (Divrei Yoel, v. 2 p. 235)

When the Zionists campaigned in the United Nations for permission to establish their state, the Agudath Israel lay leaders worked alongside them. The Brisker Rav, fearing the great bloodshed the state would bring about, tried to dissuade them from these diplomatic missions. “But,” someone said to the Brisker Rav, “it says in the works of Kabbalah that before the coming of moshiach there will be a government in the hands of the eirev rav.” “I don’t believe that,” said the Brisker Rav. The man persisted, “The words of the prophets, too, contain a hint that the Land will be partitioned and governed by a Jewish government before the coming of moshiach.” The Brisker Rav replied, “The Gemora states explicitly that even when something is foretold by prophecy, it is forbidden to violate the law of the Torah. It says in Berachos 10a that Chizkiyahu foresaw that he would have wicked children, and because of this he refrained from having children. Why? If he saw prophetically that he would have children, it would happen no matter what, so why did he try to avoid it? The answer is, since - according to what Chizkiyahu held - it was forbidden to bring bad children into the world, he was obligated to make all efforts to avoid doing it, despite the knowledge that his efforts would fail and the children would be born anyway. So too here, it is forbidden to found a state, for it will cause bloodshed. Even if the prophets say it will happen anyway, it is forbidden for us to help.”

The Brisker Rav gave another example to illustrate this point: “The Rambam writes that we can see the hand of Hashem even in the spreading of the major religions of the gentiles. These religions serve to prepare the world for the Days of Moshiach, by bringing belief in Hashem and the Torah – albeit in a corrupted form - to the whole world. Does that mean that we should go and help spread these religions?” (Teshuvos Vehanhagos v. 2, siman 140)

\* \* \*

Rabbi Yisroel Salanter said: Sometimes a person wants to do something he knows is against the Torah, because he says it will bring a great spiritual benefit – it will save Yiddishkeit. But consider the following parable: A king once sent his minister to meet with the king of another country. Before he left, the king warned him, “If the ministers of that country make a bet with you, do not accept it!” He warned him again, and a third time, “Whatever you do, do not make any bets

with them!” So the minister went and completed his mission, and when he was about to leave, they said to him, “You are a hunchback, aren’t you?” “That’s not true,” he said. “We’ll bet you a million silver pieces,” they said. He remembered the king’s warning, but said to himself, “This is a bet I can’t lose. Why shouldn’t I accept and gain a million silver pieces for the king’s treasury?” He accepted the bet; they took off his clothes and saw that he was not a hunchback. They paid him the million pieces, and he went home satisfied that he had done a good thing. When he told the story to the king, the king said, “When I warned you not to bet, I knew what I was talking about. The ministers of that country bet me 100 million silver pieces that they could make my minister take off his clothes. Now you have brought me a million, but I am losing 99 million!” Here too – said Reb Yisroel – if someone thinks that doing something the Torah prohibited will bring a great benefit, then we must tell him: That benefit that you see, the Torah also saw, and yet the Torah prohibited it. Obviously, the end result will not be benefit, but damage. (Kovetz Maamarim, p. 128)



# Mikeitz

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲבִיהֶם אִם כֵּן אֲפֹא זֹאת עֲשׂוּ קַחוּ מִזְמַרְת הָאָרֶץ  
 בְּכִלְיִכֶם וְהוֹרִידוּ לְאִישׁ מִנְחָה מֵעֵט צְרִי וּמֵעֵט דְּבַשׁ נִכְאֵת וְלֵט בִּטְנִים  
 וּשְׂקָדִים וְגו' וְאֶל-שׂ-דִי יִתֵּן לָכֶם רַחֲמִים לִפְנֵי הָאִישׁ וְגו' (מג,יא-יד).

*And Yisroel their father said to them, "If so, do as follows: Take from the best of the land in your vessels, and bring the man a gift: a bit of balsam and a bit of honey, wax and lotus, pistachios and almonds... And may G-d Almighty cause the man to be merciful to you..." (43:11)*

The Rogachover Gaon explained that here Yaakov Avinu faced danger from a gentile power (or so he thought), just as he had faced Esav and his army. Just as he had met Esav's challenge with a gift and a prayer, so too here he used a gift and a prayer. But he did not use war, because he wished to teach a lesson to his descendants not to fight wars during the exile, as it states in Kesubos 111a: "He adjured them not to rebel against the nations." (Tzofnas Paneach)

In 1904, when the Zionist movement was new, many rabbanim wrote to the Rogachover Gaon asking his opinion of the matter. Here is his response:

"These wicked men offend the angels of G-d, distort the promises of the prophets and despise the warnings of Chazal not to force the end, and to wait for the coming of the righteous redeemer. They turn after their hearts and after their eyes. In vain do they profess to burn with the love of Israel and love of the Holy Land. They think that they can be wiser than their predecessors.

"Heaven forbid that we should throw off the yoke of exile from upon our necks through violence, hard work, entreaties or plans. We must pay attention and understand the extent of the folly of these men who are wise in evil, to

whom it has not occurred that if we conquer the Land before the coming of the king of peace, grievous wars will follow and one people will gore another. One Jewish life is worth more than the Land, and anyone who destroys one soul in Israel is as if he had destroyed the whole world.

“I will therefore take my life in my hand and proclaim that until the promised messiah comes and the Holy One, blessed is He, blows the great trumpet to proclaim our freedom, we have no right to rule in the Land, and that Zionism’s aspiration for governmental power is a rebellion against the peoples who dwell in the Land. Heaven forbid that we should test Hashem and fight with Him concerning the length of the exile, and come as masters into the Land.

“Because of the Zionists, the exile will be prolonged and there will arise – Heaven forbid – many calamities. There can be no harm greater than to arouse conflicts with the nations, and to make Israel feared as a source of revolt since [the Zionists portray us as] a people bitter of heart on account of its exile.” (The Transformation, p. 196)



# Chanukah

מסרת גבורים ביד חלשים ורבים ביד מעטים וטמאים ביד טהורים ורשעים  
ביד צדיקים וזדים ביד עוסקי תורתך (על הנסים).

*You delivered the mighty into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of the few, the unclean into the hands of the clean, the wicked into the hands of the righteous, and the deliberate sinners into the hands of those who studied Your Torah. (Al Hanisim)*

Why do we repeat the same thing in so many different words? Doesn't everyone know that the Greeks were unclean, wicked and sinners, and the Chashmonaim were clean, righteous and studied the Torah? The answer is that the power of the miracle of Chanukah extends to all future generations – that whenever there is a battle between the clean and the unclean, or any of the particular descriptions mentioned in Al Hanisim, the spiritual power of Chanukah is aroused in heaven and the good side wins. The battle between the Chashmonaim and the Greeks had all of the above characteristics, but even in a future battle of one kind alone, the good side prevails.

The word “zeidim” – deliberate sinners – means those Jews who joined the Greek side and fought in favor of assimilation. Since many of them were Torah scholars who should have known better, they are called “zeidim,” as Chazal say that the sins of a scholar, even when due to a mistake in understanding the Torah, are considered like purposeful sins – he should have studied the Torah more carefully. They were delivered into the hands of the “oskei sorasecha” – those who studied the Torah properly and reached the truth. And the miracle extends even to our times, that those Jews who know the Torah well and yet use their knowledge to pervert its true meaning and “declare the reptile clean” will eventually be defeated by those who seek the truth in Torah. (Satmar Rav,

Chiddushei Torah p. 24)



מאי חנוכה וכו' שכשנכנסו יונים להיכל טמאו כל השמנים שבהיכל וכו'  
(שבת כ"א ע"ב).

*What is Chanukah? ...When the Greeks entered the Sanctuary, they rendered all the oil unclean... (Shabbos 21b)*

The laws of Chanukah are not written in the Mishnah, and even here, where the Gemora tells the story behind Chanukah, it only mentions the miracle of the one jar of oil that burned eight days. It completely leaves out the story of the miraculous battles of Matisyahu and his sons, in which a few Jews drove off the entire Syrian Greek army. The books of the Chashmonaim, which tell these stories in detail, were excluded from Jewish literature by our Sages. The central mitzvah of Chanukah, the lighting of the menorah, is a memorial to the miracle of the oil, not the wars. Why did Chazal gloss over the great miracle of “the many into the hands of the few”?

Chazal foresaw that the Temple would eventually be destroyed and the Jews would go into exile. During the exile, Jews are forbidden to wage wars; they are adjured to wait peacefully until G-d brings the exile to a miraculous end. The Sages feared that if too much stress were put on the wars, Jews in exile might be led to consider the idea of war as a means to redeem themselves.

In a similar vein, we can explain a comment of Rashi earlier, in Parshas Vayishlach (32:8). The Torah says, “And Yaakov was very afraid, and he was in distress,” and Rashi explains that he was afraid lest he be killed, and in distress lest he kill others. Yaakov Avinu knew that if Esav tried to kill him, it would be perfectly permitted to kill Esav first. But he was in distress because he knew that his descendants would one day be in exile, and then it would be forbidden for them to fight the gentile nations. If he were to kill Esav now, perhaps his descendants would learn from him that fighting is a valid option. (Divrei Yoel

Chanukah, p. 444)

We may add that it is possible that the Sages intended the menorah itself as a reminder that the Jews' redemption from exile will come in a miraculous way, not through human effort. The source for this symbolism is in the book of Zechariah (4:6), read as the haftarah for Shabbos Chanukah. Zechariah was shown a prophetic vision of a menorah. He asked an angel what the vision meant, and the angel replied, "This is the word of the Hashem to Zerubavel, saying: Not by might, and not by power, but by My spirit, said Hashem Tzevakos."

\* \* \*

On Chanukah we thank Hashem for the "wars He made for our forefathers in those days." Matisyahu with his tiny army of faithful Jews were miraculously able to drive away the entire Syrian Greek army. But what motivated them to go to war? Many Jews today, even religious, have mistaken notions about the role of war in Jewish history and in our time. One frequently hears the claim that it is important for Eretz Yisroel to be under Jewish rule, and that this is a legitimate reason to fight and risk Jewish lives. Those making this claim point to the story of Chanukah, when the Hasmoneans defeated the Greeks and established an independent Jewish kingdom. But let us read the words of Rabbi Avigdor Miller, of blessed memory, on this subject:

They did not arise to do battle for national independence, as the gentile-thinking Jewish writers of today would have us believe. The Nationalist Jews who forsook the Torah make a great to-do about the Hasmoneans, and depict them as patriots for political independence. These Zionists of today would have been among the Hellenisers, had they then existed; and the Hasmoneans would have been forced to fight against them for the right to practice the Torah. As long as they were able, the Jews sought peace and abhorred war, especially since war entailed disturbance of the Torah-regimen, which requires a peaceful and established community system. There was but one matter which could stir them to rebellion and cause them to take up arms: the interference with their observance of the Torah. Now the men of peace, and even the Cohanim, became warriors; and those who detested war became the fiercest of fighters. (Torah-Nation, p. 118)

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The Gemora (Avodah Zarah 8b) says that the Romans fought 32 battles against the Greeks but could not defeat them until they joined forces with the Jews. After the Greeks were defeated, the Romans made an agreement with the Jews under which they would split the leadership positions equally. For 26 years they honored the agreement; afterwards, for the next 180 years until the destruction of the Second Temple, they ruled over the Jews completely; the Jewish king was given very limited authority. The Gemora says that this was foretold in the conversation between Esav and Yaakov in Parshas Vayishlach (Bereishis 33:12-14). Esav suggested that he and Yaakov travel together – this foreshadowed the 26 years of shared leadership. Yaakov said, “Let my master go ahead of his servant” – this foreshadowed the subsequent years, when the Romans ruled supreme.

The Satmar Rav asked: If the Jews were so strong that they could defeat the Greeks when the Romans could not, then when the Romans broke their agreement, why didn't the Jews fight the Romans? The answer is, they too realized that the time had come for “let my master go ahead of his servant” – Hashem had decreed that it was Esav's time to rule, and they were forbidden to challenge this decree.

The Maharsha (Gittin 56a) explains that this was the reason why Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai told the militants who wanted to fight Rome, “It will not succeed.” He also understood that these words of Yaakov to Esav were a prophecy referring to the time of Roman dominion, and that the time had come for Esav to rule.

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In the Haftorah for Shabbos Chanukah, Zechariah (4:2) was shown a vision of the menorah, with two olives trees on either side of it. The angel said, “Don't you know what these are?” Zechariah replied that he did not. The angel said, “This is the word of Hashem to Zerubavel: Not by might and not by power, but by My spirit, said Hashem.”

Reb Chaim Brisker (printed in Chiddushei Hagriz Stencil on Nach) asked: Why did the angel say that Zechariah knew what the vision meant, when Zechariah said he didn't know? What did he know and what didn't he know? The answer is that Zechariah knew that the vision meant that the Second Temple would soon be built. The two olive trees referred to the king and the kohein gadol, who are anointed with olive oil. But Zechariah did not understand how that could be – in the Second Temple era there was no shemen hamishcha (anointing oil)! The angel explained to him: During the First Commonwealth, the Jews possessed Eretz Yisroel by virtue of Yehoshua's conquest. So as soon as Nevuchadnetzar conquered it from them, the Land lost its holiness. But this Second Commonwealth that is about to begin will not be founded by might and power, but by Hashem's spirit which will inspire King Daryavesh to grant the Jews the right to build it. Therefore, even when Jerusalem will fall to the Romans, the Land will retain its holiness. The Third Temple, built in the time of Moshiach, will thus be a continuation of the second, and then there will be a king and a kohein gadol anointed with oil. Therefore it is possible to say that this holiness that is about to come to Eretz Yisroel now will bring with it the anointing of a king and a kohein gadol, although this will not happen until the time of Moshiach.

Thus the menorah symbolizes the fact that the Jewish people's future possession of Eretz Yisroel will be established not by might, not by power, but as a continuation of the old kedushah from the Second Commonwealth. How ironic is it, then, that the Zionist movement, which advocates the conquest of Eretz Yisroel by force of arms, has adopted the menorah as one of its national symbols!



# Vayigash

והנה עיניכם ראות ועיני אחי בנימין כי פי המדבר אליכם (מה,יב).

*"And behold, your eyes and the eyes of my brother Binyamin see that it is my mouth speaking to you." (45:12)*

Rashi says that Yosef was speaking now in the Holy Tongue, and that was the proof that he was truly their brother Yosef. But the Ramban argues that Hebrew was spoken by all the peoples of the Land of Canaan, and surely many Egyptians spoke it, especially those in high government positions. What, then, was the proof that this ruler was really Yosef?

It may be that Rashi disagrees with the Ramban and holds that only Avraham Avinu and his family used the Holy Tongue. The Pirkei Derabbi Eliezer (chapter 24) says that when the people of Bavel build their tower, Hashem descended with 70 angels, put the 70 languages into the mouths of the nations, and appointed an angel over each language. Only Avraham, 48 years old at the time, was left with the original Holy Tongue that everyone had spoken until then.

Or, even if Rashi agrees that the Canaanites spoke Hebrew, it was not the same Hebrew that Yaakov and his family spoke. Rabbeinu Bachya (Bereishis 18:3) writes at length about the greatness and precision of the Holy Tongue and its nekudos (vowels). If someone changes even one sound, such as kometz to pasach, the entire meaning of the words changes, and sometimes it can be blasphemous or heretical. The Shelah (v. 1 p. 19) writes that Hebrew is called the Holy Tongue because all its letters and words have spiritual sources in the holy worlds above. The words are used to refer to physical objects in this world, but this is only in a borrowed sense; truthfully, each word is the name of a spiritual concept in the upper worlds.

Thus Yosef's brothers were able to tell that he was speaking the true Holy Tongue, with precision, and in accordance with its Heavenly sources. This was a language only revealed to the Avos and their descendants, not the Canaanites or the Egyptians. (Divrei Yoel, p. 413)

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The Shomer Emunim (Rabbi Ahron Roth, 1894-1944) scrupulously avoided any words that came from the Zionist language, modern Hebrew. Once he was at an engagement meal and was honored with reading the tenayim (engagement contract). The tenayim said that the bride's side promised to give "rehitim" (furniture). When the Shomer Emunim reached this word, he stopped reading and said, "This is a Zionist word! Although we find the word used in the Tanach (Shir Hashirim 1:17) and by Chazal (quoted by Rashi on Shir Hashirim), it has not been used for a long time, and so whoever uses it today is using it because of the influence of modern Hebrew!" (Furthermore, the original meaning of the word was beams or bolts, not furniture.) Then he tore up the document and told them to rewrite it. "But what word should we use for 'furniture'?" they asked. He replied that they should use the Yiddish word "mebbel." (Mishkenos Haro'im, p. 743)

Whenever the Shomer Emunim spoke about modern Hebrew, he would say, "I myself once stumbled and used a modern Hebrew word. A certain man who did not know Yiddish gave me an honor. I said to him, 'Todah,' using the Ashkenazic pronunciation. To this day I am still doing teshuva for that." (ibid.)

Once the Brisker Rav was going over his household expenses with his daughter, and she had written, among the items bought, the word "mivreshes." The Brisker Rav asked her what "mivreshes" meant. Just at that moment, his talmid Reb Mordechai Solomon came in. "Reb Mordechai, what is a 'mivreshes'?" asked the Rav. "The original Yiddish word was 'bersht' (brush)," said Reb Mordechai, "but the Zionists changed it to 'mivreshes.'" Then the Brisker Rav said to his daughter, "If so, erase 'mivreshes' and write 'bersht.'" (Uvdos Vehanhagos Leveis Brisk, v. 2 p. 192)

בני ובני בניו אתו בנתיו ובנות בניו וכל זרעו הביא אתו מצרימה (מו,ז).

*His sons and his grandsons with him; his daughters and granddaughters  
and all his seed he brought with him to Egypt. (46:7)*

The Ohr Hachaim says (here and at the beginning of Shemos) that the Torah lists the names of the Bnei Yisroel who came down to Egypt in order to praise them, for they accepted the yoke of exile willingly. This is in contrast to Esav, who ran away from it. The Torah says (36:6), “And Esav went to a land away from Yaakov his brother,” and Rashi says that he did not want the Promised Land nor the debt of exile that came with it, both foretold to Avraham. The Midrash (Shemos 1) says that the slavery began only after all the original 66 souls who descended to Egypt had died. This lightening of the exile during their lifetimes, says the Ohr Hachaim, was a reward to them for accepting the exile. However, the daughters and granddaughters did not go on their own; Yaakov had to bring them, as the second half of the verse says. Thus, Serach the daughter of Asher and Yocheved the daughter of Levi did live to see the slavery. Yocheved was an unborn baby and Serach may have been very young at the time they entered Egypt, so they cannot be blamed for their actions. Nevertheless, they lacked that extra merit of going willingly to fulfill the decree of the King.

\* \* \*

The Maharal in Gevuros Hashem, chapter 60, explains the mitzvos of the Pesach offering, matza and maror as symbolizing the fact that exile and redemption are two sides of the same coin and are peculiar to the Jewish people:

“The Pesach offering symbolizes the fact that we belong to the Holy One, blessed is He, and that only because of this can we escape the custody of nations such as Egypt, for Hashem is the G-d over all powers and all nations, and He takes us out from their domain. And just as our belonging to Hashem is the reason He redeems us, so also it is the reason why Israel experiences exile more than all other nations. For each nation has a special angel, and how can one angel be

subjugated to the other? But Israel has no angel, but rather when they are living up to their full spiritual potential, they belong to Hashem; and when they are not living up to their full spiritual potential, Hashem leaves them and they enter the domain of other nations. Do not say that Israel is equal to the nations, to the point where they would be, G-d forbid, in the domain of an angel – and then no nation would be able to subjugate it, as is the case with two equals who received portions. No, Israel received no portion, but they are the portion of Hashem, the Creator of all. The concept of portion does not apply to Hashem. And Israel has nothing to do with portions, that they should receive a portion together with the nations. Therefore they are fit for redemption: to go out from the dominion of the nations, since they belong to Hashem... Therefore, why should a person be surprised at the length of the exile? Something so peculiar to us is not easily removed... And that is why the Pesach offering is eaten together with matza and maror – this thing is very, very clear - for both these aspects are due to their being in Hashem's portion. Because of this high status, they experience both redemption from the dominion of the nations [symbolized by matza] and subjugation under the dominion of the nations [symbolized by maror].”



# Vayechi

ויקרא יעקב אל בניו ויאמר האספו ואגידה לכם את אשר יקרא אתכם  
באחרית הימים (מט,א).

*And Yaakov called to his sons, and said, "Gather and I will tell you  
what will happen (yikra) to you in the end of days." (49:1)*

The Satmar Rav asked: The word “yikra” is usually understood to mean “happen,” but then it should have been spelled differently, with a “hei” at the end. Why is it spelled with an “alef”? “Yikra” with an alef means “he will call.” The answer is that Yaakov Avinu was warning his children: In the end of days, when the time of the redemption arrives, you are not permitted to bring the redemption on your own. He, Hashem, will call you in the end of days. You must wait until He calls you! (Toros Veuvdos Mibeis Raboseinu, p. 109)



זבולן לחוף ימים ישכן והוא לחוף אנית וירכתו על צידו. יששכר חמר גרם  
רבץ בין המשפתים (מט,יג-יד).

*Zevulun will dwell on the shore of the seas, and will have ships on  
his shore... Yissachar is a bony donkey, crouching between the borders.  
(49:13-14)*

Hashem knew that it was impossible for the entire nation to occupy themselves only with Torah learning, and that some must work, so when He divided up the Land among the tribes, He hinted that Yissachar and Zevulun would each fulfill

complimentary roles: Yissachar would learn Torah, and from that tribe would emerge 200 heads of Sanhedrins, from which halachic rulings would issue forth to the Jewish people, while Zevulun would dwell by the sea, buying and selling merchandise. He would not have time for a fixed schedule of Torah learning, so he would support his brother Yissachar's Torah. Since the world was created for Torah learning, Yissachar and Zevulun are both considered pillars of the world.

The Chofetz Chaim would say, "More than the supporter does for the learner, the learner does for the supporter. For the supporter, for a few pennies, gains a portion of eternity from the learner's Torah. The biggest punishment for the supporter would be if the yeshivos would stop accepting his donations."

Once a new yeshiva was founded with a new style of learning which, the Chofetz Chaim held, would bring destruction on Torah Jewry. The Chofetz Chaim asked his talmidim to write a letter to a certain wealthy Mr. G., asking him to stop supporting this new yeshiva. If not, he threatened, he would tell the heads of all the yeshivos to stop accepting donations from him. (Chofetz Chaim Al Hatorah, p. 85)

\* \* \*

At the Keren Hatzalah gathering in Tamuz 5754 (1994) during the Satmar Rebbe's visit to Eretz Yisroel, Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch told the following story: In the months preceding the establishment of the Zionist State, the Brisker Rav was very worried and he asked many rabbanim to work hard to prevent the new state from coming into being. After the State was established, the Chazon Ish heard that the Brisker Rav was feeling ill. He sent him a message, "You need not fear the State, for we have a rule that 'a decree usually becomes annulled' (Kesubos 3b). So the State will not last long." The Brisker Rav told the messenger, "Go back and tell the Chazon Ish that it is true that a decree is usually annulled, but that would only apply here if the community considered the State an evil decree. However, I fear that the community does not think of it as a decree at all, and religious Jews will join the Zionists in running their state. Not only that, I fear that the wicked will be nourished from our holiness, from the yeshivos and chadarim that they support. If so, it will be a bitter decree for us. Go and tell the Chazon Ish that I fear that this evil decree will remain until the coming of moshiach!" (Uvdos

Vehanhagos Leveis Brisk v. 4, p. 209)



ויאמר יוסף אל אחיו אנכי מת וא-להים פקד יפקד אתכם והעלה אתכם מן  
הארץ הזאת אל הארץ אשר נשבע לאברהם ליצחק וליעקב (נ,כד).

*And Yosef said to his brothers, "I am dying; but G-d will surely visit you and take you up from this land, to the land that He promised to Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov." (50:24)*

Yosef was warning them not to go up “as a wall” until a prophet sent by Hashem Yisborach comes and says, “I have surely visited you (pakod pakadti).” And this is also a lesson for all generations, that the Jewish people may not leave exile on their own. This was the error of the Children of Ephraim: they left Egypt before the proper time. Even if a prophet had come to the Jews in Egypt and told them to leave and go to a different land (other than Eretz Canaan), they would have denounced him as a false prophet. The prophet must tell them to go to the land Hashem promised to the Avos, as Moshe Rabbeinu did. (Meshech Chochmah)

The words of the Meshech Chochmah are an echo of the Targum Yonasan ben Uziel on the next posuk. The posuk says, “And Yosef made the children of Israel swear, saying, ‘G-d will surely visit you...’” The Targum Yonasan says, “You shall not sin and leave Egypt until the two redeemers come and say to you, Hashem has surely remembered you.”

\* \* \*

The author of Meshech Chochmah, Rabbi Meir Simcha of Dvinsk, published the following letter in the early years of the Zionist movement:

“Hashem roars from on high, and from His holy habitation gives forth His

voice (Yirmiyah 25:30), for there have arisen new rebels and traitors, who plan to lay the foundation of Zion and to establish a kingdom, and they have also raised the banner to gather our exile, in the promise that in the near future, they will put an end to all trouble and calamity and that they, the Zionists, will deliver Israel from all its troubles.

“I cannot utter with my lips nor put down in writing all that is in my heart concerning these unstable men. We ask ourselves, what have these unbelievers heard, that they have come forth? Who called them and what do they want with us? They talk of redeeming us from exile, while we do not desire redemption at the hands of man, seeing that we know that its end is – Heaven forbid – destruction and vanity, and all this comes upon them through the desire for greatness and power that burns and consumes their hearts like fire.

“Heaven forbid that we should hasten the hour. Even were the foundation of a kingdom a basic commandment and even were we to hear a Voice from Heaven telling us that it is our duty to hearken to Dr. Herzl, then we should say that no attention is to be paid to a Voice from Heaven (Bava Metzia 59b), because this Zionist vision is driving – Heaven forbid – Israel to destruction. There is no need to say more.” (The Transformation, p. 184)



# SEFER SHEMOS



# Shemos

הבה נתחכמה לו פן ירבה והיה כי תקראנה מלחמה ונוסף גם הוא על  
שנאינו ונלחם בנו ועלה מן הארץ... ויעבדו מצרים את בני ישראל בפרך  
(א,י-ג).

*Lest they multiply, and when there be a war, they be added to our  
enemies...and Egypt made the children of Israel perform hard labor.  
(1:10,13).*

Rabbi Avraham Loewenstam of Emden, in his work Tzeror Hachaim (published 1820), writes that in every Jewish exile, the Jews were faithful subjects of their king and made no effort to rebel. All their prayers and longing for redemption never posed a contradiction to this faithfulness, because they knew that the hoped-for redemption would come not through their own effort, only from Above.

The Jews spent 210 years in Egypt, he writes, living all together in the land of Goshen, and it would have been easy for them to unite and launch an uprising against Egypt. They were strong enough for such a battle, as we see later that they roundly defeated Amalek, Sichon, Og and the nations of Canaan. In Egypt they were enslaved and afflicted, and yet it never occurred to them to rebel. The sole exception to this were some members of the tribe of Ephraim, who miscalculated the end of the exile by 30 years and left Egypt by force. They were punished for this – they were all killed by the Philistines at Gath (see Rashi on Shemos 15:14, on Yechezkel 37:1, and on Tehillim 78:9). We can be sure the other Jews did not join in this rebellion, for if they had, the Egyptians would have punished them severely for it, and we have no tradition of such an event. Rather, they knew that the exile was a Divine decree and they bore it with great strength and self-control. When the time came, Hashem Himself took them out

with a strong hand and an outstretched arm.

\* \* \*

Rabbi Yosef Shaul Natanson, author of the responsa Shoel Umeishiv, asks: When Pharaoh feared that the Jews would join his enemies, why was his strategy to make them slaves? Wouldn't that make them even more likely to hate the Egyptians and fight against them? He answers that Pharaoh knew that Hashem had commanded the Jews not to rebel against their king, and that He had planted into their nature the inclination to accept subjugation. This is the meaning of the oath (Kesubos 111a) not to rebel against the nations – that He adjured them and made acceptance of the exile a part of their nature. Therefore, as long as the Jews were free and independent, Pharaoh feared them, but with the hard hand of taskmasters over them, they would realize that this was a decree of exile, and they would wait patiently for Hashem to redeem them. (Divrei Shaul on Shemos, p. 48)



**ויואל משה לשבת את האיש ויתן את צפרה בתו למשה (ב,כא).**

*And Moshe swore to live with the man, and he gave his daughter  
Tziporah to Moshe. (2:21)*

Rashi, quoting Nedarim 65a, explains that the word “vayoe” means “swore,” that Moshe swore to his father-in-law Yisro that he would not leave Midyan without his permission. The Satmar Rav asks: Yisro knew that Moshe was a holy man. The Midrash says that Yisro’s daughters told him that the water in the well rose up for Moshe, and Yisro said, “This is a sign of the children of Yaakov!” Moshe was the only one able to pull out the miraculous staff, created on the sixth day of Creation, from the ground in Yisro’s garden (Pirkei Derabbi Eliezer 40). So why did Yisro need to make Moshe swear – wasn’t a simple promise enough? Did he suspect such a great man of going back on his word?

The answer is, when Moshe pulled out the staff, Yisro knew that he would eventually return to Egypt and redeem the Jewish people. Since the geulah depended on Moshe, both Yisro and Moshe feared that in his great love for the Jewish people, and in his great distress at their suffering in exile, Moshe would go back to Egypt and start the geulah before the proper time. To prevent this, Moshe took an oath. Thus this oath was similar to the general oath on the Jewish people against attempting to end the exile on their own, before the proper time. The Satmar Rav writes that this is one of the reasons he called his great work, which is devoted to explaining this oath, “Vayoel Moshe.”

He adds that the name is also appropriate because the Midrash says (Shemos 28, on the posuk 20:1) that the Prophets were all standing at Har Sinai and they heard there all the words of prophecy they would ever say. Thus the book of Shir Hashirim, in which the Three Oaths are written (“I adjure you, daughters of Jerusalem, not to arouse or awaken the love before it is desired” – 2:7) was really first brought down through Moshe at Sinai, and only later publicized by Shlomo Hamelech. Hence, “Vayoel Moshe” – Moshe adjured the Jewish people not to attempt to end the exile before the proper time. (Introduction to Vayoel Moshe, p. 17)



ויאמרו א-להי העברים נקרא עלינו וגו' (ה,ג).

*And they said, "The G-d of the Ivrim has come to us..." (5:3)*

The Midrash (Vayikra 32:5) brings these words as proof that the Jewish people did not change their language during the Egyptian exile; they continued to speak Hebrew, as did their ancestor Avraham, who was called “Avraham the Ivri” (Bereishis 14:13).

The Jewish people spoke Hebrew only until the beginning of the Second Temple era; from then on, they spoke Aramaic (Shulchan Aruch Harav, Talmud Torah 1:1). During the Babylonian exile, when Jews lived in a land full of idolatry,

the Sages decided that it would be disrespectful to the Holy Tongue to continue speaking it in such a defiled environment (Chasam Sofer on Orach Chaim 85). Additionally, they realized that the people were no longer on a high enough level to use such a holy tongue as their everyday language, for sinful speech is much worse when spoken in Hebrew than when spoken in another language (Vayoel Moshe 3:8). The Aramaic they used was not the same as that spoken by the gentiles; it was a special Jewish dialect, written with Hebrew letters. Thus they continued to uphold the principle of keeping a separate language. Later, Yiddish fulfilled the same function for European Jews.

This point was once made by Rabbi Yehoshua Leib Diskin. In Jerusalem there lived a tzaddik who sat all day wearing tallis and tefillin and learning Torah, and he adopted the practice of speaking only in the Holy Tongue. Once he came to Reb Yehoshua Leib to ask a question. He began to say his question in the Holy Tongue, when Reb Yehoshua Leib interrupted him with a rebuke: “Get out of my house! For all the days of our exile, Yiddish will be spoken!” Then he added, “The Jews in Germany, fearing that if they spoke the gentile language they would assimilate, chose a dialect of German spoken by peasants and made it their national language, to serve as a barrier between them and the gentiles. This is how our Yiddish was born. If this language was the barrier to assimilation, it is itself the Holy Tongue!” (Mara D’ara Yisroel, v. 2 p. 95)



# Va'eira

וידבר א-להים אל משה ויאמר אליו אני ה' (ו,ב).

*And G-d spoke to Moshe, and said to him, "I am Hashem." (6:2)*

Why does the Torah switch in mid-sentence from “Elokim” to “Hashem”? At the end of last week’s parsha, Moshe said, “Why have You dealt badly with this people? Why did You send me? Since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has made this people suffer even more.” What Moshe did not realize was that the decree of exile had really been for 400 years, and now Hashem was taking Israel out of Egypt after only 210 years. In order to make up for the other 190 years, Hashem was making the slavery especially hard at the end. Thus, the extra suffering was actually beneficial, and essential to the redemption process. Hashem therefore said to Moshe, “Even when I appear in the role of Elokim, the attribute of justice and punishment, I am really Hashem, the attribute of mercy. Do not complain about the suffering of exile – know that I am doing everything for your benefit.” (Tuv Hapeninim, p. 279)

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The Ateres Yehoshua gives another explanation as the benefit of this extra suffering. If Pharaoh had obeyed right away and let the Jewish people go, he would have had a hand in the birth of the Jewish people. When a wicked man gives something or accomplishes something, he has a certain power over it; in this case, Pharaoh’s generosity would have left an imprint of defilement on the Jewish people forever. For our benefit, Hashem made sure that Pharaoh resisted the order, so that when we did eventually get out, we would be completely free of Pharaoh’s influence. We would then be ready to accept the Torah at Sinai. How important it is to avoid favors and money coming from unclean sources – the Exodus from Egypt was delayed only because of this! (ibid. p. 280)



כה אמר ה' בזאת תדע כי אני ה' הנה אנכי מכה במטה אשר בידי על המים  
אשר ביאר ונהפכו לדם. והדגה אשר ביאר תמות וגו' (ז,זי-יח).

*Behold, I am smiting the water in the river with the staff in my hand,  
and it will become blood. And the fish in the river will die..." (7:17-  
18)*

Rashi explains that the Nile River was smitten in the first plague because when Hashem punishes a nation, He first punishes its idols. The Egyptians depended on the Nile for irrigation, and they worshipped it as a deity. This explains why the Nile suffered, but why did the fish have to suffer? The Satmar Rav answered: The fish lived and breathed and were sustained by the river, which was idolatry. Whoever is sustained by idolatry is punished along with the idolatry, even if he himself is righteous and innocent. (Toros Ve'uvdos Mibeis Raboseinu, p. 128)

Reb Dovid Soloveitchik reports that his father, the Brisker Rav, once said, "Those who keep far away from the Zionist movement – from their deeds, their money and all that is theirs – need not fear, G-d forbid, the evil that will befall those who support Zionism." (Uvdos Vehanhagos Leveis Brisk, v. 4 p. 203)



ושמתי פדת בין עמי ובין עמך למחר יהיה האת הזה (ח,יט).

*"And I will place a separation between My people and your people;  
tomorrow this sign will be." (8:19)*

The word "pedus" means "separation," but it can also mean "redemption." The Mesorah notes that the word occurs only two other times in Tanach: "Redemption He sent for His people" (Tehillim 111:9), and "Israel will hope to Hashem, for with Hashem is the kindness and with Him is much redemption"

(Tehillim 130:7). Moreover, in our parsha the word is written without a vav, but in both places in Tehillim it has a vav.

The Yitav Lev explained this based on the Midrash Tanchuma, end of Acharei Mos: “Fortunate are you, Israel, who is like you? A people redeemed with Hashem” (Devarim 33:29). It does not say “a people that Hashem redeemed,” but “redeemed with Hashem.” Just as a man takes his maaser sheni tithes and redeems them with coins, so too Israel is redeemed with Hashem, if it were possible to say such a thing. Said the Holy One, blessed is He: In this world you were redeemed by humans – in Egypt by Moshe and Aharon, in the time of Sisera by Barak and Devorah, in the time of the Midyanites by Shamgar the son of Anas, as it says, “And he also saved Israel.” And so by the Judges, and since they were humans, you became subjugated again later. But in the future, I Myself will redeem you, and you will never be subjugated again, as it says, “Israel is redeemed with Hashem an everlasting redemption.” (Yishaya 45:17)

This is why the word “pedus” – redemption – is missing a vav in our parsha: the redemption from Egypt was incomplete and not permanent. Why wasn't it permanent? Because “redemption He sent for His people” – Hashem sent the redemption through a human emissary. But when Hashem Himself exercises His kindness and redeems us Himself, then “with Him is much redemption” – it will be complete and permanent. (Toros Ve'uvdos Mibeis Raboseinu, p. 128)

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The Midrash Shochar Tov explains the same concept with a parable. “For with You is the source of life; through Your light will we see light” (Tehillim 36:10). Rabbi Yochanan said: Once a man lit a candle at night, and it went out. He lit it again and it went out. He said, “How long will I tire myself out? I will wait until the sun rises and go by the light of the sun.” So too, the Jews were subjugated in Egypt – Moshe and Aharon arose and redeemed them. They were again subjugated in Babylonia – they were redeemed by Chanania, Mishael and Azarya. They were again subjugated by Greece – they were redeemed by the Hasmonean and his sons. They were again subjugated by Edom. Said the Jewish people: We have become tired – we are continually redeemed and then subjugated again. We no longer wish for the light of human beings, only the

Holy One, blessed is He, as it says, "Hashem is G-d and He made light for us."  
(Tehillim 118:27)

\* \* \*

Reb Tzvi Elimelech of Dinov once posed the question: Why is our custom regarding the location of a wedding the opposite of the custom at the time of the Gemora? In the Gemora's times, the kallah was brought from her father's house to the chosson's house, and the wedding took place there (Rashi on Kesubos 15b). But our custom is that the kallah's parents make the wedding in their place, and the chosson comes to the kallah. He answers by quoting the Zohar (Vayikra 6a) where Rabbi Acha asked Rabbi Shimon the meaning of the verse, "The virgin of Israel has fallen and will never get up." (Amos 5:2) Rabbi Shimon replied that it means that in the final redemption, Israel will not get up on her own as she did in previous redemptions, such as in Babylonia where the Jews went back with permission from the king. She is not allowed to do so, for Hashem adjured us not to arouse or awaken the love before its time (Kesubos 111a). Rather she will wait in her place in exile until Hashem Himself comes and helps her up. This is why the later generations established the custom of having the wedding in the place of the kallah, and the chosson comes to her to rejoice with her - the chosson symbolizes Hashem, who will come back to the Jewish people in exile. Indeed, all Israel's customs are prophecy, for they are the children of prophets! (Bracha Meshuleshes on Chullin Chapter 5, Mishnah 3)



# Bo

והיה לכם למשמרת וגו' אל תאכלו ממנו נא וגו' (יב,ו-ט).

*And it will be for you to guard... Do not eat of it raw... (12:6,9)*

The Pesikta DeRav Kahana says that these verses contain hints to the Four Exiles and their redeemers. The chapter begins, “This month will be to you the head of months” – a hint to the exile of Nevuchadnetzar, who is called a head (Daniel 2:38). “It is the first for you” refers to Hashem, who is called the First (Yishaya 44:6); Hashem brought an end to Nevuchadnetzar’s dynasty. The Torah continues, “Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel on the tenth of this month” – alluding to Haman, who offered ten thousand silver talents for the right to wipe out the Jewish people. “Let them take a sheep for the father’s house, a sheep for the house” refers to Mordechai and Esther, who redeemed them – Mordechai was outside the king’s palace and Esther was in “the house”, inside the palace. The double mention of the word “sheep” also alludes to the Greek period – the Third Exile – when the Hasmonean kohanim, who offered two sheep in the Temple every day, redeemed the Jews. And who will redeem us from the Fourth Exile, the exile of Edom (Rome)? “And it will be for you to guard (mishmeres)...” The word “mishmeres” means standing guard, waiting and watching (“natruna”). Thus, we will be redeemed in the merit of our waiting patiently for the redemption. “Do not eat of it raw” – do not wish for it (the redemption) undercooked, i.e. before its proper time. “And you shall eat it in haste” – the exodus from Egypt was in haste, but in the future redemption there will be no haste, as Yishaya the prophet said (52:12), “For you will not go out in haste, nor will you go in flight, for Hashem is walking before you, and the G-d of Israel is gathering you.” (Pesikta DeRav Kahana, Parshas Hachodesh 25, brought in Yalkut Shimoni with some differences)



**ואתם לא תצאו איש מפתח ביתו עד בקר (יב,כב).**

*Let no man leave the door of his house until morning. (12:22)*

Rabbi Shimon Sofer writes that his father, the Chasam Sofer, once said: In the difficult period before Moshiach comes – known as the “birthpangs of Moshiach” – we will face grave trials, and we must not lose hope. At that time, it will be instructive to keep in mind the story of the Exodus from Egypt, for then we faced a similar test. On the night before they left Egypt, our ancestors sat in their houses and heard shouting and wailing from all sides: “A great cry in all the land of Egypt, such as never was before and never will be again.” (11:6) But the Jews were not permitted to go out of their houses and see what was going on. And the Egyptians surrounded the Jewish houses, yelling, “Leave us!” But the Jewish people was strong and remained faithful and did not leave until the morning, when Hashem permitted them to leave. It was in the merit of this faith that they were redeemed, for they passed a great and awesome test. And so it will be in the time of the birthpangs of Moshiach – Hashem will test us, so that we may gain merit for the redemption. (Michtav Sofer, v. 1 p. 24)



**ומושב בני ישראל אשר ישבו במצרים שלשים שנה וארבע מאות שנה  
(יב,מ).**

*And the dwelling of the children of Israel that they dwelt in Egypt was  
430 years. (12:40)*

Rashi explains that from the Covenant Between the Parts, when Avraham Avinu was 70 years old and he had a prophecy about the Egyptian exile, until the Exodus was 430 years. We find in the book of Divrei Hayamim (I 7:21) the story of some members of the tribe of Ephraim who were killed by the men of Gas,

a Philistine city. The Sages explain that these were Jews who left Egypt 30 years before the Exodus, because they miscalculated the end of the 400 years of exile foretold to Avraham (Bereishis 15:13). They thought that these 400 years began at the time of that prophecy, but in reality they began 30 years later, at the birth of Yitzchak: “Rabbi Onia said: He adjured them with four oaths, corresponding to the four times when Jews forced the End and stumbled: once in the time of Amram, once in the time of Ben Dinai, once in the time of Ben Koziva, and once in the time of Shuselach, the son of Ephraim... They counted from the time when the decree was made, when the Holy One, blessed is He, spoke to Avraham at the Covenant Between the Parts. But in reality the count began when Yitzchak was born. What did they do? They gathered together and went out to war, and many of them fell dead. Why? ‘Because they did not believe in Hashem, neither did they trust in His deliverance.’ (Tehillim 78:22) Because they transgressed the End, and they transgressed the Oath.” (Midrash Rabbah, Shir Hashirim 2:7)

Rabbi Shmuel ben Yitzchak Yaffe, in his commentary Yefeh Kol on the Midrash, asks: The children of Ephraim based themselves on their understanding of Avraham’s prophecy. So why is this called not believing in Hashem and not trusting in His deliverance? Why is this transgressing the Oath? It was a mere mistake! The answer is, he says, the mistake was deeper than just a misinterpretation of numbers. They thought that when the foretold time came, the Jews would leave Egypt with their own strong hand, without the open intervention of Hashem. Thus they did not rely on the deliverance of Hashem, but on their own swords. Had they understood that the Exodus would be a miraculous event, they would certainly not have taken the initiative without seeing a miracle to demonstrate that this was Hashem’s plan. Even when the real redeemer – Moshe – eventually came and claimed that Hashem had sent him, the Jews were not allowed to believe in him with seeing a miracle. And they had a tradition that the true redeemer would say the words “pakod pakadti”. Since the children of Ephraim had no such redeemer, they could not have left Egypt relying on Hashem’s deliverance. Clearly, they thought that they would succeed in leaving Egypt and conquering Canaan through purely natural means. This is why the Midrash says that “they transgressed the Oath” – the oath that prohibited the Jews from leaving the exile on their own, without Hashem’s intervention. And “they transgressed the End” – since there was no sign from Hashem, they should have realized that their numerical calculation was wrong.

Rabbeinu Nissim, known as the Ran, writes: The length of the Egyptian exile was foretold as 400 years, and yet the children of Ephraim miscalculated. The length of the Babylonian exile was foretold to Yirmiyahu (29:10) as 70 years, and yet Belshatzar, Achashveirosh and even the great Daniel miscalculated (Megillah 11b). So what will become of our present exile, whose length is shrouded in the intentionally obscure language at the end of the book of Daniel? (Drashos Haran, Drash 5)

An exile with an unknown end is an invitation to false messiahs and redeemers, as the Ran says. But let us remember the words of the Midrash as explained by the Yefeh Kol. An error in numbers is only possible for someone who makes a greater error: the error of thinking that the Jewish people are allowed to end their exile on their own, without intervention from Above.



# Beshalach

ויאמר משה אל העם אל תיראו התיצבו וראו את ישועת ה' אשר יעשה לכם  
היום וגו' ה' ילחם לכם ואתם תחרישון (יד, יג-יד).

*And Moshe said to the people, "Do not fear! Stand by and see Hashem's saving that He will perform for you today... Hashem will fight for you, and you will be silent." (14:13-14)*

Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Ehrenreich (1863-1944), the Samloyer Rav, once said: Why did Moshe have to say “stand by”? Wasn’t it enough to say “do not fear, see Hashem’s saving”? The answer is that among the Jewish people there were many mighty men, and furthermore, anyone who sees that he is about to meet his death will put up a great fight, summoning superhuman energy. When the Jews saw the sea on one side and the Egyptian army on the other, they thought they were doomed. Let us go and fight the Egyptians, they thought, kill as many as we can of them, and perhaps we will overcome them – for in any case we are about to die. Moshe Rabbeinu knew what they were thinking, so he said, “Stand by, stay in your places and do nothing, for Hashem Yisborach does not need you to help Him save you. On the contrary, that would make it worse. “Hashem will fight for you” only if “you will be silent.”

In general, Hashem comes to our aid only when we recognize that we cannot fight for ourselves. This is what Dovid Hamelech said in Tehillim (94:17), “If Hashem had not been my help, my soul would easily have dwelt in death. If I said, ‘My foot has slipped,’ Your kindness, Hashem, supports me.” The meaning of these verses is: If I had not recognized that Hashem helps me, my soul would easily have dwelt in death. But since I say, “My foot has slipped, I am nothing, I cannot save myself with my own power” - Your kindness, Hashem, supports me.

This is why when the rebellious Jews tried to invade Eretz Yisroel against the will of Hashem after the sin of the spies, the Amalekites and the Canaanites came down and smote them and smashed them until Charmah (Bamidbar 14:45). And this is why when some of the tribe of Ephraim left Egypt thirty years before the end of the exile, the Philistines killed them (Sanhedrin 92b). Their sin was that they relied on their own power, without Hashem's help.

This is what we must know, that we cannot save ourselves with our own power, without the help of Hashem and without the holy Torah. The Zionists, however, want to conquer and control Eretz Yisroel by force, with their own power, without the help of Hashem and without the Torah. It will be bitter for them in the end, for they will never succeed or accomplish anything. They will meet the fate of the rebellious invaders of the Land and the tribe of Ephraim.

Know also, my fellows, that this group existed once before in our history, at the time of the destruction of the Second Temple. Then they were called not "Tziyonim" but "Biryonim". We could have continued to live peacefully under Roman rule, but the Biryonim, the militants, wanted to fight Rome and become independent. They disregarded all the words of the great sages of their time, and fought till the bitter end – and because of them we are in exile today. (Drashos Lechem Shlomo 76)



שבתון שבת קדש לה' מחר את אשר תאפו אפו ואת אשר תבשלו בשלו ואת כל העדף  
הניחו לכם למשמרת עד הבקר (טז,כג).

*Tomorrow is a holy Shabbos to Hashem; bake what you want to bake,  
cook what you want to cook, and store away all that is left till the  
morning. (16:23)*

The Torah forbids cooking on Shabbos, and Chazal enacted the precaution of not even insulating cooked food on Friday with a substance that adds heat: "We may not insulate with olive pulp, manure, salt, plaster, or sand...we may insulate

with clothing, fruit, the wings of a dove, sawdust or fine flax dust.” (Mishnah Shabbos Ch. 4) Reb Mordechai Yosef of Izhbitzch (d. 1854) explained that this law contains a hint to the Jewish people’s proper conduct during exile. We may insulate our life-force during exile so that it should not burn out, but we may not do anything that “adds heat” – to arouse ourselves to the point where we want to leave exile by force and push to the End, as the Gemora (Kesubos 111a) says that Hashem made us swear not to do this. “We may insulate with clothing” – the tzitzis, which protect us – “fruit” – the Four Species of the lulav – “the wings of a dove” – tefillin and mezuzos, as explained in the Gemora (Shabbos 49a) – “sawdust” – afflictions which bring atonement (from the similarity of the words “yisurin” and “nesores”) and “fine flax dust” – acts of kindness. All these mitzvos protect us during exile, but we may not add heat and leave on our own, only when Hashem Yisborach shines His light upon us. (Mei Hashiloach on Shabbos, Ch. 4.)



ויאמר כי יד על כס י-ה מלחמה לה' בעמלק מדר דר (יז,טז).

*And he said, "For the hand is on the throne of Hashem – Hashem is at war with Amalek, from generation to generation." (17:16)*

Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman writes: The Torah teaches here that this war against Amalek exists in all generations until the coming of Moshiach. However, the “Amalek” is not always the same. In the olden days when the Jewish people was ruled only by Torah, the enemies were the descendants of Amalek in the gentile world. But ever since we have thrown off the yoke of the Torah, the seed of Amalek thrives in our midst. We now have many who violate the Torah out of spite, such as the Yevseksex – Jewish Communists – who live not only in the Soviet Union but in all of the world, wherever there are Jews, and also in Eretz Yisroel. The Hellenizers there are the same Yevseksex – there is no difference between them, except that these write in Yiddish and those write in modern Hebrew. On both groups, Hashem has sworn that His name is not complete and His throne is not complete until they are erased from the world.

People are so ignorant today, that a large percentage of Jews support them with money, so that they might be bigger and stronger. They do not know or understand the word of Hashem, “When the wicked blossom like grass, when all sinners flower, it is in order to destroy them forever.” (Tehillim 92:8) And when that time comes, woe to those who support them or flatter them! And it is as clear as the sun that the Land will vomit them out, for it is the King’s palace and it does not support sinners, much less those who sin out of spite. (I am not coming here to curse or to bless, but since these things are written in the Torah we must admit that they will come true.)

We must not err and think that all those who follow the Zionists are from the seed of Amalek. G-d forbid to say so; we are talking here only about their heads and leaders, teachers and guides, writers and speakers – these are from the seed of Amalek, standing at the front of their armies to do battle with the Holy One, blessed is He. But all the multitudes of Jews who join them are merely following like a herd of animals. (Omer Ani Maasai Lemelech, paragraphs 5-6)



# Yisro

וישמע יתרו כהן מדין חתן משה את כל אשר עשה א-להים למשה ולישראל  
עמו וגו' ויבא יתרו וגו' (יח,א-ה).

*And Yisro, priest of Midyan, father-in-law of Moshe, heard all that G-d  
did for Moshe and Israel His people... And Yisro came... (18:1,5)*

Reb Elyakim Shlessinger once asked the Brisker Rav why his wife's grandfather, Reb Yaakov Rosenheim, changed his views on Zionism in his old age. Throughout the pre-State era, Rosenheim constantly reiterated the decision of the Moetzes Gedolei Hatorah, that Jewish law did not permit the founding of the proposed Jewish state. We must see the planned state as a great misfortune for Jewry, Rosenheim wrote in a 1944 letter to Rabbi Chaim Bloch. But after the State was founded and the Agudah activists, without the benefit of any explicit ruling from the Moetzes, began to participate in the government, Rosenheim began to speak more positively of it. "I will tell you something the Kotzker said," said the Brisker Rav. "The Torah says that Yisro heard about the Exodus and came to join the Jewish people in the desert. Rashi explains that he heard about the parting of the Red Sea and the war with Amalek. Why did Rashi select these two things? So the Kotzker said, Yisro heard about the great miracle of the Red Sea and he wanted to be a Jew, but that didn't mean he had to come out to the desert to join the Jewish people. He could have waited till they entered the Land of Canaan and joined them there. But then he heard about Amalek's attack. The Amalekites had also heard about the miracles, and yet they continued to be wicked. How could that be? Because Amalek didn't have a rebbe. One must never rely on his own reading of events; one must always have a rebbe. In that case, said Yisro, I must come to be with the Jewish people right away. Your grandfather," the Brisker Rav concluded, "in his younger years, always had a rebbe. He listened to my father and to the Chofetz Chaim. The gedolim then were all much older than he. But I and the other rabbanim of today are closer to his age. In his formative

years, we were all mere *yungerleit*, and that is the permanent picture he formed of us. Now, in his old age, when all his *rebbe*s are gone, it's no wonder that he can't see us as his *rebbe*s. So he is left without a *rebbe*. And without a *rebbe*, it is impossible to stay on the proper path." (Mikatowitz *Ad Hei B'Iyar*, p. 343)



ויאמר ה' אל משה הנה אנכי בא אליך בעב הענן בעבור ישמע העם בדברי  
עמך וגם בך יאמינו לעולם וגו' (יט,ט).

*And Hashem said to Moshe, "Behold, I am coming to you in the thickness of the cloud, so that the people might hear when I speak to you, and also in you they will believe forever." (19:9)*

The Rambam in his Letter to Yemen exhorted the Jews there to remain strong in the face of the trials of exile: "And you, our brothers, be strong and rely on these true verses of the Torah, and do not be confounded by wicked decrees, nor frightened by the enemy's strong hand and the weakness of our people. For all this is but a trial, a test to show the world our faith and how beloved we are to Hashem. Under such conditions, only the wise who fear Hashem, the pure and clean seed of Yaakov, continue to believe in the true Torah, as it says, 'The remaining ones whom Hashem calls' (Yoel 3:5) – implying that they are few. And these are the people whose ancestors stood at Mt. Sinai and heard the voice of Hashem, joined the covenant and accepted the mitzvos, saying, 'All that Hashem has spoken we will do and hear.' They obligated themselves and their descendants. And the Creator has promised us – and His guarantee is certainly reliable – that anyone who stood by Mt. Sinai will believe in the prophecy of Moshe Rabbeinu, and so his children and children's children, forever. For this is what He said: 'Behold, I am coming to you in the thickness of the cloud, so that the people might hear when I speak to you, and also in you they will believe forever.' Therefore we must know that anyone who strays from the Torah given at Mt. Sinai is not a descendant of those Jews who were there. And so our Sages have said, 'Anyone who doubts the prophets – his ancestors did not stand at Mt. Sinai.' May Hashem save us and you from doubts, and keep from us and from you the thoughts that lead to doubt and stumbling."

והגבלת את העם סביב לאמר השמרו לכם עלות בהר ונגע בקצהו כל הנגע  
בהר מות יומת, לא תגע בו יד כי סקול יסקל או ירה יירה אם בהמה אם  
איש לא יחיה במשך היבל המה יעלו בהר (יט,יב).

*And you shall make a boundary for the people all around, saying,  
“Be careful not to go up on the mountain or touch any part of it...”  
(19:12)*

This verse contains an allusion: Make a boundary for the Jewish people in exile around Jerusalem and around Eretz Yisroel. Be careful not to go up on the mountain – this hints to the oath that Hashem made Israel swear not to force the End and not to go up to Eretz Yisroel before the time, as it is written, “I adjure you, daughters of Jerusalem, why do you arouse...” (Shir Hashirim 8:4) “Or touch any part of it” – this is a hint that they must not touch the building of the Temple before its time.

The Torah continues, “Anyone who touches the mountain shall surely die. No hand shall touch it, for he will surely be stoned and cast down; man or beast, he shall not live; at the sounding of the yovel they will ascend the mountain.” Anyone who speeds up the redemption will surely be stoned; anyone who ascends before the end of the subjugation of the nations will not live. “The yovel” – means the shofar of redemption, referred to in the verse (Yishaya 27:13), “A great shofar will be blown and those lost in the land of Ashur and those cast away in the land of Egypt will come, and they will bow down to Hashem in the holy mountain, in Jerusalem.” (Tosafos Hashalem)

אנכי ה' א-להיך אשר הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים מבית עבדים (כ,ב).

*“I am Hashem your G-d, Who took you out of the land of Egypt, the  
house of slavery.” (20:2)*

The Rambam, the Smag and the Smak count this as one of the 613 mitzvos. The Smak defines the mitzvah as follows: to believe that the Creator of heaven and earth is alone the ruler of the universe, and everything happens through His will, not through automatic processes such as mazalos. Hashem is the One Who brought us out of Egypt and performed all the wonders, the plagues and the splitting of the sea. No one knocks his finger unless it is ordained from Above. “The steps of a man are prepared by Hashem.” (Tehillim 37:23) And this is the meaning of Chazal’s statement (Shabbos 31a) that when a person dies and comes before the Heavenly Court, he is asked, “Did you hope for the redemption?” Where is this mitzvah written, that a person should be held responsible for it? The answer is that this is all part of the mitzvah “I am Hashem,” for just as we must believe that He took us out of Egypt, we must believe that He will bring the final redemption. If this is to be counted as one of the Ten Utterances, [it must have a practical meaning], and so it must be saying, “Just as I want you to believe in Me, that I took you out of Egypt, so I want you to believe that I am Hashem you G-d and I will eventually gather you in and save you. And so the Torah promises (Devarim 30:3), “And He will return and gather you in from all the nations.” (Sefer Mitzvos Katan, Mitzvah 1)



# Mishpatim

ורפא ירפא (כא, ט).

*And he shall surely heal. (21:19)*

The Gemora in Bava Kama 85a says, “From here we learn that a doctor is permitted to heal.” Rashi explains that if not for this verse, we might have said, “The Merciful One smites, and this man heals?!” Similarly, Tosafos says that the Torah uses a double expression “heal he shall heal” because if it had only said “heal” one time, we would have thought that a doctor may only heal a wound inflicted by a person, but to heal a sickness would be like going against the decree of the King.

Special permission was given for a doctor to heal, but in general the principle remains true: taking action to reverse a situation brought about by Hashem is considered rebelling against Hashem’s decree. This is all the more true in the case of effort to end the exile – not only is there no special permission for such effort, but it was explicitly forbidden. (Rabbi Moshe N. Kahana Shapira, printed in Daas Harabbanim, p. 38)



אחרי רבים להטות (כג, ב).

*Follow the majority opinion. (23:2)*

At the Knessia Gedolah of Agudath Israel in Marienbad, 1937, the central topic of discussion was the recent proposal of England’s Peel Commission to

partition Palestine, designating a piece for a Jewish state.

When Rabbi Elchonon Wasserman and Reb Ahron Kotler saw that the Knessia was even considering the idea of a Jewish state, they wanted to leave in protest. But Reb Chaim Ozer Grodzensky, who was ill and not able to attend himself, sent them a message that they should not leave.

The Brisker Rav, who was not at the Knessia, was also very angry when he heard that they were considering the idea of a Jewish state, which would bring bloodshed, G-d forbid. He lamented, "They are sitting and discussing whether it is permitted to give up on part of Eretz Yisroel, but to give up on one Jewish life is definitely forbidden!" Reb Avrohom Kalmanovitz visited the Brisker Rav and tried to calm him, saying, "What difference does it make what the Agudah says? The British aren't going to take the opinion of rabbis into consideration in any case."

The Brisker Rav opened a Gemora to Sanhedrin 26a and read: "Shevna's lectures were attended by 130,000 people, and Chizkiyah's lectures were attended by 110,000 people. When Sancheiriv came and besieged Jerusalem, Shevna wrote a note and delivered it with a shooting arrow: 'Shevna and his followers surrender, Chizkiyah and his followers do not surrender.' Chizkiyah was afraid, saying, 'Perhaps the mind of the Holy One, blessed is He, follows the majority. Since the majority will be delivered into the hands of Sancheiriv, we will also.' The prophet Yishayah came and said to him, 'Do not call a conspiracy, what this people calls a conspiracy.' In other words, it is a conspiracy of the wicked, and a conspiracy of the wicked does not count."

He finished reading and explained, "Yishayah told Chizkiyah that G-d indeed goes after the majority, but the opinion of the wicked does not count toward determining that majority. Here also, G-d does not care about the plans of the secular Zionists. He looks only at what the Torah Jews say. At this Knessia the majority of the gedolim of our generation are present, and G-d goes after the majority - we cannot call them "a conspiracy of wicked people." If they decide that there should be a state, then I am afraid that there will be a state.

“In our holy Torah, it makes no difference what character this Jewish state will have. Even if it would be a Jewish state run completely according to the Torah law, even if the president and prime minister would be Reb Chaim Ozer, and everything would be done according to the Torah – even then it is forbidden that even one Jew be killed in order to establish a Jewish state. That is the crux of the issue here. The issue is not how the Jewish state will be run, religiously or secularly. The point is that it is forbidden for Jewish blood to be spilled for the purpose of establishing a Jewish state. And since it is impossible to accomplish the partition without spilling Jewish blood, it is forbidden to accept this plan.”

“But,” said Reb Avrohom, “why does the Rav say that there will be bloodshed? The plan is that the British and the League of Nations will carry out the partition peacefully, with the agreement of the Arabs.” “It will never be so,” said the Brisker Rav. “The Arabs will never agree to the establishment of a Jewish state. There will definitely be bloodshed. Even if there were only a possibility of bloodshed it would be forbidden, all the more so now that it is definite bloodshed.” (Teshuvos Vehanhagos v. 2 siman 140, Peninei Rabbeinu Hagriz p. 148)

When confronted with the clear halacha that the Jewish people is forbidden to found a state during exile, and that the state causes bloodshed, some people respond, “This halacha is not practically relevant because the state has already been founded by secularist Jews who do not ask halachic questions. The question for us is how we should relate to the state.” But the Brisker Rav has shown us, based on the Gemora in Sanhedrin, the fallacy of this argument. The Gemora teaches us two important things: 1) Hashem guides the Jewish people in the direction the majority of them want to go; 2) He takes into account only the opinion of Jews loyal to the Torah. It is our vote that counts!

\* \* \*

Two young yeshiva men from Lithuania found themselves in Switzerland at the end of the Second World War, and there they became admirers of the Satmar Rebbe. Before they left Switzerland for Eretz Yisroel, they came to the Rebbe and said, “Satmarer Rav, Chazal say that a person should take leave of his fellow with a word of halacha. Let the Rebbe tell us a halacha!” The Rebbe thought for a minute and then said, “The Chazal ask in the Midrash, which halacha? And

they answer, 'Yochid verabim halacha kerabim – the halacha is determined by the majority.' Why this halacha? Because the goyim say to us, we are the majority, so you must follow us. We reply that we are a berya (a complete organism) and a berya cannot be nullified. That's a good answer for the goyim, but what do we say to the bad Jews who tell us, 'Chaveirim kol yisroel,' all Jews are friends, and we should be like them, since they are, unfortunately, the majority. The answer is, the minority only becomes nullified if there is a mixture. But if we stay completely separate, we do not have to be like them. Nu, you are now going to a place where those Jews say, 'All Jews are friends,' and they are the majority. On this Chazal say: a person should become potur (free) from chaveiro (his friend), from someone who argues that you and he are friends, through the use of halacha. Which halacha? The halacha that the minority must give in only if it is mixed together with the majority, but if it stays separate, it will not give in. That is the only way to save yourself from the argument of going after the majority in Eretz Yisroel!" (Pe'ulas Tzadik Lechaim, p. 55)



# Terumah

ועשו לי מקדש ושכנתי בתוכם (כה,ח).

*“And they shall make Me a Sanctuary, and I shall dwell in their midst.”*  
(25:8)

The Midrash in Parshas Toldos tells the following story: In the days of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya, the evil kingdom (Rome) decreed that the Beis Hamikdash be built. Papos and Lulianos set up tables from Acco to Antioch and they supplied the Jews coming up from exile with gold, silver and all their needs. The Cuthites went and said, “Be it known to the king that if this rebellious city is built and its walls completed, they will not pay the king land tax, head tax or other taxes.” He said to them, “What can I do? I already decreed.” They said to him, “Send a message to the Jews that they must either build the city in a different place, or they must add five cubits or take away five cubits from it. Then they will stop on their own.” The Jews were gathered at that time in the valley of Beis Rimon. When the letter with the king’s new decree arrived, they began to cry. They wanted to rebel against the government. They said, “Let a wise man go and appease the multitude. Let Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya go, for he is a master scholar of Torah.” He went and spoke to them as follows: “Once a lion was eating and a bone got stuck in his throat. He said, ‘Whoever comes and gets it out, I will give him a reward.’ An Egyptian kura-bird with a long neck came, stuck his neck in and took it out. He said, ‘Give me my reward.’ The lion said, ‘Go boast that you entered the lion’s mouth in peace and came out in peace.’ So too, it is enough for us that we entered our exile under this nation in peace and came out in peace.” (Bereishis Rabbah 64:10)

The Satmar Rav asked: Why does it say that the evil kingdom “decreed” that the Beis Hamikdash be built? “Decree” usually means something bad. He answered this with another story, from Midrash Eicha 1:31:

When Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai met Vespasian outside the walls of Jerusalem, Pangar the prince of Arabia was also present. They asked Rabbi Yochanan, “What should be done with a barrel in which a snake took up residence?” Rabbi Yochanan understood that this was a metaphor for the Holy City, in which the militant factions of Jews were living and preventing any Jew from making peace with Rome. He replied, “Bring a snake charmer and charm the snake out and keep the barrel.” But Pangar said, “Kill the snake and break the barrel.” Rabbi Yochanan said to Pangar: “You are a bad neighbor! Instead of being our defender, you have become our prosecutor!” Pangar said, “I mean it for your own good. For as long as the Beis Hamikdash is standing, kings will fight wars against you.” Rabbi Yochanan said, “Your heart knows whether you intended for good or for bad.”

Rabbi Yochanan did not say that Pangar was wrong, only that his intentions were bad. The Beis Hamikdash was a cause for great jealousy among the gentile nations, and it was only Hashem’s protection that made the Jewish people safe during the time it stood. But now, when the time of its destruction had arrived and Hashem no longer guaranteed this special protection, it would be not be good for them to have the Beis Hamikdash. All the more so that it should not be built during exile! Therefore, the later Roman decision to build the Beis Hamikdash was called a “decree”. (Vayoel Moshe 1:60)

The Midrash Lekach Tov brings this same story about the rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdash in relation to the verse in Shir Hashirim 8:4, “I have adjured you, daughters of Jerusalem: why do you arouse and why do you awake the love before it is desired?” Why, asks the Lekach Tov, is the wording of this oath different from the first two (2:7 and 3:5)? In the first two, it says, “I have adjured you not to arouse” and here it says “why do you arouse”. The answer is that the third oath refers to time when the Romans gave permission to build the Temple and then revoked it, and the Jews wanted to rebel. Rabbi Yehoshua said to them, “Is it not enough that Hashem lets us live among the nations? Are we to rebel against our Creator’s command, to wait until redemption is desired in Heaven?”



והבית בהבנתו אבן שלמה מסע נבנה ומקבת והגרזן כל כלי ברזל לא נשמע  
בבית בהבנתו (מלכים א' ו,ז).

*And the Temple was built of complete stones, as they came; no chisel,  
ax or other iron tool was heard in the Temple as it was being built.  
(Melachim I 6:7)*

The Gemora (Gittin 68a) says that Shlomo Hamelech used the shamir to cut the stones for the Temple. The Gemora relates how he captured Ashmedai, king of the demons, and asked him where to find the shamir. Later, Ashmedai threw Shlomo out of his kingdom and then, taking on the appearance of Shlomo Hamelech, acted as king himself. Meanwhile, the true Shlomo Hamelech was going from door to door with his walking stick and telling everyone that he was the true king. All the Jews thought he was insane, for they saw Shlomo Hamelech sitting on his throne and the kingdom running as usual. But then he came to the Sanhedrin, who said, "We know that an insane person does not just do one insane thing." And this led them to investigate and discover that the "Shlomo Hamelech" sitting on the throne was an impostor.

Reb Amram Blau wrote in 1948: Today we find ourselves in the same situation as Shlomo Hamelech. Ashmedai did not merely conquer Shlomo Hamelech and usurp his throne, as one king conquers another. He stole Shlomo's name as well, and proceeded to run the kingdom in the name of Shlomo, thus denying the identity of the true Shlomo. And Shlomo, the true wise man, appeared to be insane. He cried out, "I am Shlomo!" but no one listened. Today as well, the Zionists have stolen our name, "Israel," and they pretend to represent the Jewish people in the world, thus denying the identity of the true Israel, the people of Hashem, the people of the Torah. And our situation is worse than that of Shlomo, for at least Ashmedai, it seems, ruled the kingdom in the same way Shlomo ruled it. But the Zionists are using our name for a purpose that is the opposite of our national purpose - to deny the Torah and rebel against Hashem's decree of exile. And the Jewish people cries out to the world, who help this terrible forgery to exist - but no one listens.

But we must derive an important lesson from the story of Shlomo Hamelech.

Shlomo never gave up even for a minute his claim, “I am Shlomo!” It was a claim that made everyone think he was insane, it was a claim that seemed futile. He could easily have decided to make peace with the facts and recognize, at least temporarily, the kingship of Ashmedai in the name of Shlomo. He could have stopped claiming to be Shlomo, and the world would no longer have called him insane. And in his wisdom, he could definitely have attained an important post in the government, to salvage whatever could be salvaged of his power. This might have appeared to be the best strategy. But had he done this, all hope would have been lost! For we see in the story that the way he eventually got his kingdom back was through his claim, “I am Shlomo,” and through the wisdom of the Sanhedrin, who knew that an insane person does not just do one insane thing. Rashi explains, “He does not stick to saying one insane thing all the time.” Had Shlomo abandoned his claim, even temporarily, this line of reason would have been gone, and even the Sanhedrin would have agreed that his claim had been no more than a sign of insanity. (Mishkenos Haro’im, p. 910)



# Purim

ישנו עם אחד מפזר ומפרד בין העמים בכל מדינות מלכותך וגו' (אסתר ג,ח).

*“There is one people, scattered and separated among the peoples, in all the states of your kingdom...” (Megillas Esther 3:8)*

The Ramban asks: Why were the Jews still scattered in all the states? Just a few years earlier, the first Persian king Cyrus had given permission for the Jews to return to Eretz Yisroel and build the Temple (Ezra 1:3). The permission to build the Temple was later revoked, but we should still expect to find most of the Jews back in Eretz Yisroel. And even later, when Darius reinstated the permission, only about 1500 Jews came up with Ezra from Babylonia (Ezra 8:1-20). The answer is, he says, that the Jews would not have taken advantage of these kings' offers had they not been foretold by a prophet, speaking in the name of Hashem. That prophet was Yirmiyahu, who said (29:10), “When seventy years of Babylonia are complete, I will revisit you.” Now, the Jews were uncertain whether these kings had meant to give permission for all the tribes of Israel to return, or only for Yehuda. And even if they had meant to give permission to all of Israel, perhaps Yirmiyahu's prophecy had only referred to those Jews living in Babylonia proper, not in all the 127 Persian states. The king's permission was not enough; they needed Hashem's permission as well. Without Hashem's permission, they had no right to leave exile; this would be “forcing the End.” (Ramban, Sefer Hageulah, Shaar 1)



ויכתב בשם המלך אחשורש ויחתם בטבעת המלך וגו' אשר נתן המלך

ליהודים אשר בכל עיר ועיר להקהל ולעמד על נפשם וגו' (אסתר ח, י-יא).

*And he wrote in the name of King Achashverosh, and sealed with the king's ring...that the king gave permission for the Jews in every city to gather and fight for their lives... (Megillas Esther 8:10-11)*

Rabbi Avraham Loewenstamm, in his work Tzeror Hachaim (published 1820), asks: Why were the Jews so full of joy after Mordechai's new decree was publicized? Mordechai did not revoke Haman's decree – as it says above (8:8), a decree of the king was not allowed to be revoked – but merely stated that the Jews had the right to defend themselves. They had known all the time that they could try to defend themselves, but they were very few in number compared to all the gentiles in all the states of the king, and therefore they had felt that there was no hope. That was why they had been fasting and praying all this time. And now, Mordechai achieved this new decree that they were allowed to defend themselves – what was there to rejoice about? Everything was the same as before.

The answer is, he says, that the Jewish people knew that their strength did not lie in physical power or in superior numbers, but in the help of Hashem. The Tanach is full of stories of a few Jews defeating a mighty gentile army – the wars of the Canaanites, Yonasan's war against the Philistines, Gideon against the Midyanites. But in this case, the Jews were in exile, and they feared that they were forbidden to fight back against the gentiles under the oath against “rebelling against the nations,” since the king had not given explicit permission for this fight. If so, were they to fight back they would not only not enjoy Hashem's help, they would anger Him by violating the oath. Therefore, their sole weapons against Haman's decree were prayer, fasting and repentance. Once their prayers were answered and Haman was hanged, the king said to Mordechai and Esther, “Write any decree you want regarding the Jews, as long as you don't go against Haman's decree.” Haman's decree had not specifically stated that the Jews had no permission to defend themselves, so Mordechai wrote that they had this permission. Once the fear of the oath was gone, the Jews once again trusted that with Hashem's help they would overcome their enemies.

From the words of the Tzeror Hachaim we see that even if keeping the oaths means the death of the majority of the Jewish people, such as would have happened under Haman's plan, it is forbidden to violate the oaths. This same opinion is voiced by the Maharal in Netzach Yisroel, end of chapter 24: "Another explanation of the Midrash's statement that Hashem adjured the Jewish people in a generation of forced sin (shmad): that even if they will threaten to kill them with difficult torture, they will not leave [the exile] nor will they change their behavior in this manner."

The Satmar Rav asks: Why should one be killed rather than violate the Three Oaths? Don't we hold that there are only three sins – idolatry, murder, and immorality - for which one must be killed rather than transgress? (Vayael Moshe 1:32) He answers that violating the oaths is tantamount to heresy, because when the Jewish people rebel against the nations in exile or try to leave exile, they are in effect saying, "Our fate is in our own hands; Hashem does not run the world." In other areas such as making a living or medicine we are permitted to make efforts and so those efforts do not amount to denial of Hashem; but in the area of exile and redemption human effort was explicitly forbidden by the oaths. Thus, a violation of the oaths is, in effect, a denial of Hashem's control over the world. The Radbaz (4:92) rules that heresy has the same status as idolatry, for which one must be killed rather than transgress (Vayael Moshe 1:76).

Another answer to the Satmar Rav's question is given by Rabbi Yehoshua Dovid Hartman in his notes on the Maharal. The Minchas Chinuch in mitzvah 425 argues that the obligation to kill the Canaanites applies even when the Jew's life will be endangered by fulfilling this obligation. His proof is that the Torah commands the Jewish people to wage wars against the Canaanites. It is only natural that in the course of a war, some people are killed on both sides. The Torah's laws are not predicated on miracles. So it must be that implicit in the command to wage war is the fact that one must give his life for this mitzvah. In a similar way, we can say that the prohibition to rebel against the nations or to leave exile on our own is, by its nature, a law that implies danger and even death, since the nature of life among the nations is that sometimes they kill Jews. When the Gemora says that there are only three sins for which one must be killed rather than transgress, it does not need to count laws such as fighting the Canaanites or the Three Oaths, which are by their very nature dangerous laws.



מפני מה נתחייבו שונאיהן של ישראל שבאותו הדור כליה וכו' מפני שנהנו מסעודתו של אותו רשע (מגילה י"ב ע"א).

*Why did the Jews in that generation deserve destruction? Because they had pleasure from the meal of that wicked man (King Achashverosh).*

*(Megillah 12a)*

Rabbi Bentzion Sternfeld, rav of Bilsk, an older contemporary of the Chofetz Chaim (his approbation is printed in the Mishnah Berurah), asked: Why did they deserve such a severe punishment for this? And why does it say that they “had pleasure” – it should say that they ate. The answer is that the Jews wanted to attend the feast in order to get on good terms with the king and his ministers, and eventually ask him to reinstate the permission to return to Eretz Yisroel and build the Temple. Mordechai told them not to go, for the redemption must come from Hashem, not through political means. A few Jews disobeyed Mordechai, but their numbers were small enough that the entire people would not have been punished on their account. However, most of the Jews “had pleasure” in the fact that this small group of Jews went to the feast and made these political efforts. It is this pleasure that showed their lack of trust in Hashem’s deliverance, and this was the sin for which they deserved the decree of Haman. (Shaarei Tzion, Parshas Zachor Drush 4)



# Ki Sisa

וישמע יהושע את קול העם ברעה ויאמר אל משה קול מלחמה במחנה.  
 ויאמר אין קול ענות גבורה ואין קול ענות חלושה קול ענות אנכי שמע  
 (לב, יז-יח).

*And Yehoshua heard the sound of the people as they shouted, and he said to Moshe, “The sound of war is in the camp!” And he said, “It is not the sound of cries of victory, nor the sound of cries of defeat, but the sound of singing that I hear.” (32:17-18)*

Rashi explains that this sound of singing means “the sound of blaspheming and reviling, that afflict the soul of the one who hears them.” The Chasam Sofer writes that Yehoshua also understood that there was blasphemous singing going on in the camp, but he reasoned, “It is impossible that the righteous could be silent at such an act! There must be a war in the camp!” Moshe also shared this assumption, and this explains why he did not break the tablets on the top of the mountain, as soon as he heard from Hashem that the people worshipped the golden calf. He reasoned that there were certainly faithful Jews who were fighting the worshippers of the calf, and for these faithful Jews he would bring down the tablets. When he came down, however, and saw that there was no war, he broke them. Such was the reasoning of Moshe and Yehoshua: that whenever an abomination is committed by a segment of the Jewish people, there must be at least some faithful ones who fight it. Even if they are not strong enough to stop the sinners, the mere fact that they are fighting is precious in the eyes of Hashem, and for such people it is worth bringing down the holy tablets of the Torah.



פן תכרות ברית ליושב הארץ וזנו אחרי אלהיהם וזבחו לאלהיהם וקרא לך  
ואכלת מזבחם, ולקחת מבנותיו לבניך וגו' (שמות לד, טו-טז).

*Lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they go astray after their gods, and sacrifice to their gods, and they call to you and you eat of their sacrifice, and you take their daughters for your sons... (34:15-16)*

The Gemora says that Chazal forbade the bread of a gentile lest one come to drink his wine, and they forbade his wine lest one come to marry his daughters (Shabbos 17b). They eventually extended this decree to the Kuthites, for although they kept some of the Torah, they were found to be worshipping idols (Chullin 6a).

When Rabbi Yehoshua Leib Diskin, in his last years, heard about the new Zionist movement, he realized the danger it posed to the Jewish people. He called for his two of his greatest disciples, Rabbi Zorach Braverman and Rabbi Moshe Frankenthal, and said to them, "Write letters in my name to three of the gedolei hador, asking them to call a meeting of rabbanim to decide how to stop this movement before it is too late. There is a fearful danger looming on the horizon of Judaism, a danger the likes of which never existed before. This movement is likely to bring destruction on the Jewish people! Write that in my opinion, the rabbanim should get together and excommunicate the Zionists from the Jewish people. They should forbid their bread, their wine, and intermarriage with them, just as Chazal did to the Kuthites. I am certain that if we do not take this step, the Jewish people will eventually regret it." But some people questioned the need for the such an extreme step - the Zionist leaders were known to be irreligious and heretical, and so in any case no good Jew would pay any attention to them. Others warned that the Zionists had support in the gentile world, and fighting them would only backfire. Still others said that it would be impossible to organize such a gathering because the Maskilim had connections in the governments and they would work hard to prevent the gathering. So in the end, the gathering never took place. Reb Yehoshua Leib was always upset about this and he warned, "A day will come when they will realize the correctness of my suggestion." (Mara D'ara Yisroel, v. 2 p. 43)

\* \* \*

Reb Yaakov Leizer, the Pshevorsker Rebbe, related the following story about the Shinover Rav. Once the Shinover Rav's grandson, Reb Chuna of Kalashitz, was sick, and the doctors said that the only cure was to drink wine of a certain type. Kosher wine of that type was only available from Carmel in Eretz Yisroel. The Shinover Rav ruled, "Carmel wine has the status of idolatrous wine. If one must drink idolatrous wine, better to drink wine made by gentiles, not Carmel, so that no one should make any mistake!" (Mishkenos Haro'im, p. 199)



ולקחתי אתכם מן הגוים וקבצתי אתכם מן הארצות והבאתי אתכם אל  
אדמתכם (יחזקאל לו, כד).

*And I will take you from the nations, and gather you from the lands,  
and I will bring you to your land. (Yechezkel 36:24)*

"Hashem builds Jerusalem; he will gather the dispersed of Israel. He heals the broken-hearted, and bandages up their sadness." (Tehillim 147:2-3) The Zohar derives from this verse the order of events in the time of Moshiach. First, Hashem will build Jerusalem. Then He will gather in the exiles. Lastly, He will revive the dead. (Midrash Haneelam v. 1 p. 139a)

But the Gemora in Megillah 17b seems to say otherwise. The Gemora says that the order of the blessings of Shmoneh Esrei corresponds to the order of events in the time of Moshiach. After the exiles are gathered in, justice will be meted out against the wicked, then the heretics will perish, and then the pride of the righteous will be raised up. Where will their pride be raised up? In Jerusalem. So it seems that the ingathering of the exiles will precede the building of Jerusalem.

The Satmar Rav explained this according to the Raavad's comment on Eduyos 2:9. The Raavad writes that in every exile, there are two times of redemption: a

number of years, and a number of generations. When the number of years ends, Hashem takes the Jewish people out from their captivity and subservience to the nations, but for the fulfillment of Hashem's promises to them they must wait until the right generation has arrived. This is why even after the time came and they left Egypt, they had to wander in the desert for 40 years until the generation destined to enter the Land had arisen. Similarly in the Babylonian exile, they were released from exile after 70 years, but the building of Jerusalem was not completed until 30 years later, in the time of Nechemiah. In the future as well, we will be gathered from all the lands of our exile to an intermediate place called "the wilderness of the nations," and when the right generation arrives we will go from there to Eretz Yisroel. This intermediate place is described by Yechezkel: "And I will take you out from the nations, and I will gather you from the lands where you were dispersed, with a strong hand and an outstretched arm and poured out wrath. And I will bring you to the wilderness of the nations, and I will contend with you there face to face. As I contended with your ancestors in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will contend with you, said Hashem G-d. And I will make you pass under the rod, and I will bring you into My covenant. And I will filter out from you the rebellious and the sinners against Me; from the land of their sojourn I will remove them, but to the Land of Israel they will not come, and you shall know that I am Hashem." (Yechezkel 20:34-38)

The blessing in Shmoneh Esrei about the ingathering of the exiles refers to this first stage, when the Jews will be gathered into the wilderness of the nations. This stage comes before the building of Jerusalem. Therefore, the blessing reads simply, "Who gathers in the dispersed of His people Israel," without saying to where. Some versions of the Nusach Ari have the word "l'artzeinu" - to our land - in the middle of the blessing. The Arizal himself said that this blessing has 20 words, so those versions would seem to be incorrect. And even if they are correct, certainly our prayer is eventually to return to Eretz Yisroel, but the order of the blessings laid out in the Gemora in Megillah 17b relates to their main subjects, expressed in the endings of the blessings, which are the most important part. Here the main subject of the blessing is not the return to Eretz Yisroel. (Vayael Moshe 1:22)

# Vayakhel/Pekudei

ויקהל משה את כל עדת בני ישראל ויאמר אלהם אלה הדברים אשר צוה ה'  
לעשות אתם...קחו מאתכם תרומה לה' וגו' (לה,א-ה).

*And Moshe gathered all the congregation of the children of Israel and said to them, "These are the things that Hashem commanded to do... take from yourselves a contribution to Hashem..." (35:1,5)*

The Zohar points out the difference between the wording here and the wording at the beginning of Parshas Terumah. There it says, "From every man whose heart inspires him to donate, shall you take My contribution" (25:2), but here it says "take from yourselves a contribution." The reason, says the Zohar, is that Hashem originally commanded the building of the Mishkan before the sin of the golden calf, and then He allowed Moshe to take contributions even from the Eirev Rav, the mixed multitude of Egyptians and other gentiles who had joined the Jewish people. But after the Eirev Rav had instigated the sin of the golden calf, they were excluded from the building of the Mishkan. This is why the Parsha begins with Moshe gathering the Jews. Since the Eirev Rav was mixed into the nation, Moshe had to separate them out from the Eirev Rav.

The Satmar Rav asked: According to this, the Torah should have said, "And Moshe separated out the children of Israel..." Why does it say that he gathered them? The answer is, he said, that the Eirev Rav was very powerful and organized, and they were greater in number than the loyal Jews. Hashem had commanded not to give them the privilege of contributing to the Mishkan, but it would be very hard to avoid their pressure. It is possible for Jews to learn Torah and keep mitzvos as individuals even if they are not organized and united, but in order to stand up against the influence of the Eirev Rav and to ensure completely separateness from them, it was necessary to unite the loyal Jews. Only when

they were gathered could they stay separate. (Divrei Yoel, p. 347)



וירא משה את כל המלאכה והנה עשו אתה כאשר צוה ה' כן עשו ויברך  
אתם משה (לט,מג).

*And Moshe saw all the work, and behold, they had done it as Hashem had commanded, so had they done; and Moshe blessed them. (39:43)*

The Baal Haturim writes (40:21) that the words “as Hashem commanded Moshe” appear 18 times in Parshas Pekudei, and this is why the Sages enacted the 18 blessings of Shmoneh Esrei. Additionally we have the above verse – “as Hashem had commanded, so had they done” – and corresponding to this, they enacted the nineteenth blessing, the Blessing Against the Heretics.

Once a man complained to the Satmar Rav, “My son is caught up with the kannaim – he is always leading demonstrations and protests against the Zionists. I know it’s important to fight the Zionists, but shouldn’t it be the gedolim and rabbanim who do the fighting, not simple Jews?” The Satmar Rav replied, “No! Every Jew must fight the heretics; the rabbanim do not exempt the others from this obligation. Look at the Baal Haturim’s comment on Parshas Pekudei. The verse “so had they done” corresponds to the Blessing Against the Heretics, because this verse does not say that only Moshe did the work, it says that all the Jews did it. Fighting heretics is something for which every Jew must take responsibility.” (Toros Ve’uvdos Mibeis Raboseinu, p. 209)

To elaborate on this theme, we might add that Chazal say that the total number of prophets who ever lived was one million two hundred thousand, or twice the number of Jewish men who left Egypt (Megillah 14a). The commentators explain the significance of this number based on the concept that there are six hundred thousand souls in the Jewish people. This means roots of soul, so that although there have always been more than that number of Jews living in the world, every Jewish soul is a branch of one of these root souls. Every root

soul has a different nature, and so he needs to hear his rebuke in a different way and from a different prophet. Therefore, it was not sufficient to send one prophet to rebuke all the people; Hashem had to send two per root soul, so that every root soul should receive two rebukes. The same is true of the fight against heretics. There are today, unfortunately, a large number of religious Jews who have never been taught what is true Torah belief and what is heresy. They need to be enlightened, but no single person, not even a gadol hador, is able to reach everyone. Moreover, people are more likely to be influenced by the views of someone they know well and trust. It is therefore incumbent on everyone, great or small, to reach out to those under his influence – family members, students, friends, co-workers - and to make some protest, in his own little arena, against the pervasive heresy of our time.

\* \* \*

The Blessing Against Heretics begins as follows: “And for the informers let there be no hope, and may all the heretics perish in an instant...”

During the war of 1967, when the Jewish world was swept away by the Zionists’ swift victory, the Satmar Rav was very upset. He lamented this great downfall in the Jewish people’s faith, that so many people who had until then been clean of Zionism were suddenly infected with this poisonous heresy, the heresy of believing that Jews were permitted to stand up and fight for themselves during exile, or that Eretz Yisroel should be under Jewish control. During the tense period before the war, the Rebbe had prayed tirelessly that the Jews in Eretz Yisroel might be saved from danger in such a way that no trial of faith would result. However, some Zionists attempted to dampen the Rebbe’s influence by claiming that he had wanted the Arabs to win the war and then, G-d forbid, take out their anger on the Jews of Eretz Yisroel.

The Rebbe was very upset by these false accusations, and he spoke about them at Shalosh Seudos of Parshas Naso, just after the war ended. “I always wondered,” he said, “why the informers are mentioned in the Blessing Against the Heretics. What do informers have to do with heretics? But now I have an answer. The informers mentioned here are not only people who speak to the gentiles against

the Jews, but also people who speak to the Jewish people in general against those Jews who carry on the fight against heretics. They try to blacken us in the eyes of the world with falsehoods, claiming that we hate Jews, that we have no sympathy for Jews, so that our fight will not be successful. Therefore we pray, “For the informers let there be no hope” so that “all the heretics perish in an instant” – for only when the informers are stopped will we be able to fight the heretics.



# SEFER VAYIKRA



# Vayikra

אדם כי יקריב מכם קרבן לה' מן הבהמה מן הבקר ומן הצאן תקריבו את  
קרבנכם (א,ב).

*If any man among you offers an offering to Hashem, from the animals,  
from the cattle or from the sheep shall you bring your offering. (1:2)*

The Toras Kohanim says that from the word “man” we learn that gerim (converts) may also bring offerings. The Korban Aharon asks: Why did the Torah have to teach us this? It is well known that even gentiles may bring offerings, as the Torah mentions later (22:25; see Rashi there). Why should a convert be any worse than a gentile?

We can answer this question using the Gemora in Chullin 5a. The Gemora derives from the word “mikem” (among you) that we do not accept offerings from a mumar. “Mumar” is defined in this case as a Jew who worships idols or violates Shabbos in public. Then the Gemora derives from the same word that this exclusion of mumar only applies to Jews, but we may accept an offering from a gentile even if he worships idols.

Why is a Jewish idolater worse than a gentile idolater? After all, the gentiles are also forbidden to worship idols. The answer is twofold. First of all, because a Jew has more holiness, he has a greater level of defilement when emptied of that holiness. This concept is explained by the Ohr Hachaim in Parshas Chukas, in the context of the laws of the defiling power of a dead body. Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai holds that the dead body of a Jew renders anyone in the same room defiled, whereas the dead body of a gentile does not. The Ohr Hachaim gives the analogy of two barrels, one full of honey and the other full of manure. When emptied out and then left in the sun to rot, the barrel that once contained honey

attracts more flies, due to its sweetness. So too, when a Jewish body is emptied of its holy soul, the powers of defilement are attracted to it more than to a gentile's dead body, because the gentile's soul had less holiness.

Secondly, a Jew who goes off the path of Torah is more likely to influence other Jews than a gentile. A person is naturally more influenced by one of his own kind. The Rambam expresses this in his Laws of Idolatry (10:1): "One may not kill a gentile idolater, but Jewish informers and heretics were to be killed and thrust into the pit of destruction, for they afflict Israel and lead the people astray from following Hashem." Therefore, we do not accept offerings from a Jewish "mumar", in order to stay as far from him as possible.

Now we can explain the statement about converts. Of course a convert may bring an offering, but one might have thought that a convert has the status of a gentile as far as the exclusion of "mumar" is concerned, that even if he reverts back to his old religion and worships idols we may accept an offering from him. The Torah teaches that no, he is a full Jew with the same holiness and influence as any other Jew, and therefore if he worships idols we do not accept his offering. (Divrei Yoel, p. 60)

\* \* \*

In the late 1800's, the maskilim influenced the Hungarian government to pass a law that all Jewish boys must go to school and learn Hungarian and other secular subjects. Then they attempted to influence the government to found separate Jewish schools, in which the Jewish children could learn from Jewish teachers. The Kedushas Yom Tov fought against this idea, saying it was better to go to a gentile school than to learn from "enlightened" Jewish teachers who would lead children astray. Such schools were built throughout Hungary, but in Marmarosh, the province surrounding Sighet, the Kedushas Yom Tov's influence was such that no secular Jewish schools were built there during his lifetime.

Once the gentile mayor of Sighet came to the Kedushas Yom Tov's house to discuss the matter with him. "Is it a sin," asked the mayor, "for a Jewish child to sit with an uncovered head?" "Yes," said the Kedushas Yom Tov. "In the gentile

schools,” said the mayor, “the Jewish children are forced to sit with uncovered heads. But we are giving you permission to build a separate Jewish school in Sighet, which will be under your supervision. The children can cover their heads, and keep every detail of the Torah. Why won’t you agree to save them from sin?”

“Whatever sins the child does in the gentile school,” answered the Kedushas Yom Tov, “he is forced to do, and G-d will not hold it against him. We need not fear that what he sees there will make an impression on him and cause him to act that way for the rest of his life, because he knows that the teacher is not a Jew and although he learns math and language from him, it will not occur to him to learn from the teacher anything relating to religion. As far as religion, his home will be the sole influence on him. But if the teacher is Jewish, the child will come to respect him and see him as wiser than his own father, since his father does not know these secular subjects. He will imbibe the teacher’s views on religion as well, and these views will stay with him for his whole life. These Jewish teachers tend to be heretical or at least critical of our ancient beliefs. Their influence on our children would be far worse than a few sins the child will be forced to commit.” (Shailos Utshuvos Divrei Yoel, Choshen Mishpat 141)



# Tzav

אם על תודה יקריבנו וגו' (ז,יב).

*If he brings the offering for thanksgiving... (7:12)*

Rashi says that this thanksgiving is for a miracle performed for the person, in which he was saved from a dangerous situation, for example, one who returns from a sea voyage, a desert trek, one who was released from jail, or one who recovered from an illness. Nowadays we have no thank-offerings, but Chazal instituted the blessing “Hagomel” for these same situations. The Shulchan Aruch (219:9) says that these four cases are only examples, and one should say the blessing after being saved from any dangerous situation.

We have already mentioned once (Toldos, p. 35) the Satmar Rav’s statement that the danger in Eretz Yisroel is so great that one living there should say the blessing “Hagomel” every morning to thank Hashem that he woke up alive and did not see the fulfillment of the terrifying punishment for the violation of the Three Oaths. Now we will take this opportunity to quote some of the predictions of Torah scholars of past generations regarding Eretz Yisroel in the era just prior to the coming of Moshiach.

The Abarbanel writes, “Hashem will put into the hearts of the nations of Edom to conquer the lands of Yishmael, and in particular the Land of the Deer (i.e. Eretz Yisroel), for all of them long for that land since the grave of Oso Ho’ish is there. And especially when they see Jews gathered there, their anger will burn and they will conquer those lands, and they will smite the descendants of Yishmael with the sword and killing and destruction, and the descendants of Yishmael will gather and go to war against them in Jerusalem, and they will kill them and destroy them.” (Mayanei Hayeshua 11:8)

Rabbi Shaul Brach of Kasho quotes this Abarbanel, and then comments, “And it was regarding this war that Bilam said, ‘Woe, who can survive this, G-d (alef lamed)?’ (Bamidbar 24:23) – referring to the coming of the nations that have the Divine Name alef-lamed as part of their name (i.e. Yishmael). And there will be no natural way to escape alive from this war, and only those as holy as the angels will be left. Regarding them Yishaya said (4:3), ‘Anyone who is left in Zion and Jerusalem will be called holy, all who are written for life in Jerusalem.’ Who can be sure of himself that he will be among those holy ones who will survive?” (Introduction to Avos Al Banim)

Rabbi Menachem Azariah of Fano (d. 1620) quotes the above verse in Yishaya, and then explains, “The number of these people who will be called ‘holy’ is seven thousand, as we find that the word ‘left over’ is used in another place in Tanach (Melachim I 19:18) in reference to seven thousand.” (Maamar Tzevaos Hashem 3:9)

Rabbi Avraham Azulai (d. 1643) also gives this number: “Know that we have a tradition in our hands that on that day when the king Moshiach will come to Eretz Yisroel with the ingathered exiles, he will find there in Eretz Yisroel seven thousand Jews.” (Chesed L’Avraham 3:22). (It is said that whenever the Satmar Rav quoted this statement of the Chesed L’Avraham, he would tremble.)

Let us conclude with a prayer that these predictions be fulfilled in a peaceful way!



# Pesach

ואילו לא הוציא הקב"ה את אבותינו ממצרים הרי אנו ובנינו ובני בנינו  
משועבדים היינו לפרעה במצרים (הגדה של פסח).

*If the Holy One, blessed is He, had not taken our forefathers out of  
Egypt, we and our children and our children's children would be slaves  
to Pharaoh in Egypt. (Hagadah)*

The Satmar Rav commented: We see here that the Jewish people would have preferred to stay slaves in Egypt than to redeem themselves. For it says that if Hashem had not redeemed us, we would still be slaves, and it is assumed as obvious that we would never have tried to rise up and rebel against Pharaoh. (Machzor Divrei Yoel)



כנגד ארבעה בנים דברה תורה אחד חכם אחד רשע אחד תם ואחד שאינו  
יודע לשאול (הגדה של פסח).

*The Torah spoke of four sons: one wise, one wicked, one simple and one  
who does not know to ask. (Hagadah)*

This is our version of the text, but the Yerushalmi (Pesachim 70b) calls the third son “foolish” (tipesh) instead of “simple”. The Satmar Rav commented that from here we can learn the true meaning of the statement of Chazal (Bava Basra 158b) that “the air of Eretz Yisroel makes one wise.” People think it means that anyone who goes there becomes wiser, but the true meaning is that Eretz Yisroel

has the power to accentuate and strengthen any person's tendencies. If he is wise, he will become wiser; but if he is foolish, he will become even more foolish there. Thus the son we call "the simple son" - in the Talmud of Eretz Yisroel is called "the foolish son". (Toros Ve'uvdos Mibeis Raboseinu, p. 333)



רשע מהו אומר, מה העבודה הזאת לכם וכו' ואף אתה הקהה את שיניו  
ואמור לו בעבור זה עשה ה' לי בצאתי ממצרים - לי ולא לו, אילו היה שם  
לא היה נגאל (הגדה של פסח).

*What does the wicked son say? "What is this service to you?" And so you blunt his teeth and say to him, "Because of this Hashem acted for me when I went out of Egypt" – for me and not for him, for had he been there, he would not have been redeemed.*

The Chasam Sofer explains this based on the statement of Chazal (quoted by Rashi on Vayikra 25:43) that one may not tell a Jewish slave, "Shovel under the vines until I return," because this is a job whose end time is unknown. But it is permitted to tell him to shovel for one hour or even several hours, as long as there is a set limit to it, for "drawn-out hope makes the heart sick" (Mishlei 13:12). The reason for this law, suggests the Chasam Sofer, is that the Torah says, "For to Me are the children of Israel slaves; they are My slaves." Thus it is not proper that one Jew should work for another with that type of servitude reserved for the service of the Creator. Our greatest accomplishment is that we sit and wait with unfailing trust for the redemption of Hashem, although we do not know when it will come. Waiting without a known limit is our service of Hashem; we may not serve a human being in this fashion.

Waiting indefinitely is such an important Jewish trait, says the Chasam Sofer, that any display of this trait evokes Divine favor. For example, the Midrash says (Shochar Tov Mishlei 10) that when the rabbi is speaking and the people are listening, Hashem forgives the sins of the Jewish people. The reason is that when the ignorant masses hear the rabbi's complex Torah discourse and do not

understand a word, yet they wait patiently for the stories and mussar at the end of the speech, they are exercising their ability to wait, and this shows that they are well-trained in the service of Hashem.

For the same reason, there is a custom to teach children to recite the names of the different stages of the Seder. The point is to teach them patience, that they must sit at the table and wait till all the stages are completed, and only then may they eat the meal.

The opposite of this virtue was exemplified by the members of the tribe of Ephraim, who could not wait for the end of the Egyptian exile, and left early: “The children of Ephraim, armed and shooting their bows, turned back on the day of battle. They did not keep the covenant of G-d, and in His Torah they refused to walk.” (Tehillim 78:9-10; see Rashi there) Thus their inability to wait eventually let them to reject the entire Torah.

This wicked son as well cannot stand to wait, and therefore he asks, “What is this long service to you? Why do you have to drag it out so much? It’s already time to eat.” We reply to him: “Because of this – in the merit of our waiting for the redemption and not leaving early like the tribe of Ephraim – Hashem redeemed us from Egypt. If you, the impatient son, had been there, you would not have been redeemed.” (Drashos Chasam Sofer v. 2 p. 258)



אילו נתן לנו את התורה ולא הכניסנו לארץ ישראל דיינו (הגדה של פסח).

*If He had given us the Torah but not brought us into Eretz Yisroel, it would have been enough.*

The Chofetz Chaim writes that from here we learn that it is possible for our people to exist even in exile, as long as we fulfill the commandments of the Torah. But in the reverse situation – to live in Eretz Yisroel and not fulfill the Torah – we cannot survive; that is why the author of the Hagadah did not say,

“If He had brought us into Eretz Yisroel but not given us the Torah, it would have been enough.” To hold onto the Land without Torah is impossible. (Chofetz Chaim on the Torah, Vaeschanan)

The Chofetz Chaim elaborates further with an analogy: A man consists of a body and a soul. The soul alone cannot live in the physical world, it must have a body. Nevertheless, the soul alone is a complete and independently existing entity. The body, on the other hand, when separated from the soul is no more than a piece of earth. So too, the soul of the Jewish people is the holy Torah; the body is Eretz Yisroel. Certainly without a body it is very bitter: we cannot keep the mitzvos that depend on Eretz Yisroel, the wicked gentiles take away our livelihood and persecute us. We are broken physically and spiritually. Certainly it is bitter – we cannot stand it any longer in exile – and yet we are holding out. But Eretz Yisroel without Torah is just a piece of earth. (Kol Kisvei Chofetz Chaim, p. 27)

The Satmar Rav once commented on the word choices of the author of Dayeinu. “If He had given us the Shabbos... If He had given us the Torah... If He had brought us into Eretz Yisroel...” Seemingly, he should have continued to use the word “give”: “If He had given us Eretz Yisroel...” The answer is, when it comes to Eretz Yisroel it is not enough if it seems like Hashem is letting us have it. We must wait for Hashem Himself to actually bring us into the land; until then, we are forbidden to enter. (Machzor Divrei Yoel)



**ויצא חטר מגזע ישי ונצר משרשיו יפּרה (ישעיה יא,א).**

*And a branch will come forth from the stem of Yishai, and a sapling from his roots will bear fruit. (Yishaya 11:1)*

In this Haftorah for Last Day of Pesach we read about the coming of Moshiach. The Gemora (Succah 53a) tells us a strange story. In the presence of Rabbi Yehudah Hanasi, Levi performed the feat of “kidah” - bowing down and kissing the earth without supporting his weight with anything but his thumbs, and then raising himself up in the same manner. As a result of this Levi became

lame. Rashi explains that Rabbi Yehudah Hanasi was the leader of the generation and was constantly worried about all the problems facing the Jewish people, so people used to do tricks in his house in order to cheer him up.

Reb Tzvi Hirsch of Ziditchoiv (d. 1831) explained that Levi's act contained a hidden message: that the future redemption will come completely from above, without any help or support from human beings, for so were we forsworn by the deer and hinds of the field not to arouse the love before it is desired by Hashem. This is the meaning of the verse in Yishaya 63:5, "And I will look and there will be no helper, and I will be silent and there will be no supporter; so My arm will save for Me, and My anger will support Me." (Ateres Tzvi, Bereishis p. 33)



השבעתִי אתכם בנות ירושלים בצבאות או באילות השדה אם תעירו ואם  
תעוררו את האהבה עד שתחפץ (שיר השירים ב,ז).

*I have adjured you, daughters of Jerusalem, with deer and hinds of the  
field, that you not arouse or awaken the love before it is desired! (Shir  
Hashirim 2:7)*

What is the meaning of these three oaths? One, that Israel should not go up as a wall. Two, that the Holy One, blessed is He, made Israel swear not to rebel against the nations of the world, and three, that the Holy One, blessed is He, made the gentiles swear that they would not subjugate Israel too much... The Holy One, blessed is He, said to Israel: If you keep the oaths, good, but if not, I will permit your flesh like the deer and hinds of the fields. (Kesubos 111a)

Reb Tzvi Dov Abraham, rav of Kedushas Levi in Monsey, related that he was once sitting with the Chazon Ish in his room when a man came in, his mouth full of praise and amazement at the Zionist State. We see with our eyes that it is the beginning of the redemption, he said, and spoke at length. The Chazon Ish said, "Bring me a Gemora Kesubos." They brought a Gemora Kesubos and he showed on page 111a the Three Oaths and their punishment. Then, holding his finger

on the place, he said to the man, “Es shteit az men vet azoy ton vet azoy kumen, men hot azoy geton un es iz azoy gekumen, un ir zogt az es iz aschalta degeulah!” (It says that if we do this, this will happen. They did it, and it happened. And you say it’s the beginning of the redemption!) (Mishkenos Haro’im, p. 1195)

Reb Dovid Shmidel related that someone once asked the Chazon Ish, “How could it be that all the nations of the world stood by silently while the Germans killed millions of Jews?” The Chazon Ish replied, “Is it not an explicit Gemora in Kesubos that if the Jewish people violates the Three Oaths, Hashem will permit their flesh like the deer and the hinds of the field?”

Reb Meir Soloveitchik related that the Brisker Rav once asked: Why is the wording of the last oath different from the first two? In the first two (Shir Hashirim 2:7 and 3:5) it says “If you arouse and if you awaken,” and in the last one (8:4) it says “Why do you arouse and why do you awaken?” The answer is, he said, that the first two oaths are said to the Jewish people before they make any attempt to throw off the yoke of exile. “Do not do it...” for if you do it will be bitter. But Shlomo Hamelech foresaw in his ruach hakodesh that there would come a time when the Jews would indeed try to force the end. After they have already tried, and seen the bitter consequences (“I will permit your flesh”) Hashem calls to them: Why do you continue in your folly of fighting with the nations? Don’t you see what the results are? Why are you asking for more? (Uvdos Vehanhagos Leveis Brisk, v. 4 p. 187)

Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kahn, the Toldos Ahron Rebbe, wrote in 5754 (1994): “We always saw the constant state of war and terrorism in Eretz Yisroel as the fulfillment of the punishment of the Oaths. Until recently, this punishment was confined to wars, or terrorist acts against the settlers and those on the borders. But now we are seeing a new phenomenon: Jewish blood is spilled like water in the streets of the city. Moreover, these random terrorist acts seem to have no logical reason for them, since the peace process is in progress. But the answer would seem to be that when the accusation was made in heaven that the Jewish people violated the Oaths, defending angels spoke up and said, ‘There is a large population of religious Jews who have nothing to do with this violation – why should they suffer?’ But now that many religious Jews have begun to speak of Eretz Yisroel as if it is ours and it is forbidden to return it, thus aligning

themselves with the Zionist ideal, the angels no longer have any defense, and the punishment for the Oaths comes back into force, may Hashem have mercy.” (Igros Divrei Emunah, p. 225)



# Tazria

וראה אתו הכהן והנה שאת הנגע לבנה אדמדמת בקרחתו או בגבחתו  
 כמראה צרעת עור בשר, איש צרוע הוא טמא הוא טמא יטמאנו הכהן  
 בראשו נגעו (יג, מג-מד).

*And the kohein sees him, and behold the rising of the plague is reddish-white in his rear or frontal baldness, like the appearance of leprosy in the skin of the flesh. He is a leprous man; he is unclean; the kohein shall surely pronounce him unclean; in his head is his plague. (13:43-4)*

The Netziv explains that all leprosy comes because of the person's sins, but whereas leprosy on the flesh of the body comes because of sins of the flesh, committed as a result of desire, leprosy on the head comes because of the sin of incorrect beliefs. Thus, the Torah says that although the plague on the head has "the appearance of leprosy in the skin of the flesh," yet its location indicates that the person committed sins in his mind. The Torah is stressing this so that we might be more careful to avoid such a person, for the sin of incorrect beliefs is the kind of sin that can easily spread to others. This is the meaning of the long and seemingly redundant verse quoted above: "He is a leprous man," and the disease itself is contagious, so people should stay away from him. And even a tzaddik, who is not afraid of coming into contact with the sick, should stay away because "he is unclean" – he transmits tum'ah. But still I might think that a very great man would have reason to speak with this leper, to rebuke him for his sins and convince him to do teshuva. Therefore the Torah says, "In his head is his plague," i.e. since he has heretical ideas, he cannot be rebuked, as Chazal say (Sanhedrin 38b) that one should not debate with a heretic, for he will only become worse. (Haamek Davar)



# The Counting of the Omer

שנים עשר אלף זוגים תלמידים היו לו לר"ע מגבת ועד אניפרס וכולן מתו  
בפרק אחד מפני שלא נהגו כבוד זה לזה וכו' כולם מתו מפסח ועד עצרת  
וכו' כולם מתו מיתה רעה מאי היא א"ר נחמן אסכרה (יבמות ס"ב ע"ב).

*Rabbi Akiva had twelve thousand pairs of disciples, from Gevas to Antiparas, and they all died during one period, because they did not treat one another with respect...they all died between Pesach and Shavuos...they all died of askara (the croup). (Yevamos 62b)*

The Gemora here states clearly that Rabbi Akiva's disciples died from a disease. But Zionist authors such as Y. L. Maimon invented the story that they died fighting in the revolt against Rome led by Ben Koziva. Even before the era of Zionism, heretical Jewish historians such as Graetz and Frankel depicted Rabbi Akiva as traveling around, arousing the Jews to fight for their independence. Rabbi Yitzchok Isaac Halevi showed that these claims have no historical basis, in Chazal or elsewhere (Doros Harishonim v. 4 chapter 39-41). The Talmud Yerushalmi (Taanis 24a) says only that Rabbi Akiva thought that Ben Koziva was Moshiach.

In fact, there is a dispute between the Talmud Bavli and the Talmud Yerushalmi about the attitude of Chazal toward Ben Koziva. The Bavli (Sanhedrin 93b) says that Moshiach must be able to judge cases based on his sense of smell. When Ben Koziva claimed to be Moshiach, the Sages tested him to see if he had this miraculous ability. When they saw that he did not, they killed him. The Yerushalmi, on the other hand, says that Rabbi Akiva believed in Ben Koziva, and

the Rambam says (Melachim 11:3) that not only Rabbi Akiva but all the Sages of his generation as well believed in him. The Rambam proves from this story that Moshiach will not have to perform any miracles to establish his identity as Moshiach. The Raavad, quoting the Bavli mentioned above, disagrees.

The Midrash Rabbah on Shir Hashirim 2:7 says that there were four times in history when the Jewish people “forced the end and stumbled”; one of them is the revolt of Ben Koziva. This Midrash, which holds that the revolt was forbidden, must agree with the Talmud Bavli that Chazal did not support Ben Koziva. But according to the Yerushalmi, which says that Rabbi Akiva did support him, it must be that there was no transgression of the oath against forcing the end. Why not?

The answer is simple: the oath prohibits forcing the end, that is, trying to bring the end of the exile on our own, without waiting for Moshiach. According to the Bavli, since Chazal had conclusively proven that Ben Koziva was not Moshiach, any effort to throw off the Roman yoke would be considered forcing the end. But the Yerushalmi holds that Moshiach need not perform any miracles, as the Rambam says. He need only be someone who “learns Torah and does mitzvos and forces the entire Jewish people to follow the Torah” (Rambam Melachim 11:4). Ben Koziva evidently met these criteria, so Chazal rightly assumed that he was Moshiach, and there was no prohibition on following him into battle. However, to follow a false moshiach who does not succeed in getting everyone to keep the Torah, and certainly to follow someone who does not even claim to be moshiach, is a transgression of the oaths according to all opinions.

The Satmar Rav notes (Vayoel Moshe 1:48,80) that by making teshuva of the entire Jewish people the criterion for Moshiach, the Rambam is not leaving open the door for impostors. On the contrary, to make everything dependent on miracles and wonders would be dangerous, because sometimes a false prophet is given the ability to fool people with miracles (Devarim 13:3). But to make all Jews do teshuva is such a monumental task that, in the normal way of the world, no one can do it. If someone does succeed, it is a clear sign that Hashem has sent him to be Moshiach.

\* \* \*

Rabbi Avrohom Loewenstam in his work *Tzeror Hachaim* (published 1820) explains Rabbi Akiva's position differently. How, he asks, could the great Rabbi Akiva have sanctioned this sin, this transgression of the oath? The answer is, he says, that the city of Beitar, in which Ben Koziva reigned for two and a half years, had never been conquered by Rome at all. Beitar was a living remnant of the Jewish kingdom that had existed before the destruction of the Temple. Evidence to this can be found in the words of the Midrash Eichah (2:2): "Fifty-two years Beitar lasted after the destruction of the Temple. And why was it destroyed? Because they lit candles to celebrate the destruction of the Temple." The Midrash goes on to explain that they rejoiced that Jerusalem was gone, and now Beitar would be the commercial center of the Land. Thus, Beitar had been a Jewish center all along, and Ben Koziva's reigning in Beitar was not really an act of revolt against Rome. Rabbi Akiva was completely justified in supporting this, and he never, G-d forbid, entertained thoughts of rebellion.

But we must understand: what was the *Tzeror Hachaim's* question? If Rabbi Akiva held that Ben Koziva was Moshiach, what was wrong with supporting his military activities? It seems that unlike the Rambam, the *Tzeror Hachaim* assumes that according to all opinions there will be miracles and heavenly revelations of some kind to prove Moshiach's identity. Thus even Rabbi Akiva, who thought that Ben Koziva would eventually be revealed as Moshiach, had no right at that point in time to rely on this assumption in practice, to launch a revolt against Rome. The *Tzeror Hachaim* is thus forced to say that the reign of Ben Koziva was not a revolt.

\* \* \*

The Gemora in Sanhedrin 93b says that the Sages killed Ben Koziva when they realized he was a false moshiach. The *Yerushalmi Taanis* 24b, which says that he fell into the hands of the Romans and was killed by a snake, apparently disagrees. This would fit well with the *Yerushalmi's* statement earlier that Rabbi Akiva believed that Ben Koziva was Moshiach, which the Rambam understood to mean not only Rabbi Akiva but all the Sages of the time. However, the *Radvaz* attempts to reconcile the two Talmuds by saying that some of the Sages believed

in Ben Koziva and some did not. When those who rejected him (because of the smell test) distanced themselves from him, he was weakened and lost his battle.

Whether the Sages actually killed him or merely weakened him, it is clear that they caused him to lose his war. Why did they decide on this course? Didn't they realize that Beitar was a huge metropolis, and that myriads of Jewish lives would be lost if the Romans conquered it? Didn't they realize that Ben Koziva, with his army of two hundred thousand mighty warriors who could uproot cedar trees with their bare hands, was the Jewish people's best hope to defend themselves?

The Satmar Rov explains that yes, our Sages knew all this; but they also knew that the alternative - to continue in this uprising during exile, led by someone who was not Moshiach - would be far more dangerous. Hashem made the Jewish people swear not to force the end of the exile, and warned that violating the oath would bring dire consequences. If Ben Koziva were to continue his reign, who knew what would happen? So they chose the lesser of the two evils, to put an end to Ben Koziva's kingdom, and they saw this as a partial escape from danger. We must always remember the story of Ben Koziva and the great trepidation with which Chazal viewed the concept of a Jewish kingdom before the coming of Moshiach! (Vayoel Moshe 1:139)



# Acharei Mos/ Kedoshim

קדשים תהיו (יט,ב).

*You shall be holy. (19:2)*

The Chofetz Chaim says that this is the difference between a man and an angel: a man is commanded to work on himself to become holy, whereas an angel is created already holy, as we say in Yotzer, “He creates holy ones.” To become holy, the Chofetz Chaim taught his talmidim, one must channel all of his efforts toward the service of Hashem, to increase Hashem’s honor in this world. This is what Dovid Hamelech said in Tehillim (45:2), “My heart stirred with a good thing: I say, my actions are for the King.” An analogy: the merchant who imports and sells to the government makes a lot more money in a shorter time than the merchant who sells to ordinary citizens. Not only that, but he is exempt from paying customs fees and taxes. His train, loaded heavily with merchandise, rolls right past the tax collector’s office, and no one says a word because every car bears a large sign saying, “Government Property.” So too, a person must always say, “I am working for the King!” When you work for the King, you can be sure you will always have what you need, as well as many benefits and exemptions. For example, there are groups of Jews who fear Hashem, who are zealous for the honor of Hashem, and therefore pursue the enemies of the Torah. As they are running, they break things. But since they are pursuing the “rodfim” – those who threaten the Torah – they are exempt from paying for damages, for that is the law of one who pursues a rodef. (Chofetz Chaim Al Hatorah)

Once during an ideological battle, certain Chassidim offended the honor of a certain gadol, and the Chofetz Chaim was asked to step in and defend him. But

he declined to do so, explaining: “In the fiery war of the Chassidim against heresy and secularism, it can sometimes happen that an innocent person suffers. I see no danger in this, for we find in the Gemora (Sanhedrin 74a) that if a murderer is chasing his victim and someone comes running after the murderer, and he damages property on the way – whether it is the property of the murderer, the victim, or anyone else – he is exempt from payment. Why should the innocent owner of the property, who is not involved at all in the chase, suffer this loss? The Gemora explains that Chazal made this special exemption because they feared that if people had to worry about paying for damage, they would not want to save the victim from the murderer.” (Dos Leben un Shafn fun Chofetz Chaim, v. 3 p. 790)



לא תלך רכיל בעמיך (יט,טז).

*Do not go talebearing among your people. (19:16)*

Once the Chofetz Chaim was traveling on the train to a gathering, together with Rabbi Z. from Jerusalem. Rabbi Z. had never seen the Chofetz Chaim before, so he did not recognize the old man sitting next to him. During the trip they began to converse, and the Chofetz Chaim began to speak against a certain Mizrachi rabbi. Rabbi Z. interrupted and said, “I saw a sefer in Jerusalem called Chofetz Chaim, and I think that if you would read that sefer you would not say such things.” “I also know about that sefer,” said the Chofetz Chaim, “and if you look there in such-and-such a section and such-and-such a paragraph you will see that sometimes it is permitted and even obligatory to speak.” (Mishkenos Haro'im, p. 477)

Perhaps he was referring to section 4, paragraph 10: “And despite this [that one may not consider a person wicked after seeing him do wrong], if one sees that someone has a bad character trait, such as arrogance or anger or other bad traits, or that he neglects Torah study or the like, it is proper to tell this to his son or his students and to warn them not to be together with him so that they should

not learn from his actions.”



ושמרתם את כל חקתי ואת כל משפטי ועשיתם אתם ולא תקיא אתכם  
הארץ אשר אני מביא אתכם שמה לשבת בה (כ,כב).

*And you shall keep all My laws and all My ordinances, so that the land  
not vomit you out.” (20:22)*

At the end of Acharei Mos the Torah says the same thing: “So that the land not vomit you out, when you make it unclean, as it vomited out the nation that was before you.” (18:28) Why does it repeat itself? The answer is, to teach us to be careful not only that we should keep the mitzvos, but that all Jews should keep them, for if not, the land will vomit out everyone. Those who kept the mitzvos will be punished as well, for not protesting against those who did not keep them. (Ohr Hachaim)

The Chofetz Chaim once said, “The Zionists err in thinking that keeping Torah and mitzvos is a side issue, having nothing to do with the mitzvah of living in Eretz Yisroel. But the Torah slaps them in the face, saying, “Let the land not vomit you out as it vomited out the nation before you.” This has already come true, and since then we have wandered in exile. Now we say, “Let the land not vomit us out, as it vomited out our forefathers.” (Kol Kisvei Hehofetz Chaim, p. 74)

Avrohom Yaakov Slutzky, an early Zionist and later a co-founder of Mizrachi, published a book in 1891 called Shivas Tzion. In the introduction to his book, he quoted the Haflaah as saying that for a person who lives in Eretz Yisroel, keeping Torah and mitzvos is not as important as it is for one who lives in other lands. Rabbi Yechezkel Halberstam, the Shinnover Rebbe, responded sharply in a letter to another rav who had asked him to join Slutzky’s organization: “On the contrary, Hashem is stricter on those who live in Eretz Yisroel, as it says, ‘Let the land not vomit you out...’ For Eretz Yisroel can tolerate only pure individuals...”

As to the Haflaah, his words were misinterpreted. The Gemora (Kesubos 110b) says, “One who lives in Eretz Yisroel is similar to one who has a G-d, and one who lives outside Eretz Yisroel is similar to one who has no G-d.” The Haflaah asks: the word “similar” implies that really the one living in Eretz Yisroel has no G-d, and the one outside Eretz Yisroel has a G-d. If so, it is really better to live outside Eretz Yisroel. But this cannot be – the Gemora there is coming to explain why one should live in Eretz Yisroel! The answer is, he says, that in Eretz Yisroel Hashem gives everything directly, whereas in the rest of the world it is through angels (see Ramban on Vayikra 18:25). Moreover, the blessings flow to the rest of the world through Eretz Yisroel. This is why Shlomo Hamelech said, “And they shall pray to you by way of their land...” (Melachim I 8:48). So one who lives in another part of the world, even if he keeps the Torah and thus has a G-d, is similar to one who has no G-d, because his blessings come through intermediaries. But one who lives in Eretz Yisroel, even if he does not keep the Torah and thus has no G-d, gets his blessings directly from G-d and thus appears to have a G-d. At the same time, it is worse to violate the Torah in Eretz Yisroel than in the rest of the world; the Haflaah’s words never contradicted this fact.

This, explained the Shinnover Rebbe, was true only in the time of the Temple, when most of the Jewish people kept the Torah and they flourished in the land, living on Hashem’s blessings (see Rashi on Shmuel I 26:19). Then even an individual who strayed from the path would appear to have a G-d. But nowadays, there is no blessing in the land, and the few Jews living in Eretz Yisroel need to be supported by the Jews of the rest of the world. (Mishkenos Haro’im, p. 200)



# Emor

אמר אל הכהנים בני אהרן (כא,א).

*Say to the Kohanim, the sons of Aharon... (21:1)*



והכהנים הלויים בני צדוק אשר שמרו את משמרת מקדשי בתעות בני ישראל מעלי המה יקרבו אלי לשרתני ועמדו לפני להקריב לי חלב ודם נאם ה' א-להים (יחזקאל מד,טו).

*And the Kohanim, the Levites, the sons of Tzadok, who kept the charge of My sanctuary when the children of Israel strayed away from Me – they will draw near to Me to serve Me, and they will stand before Me, to offer Me fat and blood, said Hashem G-d. (Yechezkel 44:15)*

In the 1890's, the Chofetz Chaim began to devote himself to the study of Seder Kodashim, the laws of the Beis Hamikdash and the offerings. He began to write his Likutei Halachos on the tractates of the Talmud that deal with this subject. The Rif and the Rosh had distilled the halachic conclusion from the parts of the Talmud that apply to us nowadays, but they had left the subject of offerings untouched. The Likutei Halachos covers nineteen tractates and fulfills a similar function to that of the Rif. (The Rif's sefer was called "Halachos," but the Chofetz Chaim, in his humility, added the word "Likutei" to show that he had no intention of comparing his work to the Rif's.)

The Chofetz Chaim also established a kollel for young married men studying to become rabbis, and he made a rule that every member of the kollel must learn

Kodashim for at least three hours a day, to become so fluently versed in its laws that they could answer and decide any practical question in its subjects that might arise. “We must be prepared,” he would often say. “The Beis Hamikdash will soon be rebuilt, so suddenly that there will be no time to learn all the laws. The Jewish people will come with questions about offerings, tumah and taharah, terumah, bikurim, maaser, and kilayim. They will ask the rabbis, but if the rabbis have learned only Yoreh Deah they will be unable to answer.”

More than once he gathered the kohanim in Radin who could not study Torah by themselves, and explained to them the chapter Eizehu Mekoman in the Siddur, which sets forth the basic types and rules of offerings. (The Chofetz Chaim, pp. 362-363)

Rabbi Yankev Kamenetsky said that the Chofetz Chaim had another reason for encouraging the study of Kodashim. Those were the years of the so-called First Aliyah: Russian Jews, forerunners of the Zionist movement, were selling their homes, packing their bags and setting out for a new life in Eretz Yisroel. The Chofetz Chaim saw their goal, to establish an independent Jewish colony in Eretz Yisroel, as an implicit denial of the coming of Moshiach and the complete redemption to be brought by Hashem. Therefore he taught the Jewish people to make a point of studying the laws of the service in the Beis Hamikdash, in order to reinforce the belief in Moshiach. (Bimechitzas Rabbeinu, p. 31)



והניף את העמר לפני ה' לרצונכם ממחרת השבת יניפנו הכהן (כג,יא).

*And he shall wave the Omer before Hashem to appease for you; on the day after the day of rest the kohein shall wave it. (23:11)*

The Oral Tradition teaches that the “day of rest” referred to here is the first day of Pesach; thus the Omer was always harvested on the night following the first day of Pesach, and offered in the Beis Hamikdash on the second day of Pesach. The Mishnah in Menachos (65a) says that the heretical Baithusian sect

disputed this tradition of Chazal, and held that the Omer should be harvested on the first Saturday night and offered on the first Sunday after the first day of Pesach. To combat the influence of this sect, Chazal enacted that the Omer be harvested with great fanfare, before a large crowd of people. The man designated to cut it would say to the crowd, "Has the sun set?" They would say, "Yes!" "Has the sun set?" "Yes!" "Has the sun set?" "Yes!" Then he would ask, "With this sickle!" They would say "Yes!" And so on three times. "With this basket?" "Yes!" "Should I cut?" "Cut!" Each question and answer was repeated three times, in order to reinforce the true interpretation of the Torah handed down to us by Chazal.

Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch in his commentary to the Siddur (p. 703) points out a similar instance in the fourth blessing of Birkas Hamazon. It reads, "He did good to us, He does good to us, He will do good to us; He bestowed upon us, He bestows upon us, He will bestow good upon us forever." He explains that this threefold repetition, like the repetition used when cutting the Omer, was intended to combat a heretical idea. The blessing was composed after the uprising of Bar Kochba, when the Romans gave the Jews permission to bury their dead. "When the uprising led by Bar Kochba proved a disastrous error," writes Rav Hirsch, "it became essential that the Jewish people be reminded for all times of an important fact; namely, that they must never again attempt to restore their national independence by their own power; they were to entrust their future as a nation solely to Divine Providence." When reciting this blessing, we emphatically state our belief that it is G-d alone Who has bestowed goodness upon us in the past, that He continues to do so, and to Him alone do we look for our future good, our redemption. (Rabbi Yonasan Shteif, Introduction to Chadashim Gam Yeshanim on Chullin, p. 33)



# Behar / Bechukosai

ואם לא מצאה ידו די השיב לו והיה ממכרו ביד הקנה אתו עד שנת היבל  
וגו' (כה,כח).

*And if his hand was not able to produce enough [money] to return  
to him, then his field will be in the buyer's hand until the Yovel year.  
(25:28)*

The word “matz’ah” – meaning found, or was able – occurs only a few times in Tanach. The Bobover Rebbe, Rabbi Ben Zion Halberstam (1874-1940) explains a hidden level of meaning in our verse, based on a comparison with one of the other places where the word occurs: “Also the bird found a house, and the wild bird a nest for itself” (Tehillim 84:4). The bird is a metaphor for the Jewish people, as Rashi explains there. When the time of redemption arrives, the Jewish people will go up to Jerusalem and find a house, a Beis Hamikdash already built by Hashem and brought down from Heaven. But the wild bird will make a nest for itself. The wild bird is a metaphor for the wicked Jews who want to be wild and free from the mitzvos. They force the end and wish to build a nest, a sovereign state, on their own, pretending that this is the ultimate redemption. But it is obvious and known that they speak falsely, and that their way is the complete antithesis of the Torah. See the Targum on Shir Hashirim 8:4: “The king Moshiach will say, I adjure you, my people, house of Israel, why do you fight with the people of the land, to leave the exile? Wait a little more until the nations who ascended to war in Jerusalem are destroyed, and after that the Master of the World will recall the love of the righteous ones and it will be His will to redeem you.” And this is based on the Gemora in Kesubos (111a), that Hakadosh Baruch Hu made the Jewish people swear not to force the end.

The Torah needed to warn the Jews not to follow these people, not to be

influenced by their false beliefs. Therefore it says, “And if his hand was not able” – if the Jewish people did not yet merit the complete and true redemption, then they should not think of doing as the wild bird does, building a nest for themselves, but rather “it is enough to return to him” – it is enough that they do complete teshuva. For the redemption is only dependent on teshuva (Sanhedrin 97b), and if they will only do teshuva then “also the bird will find a house,” for Hashem will redeem us and reveal the Beis Hamikdash from Heaven. (Kedushas Tzion on Tanach, p. 92)



ונתתי את פגריכם על פגרי גלוליכם וגו' (כו,ל).

*I will place your corpses on the corpses of your idols. (26:30)*

The Gemora says (Sanhedrin 63b): “The righteous Eliyahu walked among the people dying of hunger in Jerusalem. He found a child who was swollen from hunger, lying in the garbage heaps. ‘From which family are you?’ he asked. ‘From such-and-such a family,’ he said. ‘Is there anyone surviving from that family?’ ‘No, except for me.’ ‘If I teach you something through which you will live, are you willing to learn it?’ ‘Yes,’ said the child. ‘Say every day, “Hear O Israel, Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is One.”’ The child said, ‘Be quiet, do not mention the name of Hashem!’ For his father and mother did not teach him that. Immediately, he took out his idol from his bosom and hugged it and kissed it until his stomach split, and his idol fell on the ground and he fell on top of it, to fulfill the verse, ‘I will place your corpses on the corpses of your idols.’”

The Brisker Rav used to repeat this passage often, and he would say, “This is the situation today. People see that rebelling against Hashem will not succeed, and that because of the establishment of the State we are suffering bitterly from our Arab neighbors. Every day people are killed and wounded, may Hashem have mercy. All the arms of the Zionists do not help to stop terror. And still people continue to support the State and think that it is the salvation of Hashem and the redemption of the Jewish people. They do not understand that this is a

threat of destruction to the Jewish people!” (Uvdos Vehanhagos Leveis Brisk v. 4, 191)

In the same vein, the Rav said, “I heard that the religious Zionists announced that this war [of 1967] was necessary and obligatory according to Torah [in order to save the Jewish people from danger]. But it is obvious and known to all who see truth that all these troubles, including the danger of the war, came upon us only as a result of the existence of that Zionist state...it is the Zionist government that aroused the anger of the Arabs by provoking them in various ways, and if not for the stubbornness of its wicked leaders the danger of the war would never have been. And even now, if they were to give up their state and their government, there is no doubt that they would take Hashem’s anger away from the Jewish people. Had they done this, the entire calamity – the danger of the war and the loss of Jewish lives – would not have come upon them. And for every minute that they hold on to their power they are offending the Creator, blessed be He, with violation of the oaths and rebellion against the nations, which the holy Torah has forbidden and for which we have been warned of a severe punishment... And even naturally speaking, if they were to give up their government and Zionist state, there is no doubt that the United Nations would be able to find some way to prevent war, bloodshed and loss of Jewish lives.” (Al Hageulah V’al Hatemurah, Chapter 44)

Earlier (p. 129) the story of Ben Koziva was brought up as a model of Chazal’s attitude toward a Jewish state before the coming of Moshiach. But the words of the Brisker Rav and the Satmar Rav quoted above teach us that there is a major difference between today’s situation and that of Ben Koziva. While the fall of Ben Koziva’s state led to bloodshed, today’s state is - on the contrary - a cause of bloodshed, and relinquishing it would be the best way to save Jewish lives.



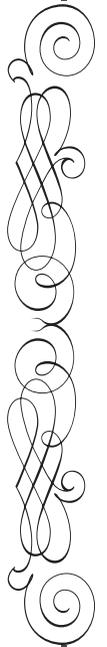
ואף גם זאת בהיותם בארץ איביהם לא מאסתים ולא געלתים לכלתם להפר  
בריתי אתם כי אני ה' א-להיהם (כו,מד).

*And despite this, when they were in their enemy's lands, I did not reject them nor revile them to destroy them, to annul My covenant with them, for I am Hashem their G-d. (26:44)*

The Gemora in Megillah 11a expounds the verse as follows: "I did not reject them" in the time of the Babylonians, for I sent them Daniel, Chananya, Mishael and Azariah. "I did not revile them" in the time of the Greeks, for I sent them Shimon Hatzaddik, the Hasmonean and his sons, and Matisyahu the Kohen Gadol. "To destroy them" in the time of Haman, for I sent them Mordechai and Esther. "To annul my covenant with them" in the time of the Persians, for I sent them the house of Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi and the sages of the generations. "For I am Hashem their G-d" in the future, when no people or tongue will be able to rule over them. The Maharsha explains that the Gemora did not count the redemption from Egypt because then Hashem Himself redeemed the Jewish people with open miracles: "I and not an angel, I and not a messenger..." (Hagadah) The Gemora is only enumerating the times when the Hashem saved the Jewish people through the mask of natural events, through human efforts. Each time they were saved, they continued to live under the rule of the nations. But in the future we will be redeemed by Hashem Himself just as in Egypt, as it says, "I will show wonders like in the days of the Exodus from Egypt" (Micha 7:15). Therefore it will be a complete redemption, and no nation will rule over us.



# SEFER BAMIDBAR



# Bamidbar

ויתילו על משפחתם לבית אבתם וגו' (א,יח).

*And they established their birth to their families, to their fathers' houses. (1:18)*

Rashi explains that they brought documents or witnesses to prove their birth, to which tribe they belonged. In Parshas Pinchas (26:5) Rashi says that the gentiles ridiculed the Jewish people, saying, “How pretentious these people are, that they claim descent from their respective tribes! Do they really think that the Egyptian men did not have power over their mothers?” Therefore Hashem placed the two letters of His name on either side of each of the family names – hei at the beginning and yud at the end, to bear testimony that they were indeed their fathers’ sons.

The Rambam says (Isurei Biah 12:7) that although intermarriage carries no death penalty and thus may seem to be a lesser sin than the other forbidden relationships, it should not be light in your eyes, for it carries with it a loss that no other sin carries. If one violates any other arayos prohibition, the resulting child is still a full-fledged Jew and is still considered his son. But a child born from a gentile woman is not considered his father’s son, neither is he a member of the Jewish people.

However, there are times when intermarriage is a powerful tool in the hands of Hashem to purify the Jewish people. This principle of Jewish history was explained by Rabbi Avigdor Miller in his famous lecture entitled, “The Keg and the Serpent.” He began with the story of Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai’s meeting with the Roman general Vespasian (Gittin 56b). Rabbi Yochanan said that he and the other good Jews wanted to surrender and accept Roman rule, but the

“biryonim” (zealots) did not allow it. Vespasian said: “If a poisonous serpent coils itself around a keg of honey, do we not break the keg in the process of killing the serpent?” He meant that despite Rabbi Yochanan’s desire for peace, he could not call off the war because he had to defeat the zealots, and it would be impossible to do so without destroying Jerusalem and the Temple. Rabbi Yochanan was silent. He saw in Vespasian’s words a deeper and prophetic meaning of which the general himself was not aware. The Jewish people had been plagued for 150 years by the heretical Sadducees and the tyrannical Herodian monarchy. They had trampled on the people and on the Torah. Jerusalem and the Temple had become their political center and source of wealth; they were coiled around it like a serpent. One cannot shake off the serpent without destroying the keg, and so the destruction of Jerusalem was Hashem’s way of getting rid of them. Indeed, after the destruction, when there was no longer any political power or money to be had, these two groups were never heard from again. They assimilated, intermarried and went lost among the gentiles.

“This is very important,” he continued, “because there are analogies to this today. Today a snake has coiled itself around Eretz Yisroel... worse than the snake that existed then. The atheists who are in authority, who rule Medinas Yisroel, are the most dangerous serpent that ever came out from our midst.

“The tribe of the wicked cannot rest together with the lot of the tzaddikim, so that the tzaddikim not stretch out their hand to do wickedness.” (Tehillim 125:3) This is the principle we are explaining now: to protect the virtue of the righteous, it is imperative that the wicked be weeded out. And throughout our exile, Hashem is constantly weeding out the wicked among us. “Behold it is I who gives the order, and I will shake throughout all the nations the house of Israel, as something is shaken in the sieve.” (Amos 9:9) Shaking means expulsions, exiles, troubles. If you have flour mixed with pebbles, by holding it still you won’t separate it. You must shake that sieve up and down. Now the flour would prefer you should let it alone. But we want pure flour, so we shake it up and down, back and forth, and that causes the flour to go out and the dirt is kept back. As Hashem leads us through the nations He is sifting out the wicked. He took us into Spain and then there was an expulsion. The wicked remained, converted, and the good ones continued. He took us to Germany and there was Reform, assimilation, and the wicked intermarried and we got rid of them. He took us to Russia, there was

Communism, many Jews embraced Communism and intermarried, and they got lost. All this was for the benefit of ridding us of the undesirable elements. And to quote from Yechezkel (20:35-38), “I shall bring you into the wilderness of nations...and I shall cause you to pass under my staff...and I shall pick out from you those who rebel and those who are disloyal to Me.” (Tape # 52)



# Shavuos

לא תשא את שם ה' א-להיך לשוא כי לא ינקה ה' את אשר ישא את שמו  
לשוא (שמות כז).

*Do not take the name of Hashem your G-d in vain, for Hashem will not  
acquit anyone who takes His name in vain. (Shemos 20:7)*

The Gemora in Shevuos (39a) says that before administering an oath, the beis din warns the person, “You must know that the entire world trembled when the Holy One, blessed is He, said on Mount Sinai, Do not take the name of Hashem your G-d in vain. Regarding all sins in the Torah it states, ‘He will acquit’ (Shemos 34:7) but here it says, ‘He will not acquit.’ And for all the sins in the Torah, the sinner himself is punished; but here the sinner and his family are punished...and for all the sins in the Torah the sinner himself is punished, but here both the sinner and the entire world are punished. For all the sins in the Torah, if the sinner has a merit, he is allowed to continue unpunished for two or three generations, but here he is punished right away.”

The Ibn Ezra explains that when one swears, he is comparing his words to Hashem, saying that just as Hashem is true, the person’s words are true. This is why violating an oath is such a severe offense – it is as if he is denying Hashem. The Ibn Ezra also points out several instances when people were punished severely – seemingly unfairly – for the violation of an oath. We find (Shoftim 21:5) that when the Jewish people made a collective oath at the war over the concubine at Givah, and the residents of Yavesh Gilad violated the oath and did not participate in the war, they were killed men, women and children - a punishment not given even for the profaning of Shabbos. We also find (Shmuel I 14:44) that Shaul wanted to kill his son Yonasan for violating the oath not to eat on the day of the battle, although Yonasan had not known about the oath

when he ate. And we find (Shmuel II 21:1) that Hashem brought a famine to the land on account of Shaul, who violated the oath of the Jewish leaders who had sworn to keep the Givonim alive and employ them as woodchoppers and water carriers. The famine only went away after Dovid allowed the Givonim to kill seven members of Shaul's family. And Shlomo Hamelech killed Shimi ben Geira for violating his oath (Melachim I 2:46) not to leave Jerusalem.

In Gittin 35a the Gemora tells the story of a man who deposited a gold coin with a widow, and she hid it in a jar of flour. Later she baked a loaf of bread from that flour and gave it to a poor man. When the owner came back to pick up his coin, she had forgotten about the whole story, and she swore, "May poison kill one of my sons if I have benefited from your coin at all!" A short time later, one of her sons died. The Sages said: If one who swore truthfully (i.e. thinking it was the truth) was punished so severely, all the more so one who swears falsely! And therefore the Sages discontinued the practice of letting a widow swear in order to collect her kesubah. Tosafos explains that although one who accidentally utters a false oath is usually exempt from punishment, in this case the widow should have been more careful to remember where she put the coin. An oath is not something to play around with!



ויהי בימי שפט השפטים ויהי רעב בארץ וילך איש מבית לחם יהודה לגור  
בשדה מואב הוא ואשתו ושני בניו, ושם האיש אלימלך וגו' וימת אלימלך  
וגו' (רות א,א-ג).

*And it came to pass in the days of the judging of the judges, that there was a famine in the land, and a man went out from Beis Lechem of Yehuda to sojourn in the fields of Moav, he and his wife and his two sons... and the man's name was Elimelech... and Elimelech died...  
(Rus 1:1-3)*

The Gemora (Bava Basra 15b) explains the words "the judging of the judges" to mean that it was a generation that judged its judges – the judges themselves

were sinners, and when they rebuked a person for a sin he could retort that they themselves had committed greater sins.

Based on this, Rabbi Shmuel ben Yitzchak Uzeda (a student of the Arizal and author of Midrash Shmuel) in his work Igeres Shmuel explains the sin of Elimelech for which he was punished by death. Elimelech could have been forgiven for leaving Eretz Yisroel because of the famine. But the accusation against him was that he did not leave earlier, due to the wickedness of his neighbors. This is similar to what Chazal say (Sanhedrin 103b) about the war over the concubine at Giv'ah, that Hashem said to the tribes who went to war against Binyamin: "You are protesting for the honor of a human being, who was attacked by the men of Binyamin, but you did not protest for My honor, when Micha made his idol!" And that is why the tribes lost on the first two days of battle. Similarly, Hashem said to Elimelech, "For My honor, to get away from the wicked leaders, you did not leave Eretz Yisroel, but for your own honor and comfort, to get away from the famine, you left!"

\* \* \*

In our time, Jews loyal to the Torah living in Eretz Yisroel are challenged not only by neighbors who are sinners, but by neighbors who are heretics. The Gemora says, "A person should live in Eretz Yisroel even in a city of mostly gentile idolaters, rather than in other lands, even in a city that is mostly Jewish." (Kesubos 110b) The word "even" means that this is the limit, but more than that – i.e. something worse than gentile idolaters - is not permitted. Jewish heretics are worse than gentile idolaters, "for they afflict Israel and lead the people astray from following Hashem." (Rambam, Laws of Idolatry 10:1) A person is naturally more influenced by one of his own kind. (See p. 112.) Furthermore, the evil inclination for idolatry was slaughtered long ago by the Men of the Great Assembly (Yuma 69b), whereas heresy remains a strong attraction (see Avodah Zarah 27b). One must distance himself more from heresy than from idolatry, as it says (Shabbos 116b): "Even if one is being pursued by a murderer or a poisonous snake, he may enter a house of idol worship but not a house of heretics, for the gentiles were never taught the truth, whereas the heretics are Jews who learned Torah and then denied it." Therefore, the Gemora in Kesubos does not mean that one should live in a city of mostly heretics. (Vayael Moshe

2:33; see also p. 35 for a similar quotation from the Brisker Rov.)



וזאת לפנים בישראל על הגאלה ועל התמורה לקים כל דבר שלף איש נעלו  
ונתן לרעהו (רות ד, ז).

*And this was the old practice in Israel, on redemption and substitution,  
to seal any deal, one man would pull off his shoe and give it to the other.  
(Rus 4:7)*

The Midrash says that there is a hint in the words “on redemption and substitution” to the sin of the golden calf: Originally, standing at the shores of the sea after the Egyptians had drowned, the Jewish people gave praise over the redemption; “but now they give praise over a substitute.” And so it states (Tehillim 106:20), “And they substituted their glory with an image of an ox eating grass.”

The Midrash seems to say that the worshippers of the golden calf gave praise to Hashem over it, just as they praised Him at the sea. This can be understood according to the Ramban (on Shemos 32:1,4), who writes that the Jewish people did not intend the calf as a replacement for Hashem, but as a leader to replace Moshe. Thus they decided to make it only after thinking that Moshe had died, and as soon as Moshe returned they allowed him to destroy it without protest. This, concludes the Ramban, is the meaning the verse “And they substituted their glory with an image of an ox eating grass.” They did not substitute the calf for Hashem, but for the glory of Hashem. They thought that when they said, “This is your G-d, O Israel, Who brought you out of the Land of Egypt” they were giving glory to Hashem, but actually they were giving honor to the false calf, which would eventually lead to real idol worship.

But why does the Midrash say that “now they give praise over a substitute,” when the golden calf does not exist now, but was destroyed long ago? This is a hint that just as this bitter substitution was done with the golden calf, so it is likely to happen again in future generations. This is what we see in our own

time: some Jews praise the Zionist state, thinking that thereby they are giving glory to Hashem. In fact, they are substituting a false redemption for the true redemption, and glorifying something that is actually a great sin and a danger to the Jewish people. (Al Hageulah V'al Hatemurah, pp. 3-6)

It is significant that these words are written in Megillas Rus, the story of the ancestry of Dovid Hamelech and Moshiach. On the level of pshat (the simple meaning of the words), the many references to "geulah" refer to Boaz buying back the ancestral field and marrying Rus. But they are also hints at the future redemption - see Tikunei Zohar 22b on Rus 3:13. Thus we can reapply the words of the Midrash to the future redemption: Originally, waiting in exile, the Jewish people gave praise over the redemption for which they hoped, saying, "Blessed are You, Hashem, Who builds Jerusalem, Who causes the pride of redemption to sprout, Who returns His presence to Zion." But now they give praise over the substitute for the redemption, the Zionist state!

There are those who claim that the Zionist state is not a substitute for redemption, but simply another stage in the exile of the Jewish people. Such people would do well to look at the Midrash on Shir Hashirim 2:7, where it says that the Jewish people were foresworn not to go up as a wall from exile, for "if so, why does the Melech Hamoshiach come?" The Maharzu and the Yefei Kol explain that gathering in the Jews to Eretz Yisroel is Moshiach's job, and it is not for us to do it in advance.

They should also look at the Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 157:3: "A Jew may not say he is a gentile to avoid being killed." The Tur explains the reason: "For by saying he is a gentile he is agreeing to their religion and thus denying the basic principles of Judaism." We see that although the Jew has no intention at all of denying a principle of Judaism, and he is only saying it out of fear for his life, yet since he would be causing the gentiles to think he is agreeing to their religion, he may not do it. Here too, even if someone has no intent of denying the coming of Moshiach and replacing Hashem's redemption with a man-made substitute, yet since to the uneducated and gentile world he appears to be doing just that, it is forbidden. (Vayoel Moshe 1:76)

# Naso

צו את בני ישראל וישלחו מן המחנה כל צרוע וכל זב וכל טמא לנפש...  
 כאשר דבר ה' אל משה כן עשו בני ישראל (ה,ב-ד).

*Command the children of Israel to expel from the camp every leper, every zav, and everyone unclean from a body... as Hashem spoke to Moshe, so the children of Israel did. (5:2-4).*

The Midrash explains these verses as an allusion to exile: “Command the children of Israel” and if they do not keep the commandments, “expel” exile them “from the camp” - Eretz Yisroel, where the Divine Presence is camped. The Midrash explains how the three types of uncleanness mentioned allude to the sins for which the Jewish people was punished with exile, and how the different exiles are alluded to in the verse. Then it continues: “As Hashem spoke to Moshe, so the children of Israel did” – what did the Holy One, blessed is He, say to Moshe? That if they repent in the kingdoms where they will be, the Holy One, blessed is He, will gather them in, as it says, “When all these things come upon you... and Hashem will bring you to the Land which your ancestors inherited, and you will take possession of it.” (Devarim 30:5) “So the children of Israel did” – the Jewish people will eventually repent in the end of days, and they will be redeemed, as it says, “With repentance and calmness you will be saved” (Yishaya 30:15). (Midrash Rabbah 7:10)



איש איש כי תשטה אשתו ומעלה בו מעל (ה,יב).

*Any man whose wife strays and commits a trespass against him...  
(5:12)*

Rabbi Akiva said: If a husband and wife are faithful to each other, the Divine Presence is between them. If not, fire consumes them (Sotah 17a). Rashi explains that “ish” (husband) contains the letter yud and “ishah” (wife) contains the letter hei. These two letters spell one of Hashem’s names. If they are not faithful, Hashem takes away His name from them and both of their names become “eish” (fire).

When Rabbi Hirsch Kalischer first publicized his idea that Jews should emigrate to Eretz Yisroel and work the land in order to hasten the redemption, the great Chassidic leader Rabbi Yisroel of Rizhin (1797-1850) made the following comment: “How does geulah (redemption) come about? We take the word golah (exile) and add to it an alef, which stands for the Yechido Shel Olam, the One G-d. But if the Yechido Shel Olam is not part of it, then it prevents the geulah!” (Mishkenos Haro’im, p. 156)

It is important to note that although Rabbi Kalischer advocated immigration and settlement in Eretz Yisroel, he had no intention of coming to a confrontation with the gentile power that ruled the Land, which even he agreed would be a violation of the Three Oaths. See his letter to Rabbi Meir Auerbach: “Those who fell into pits in earlier times – they were the ones who came illegally, using force, and they almost transgressed the oath ‘not to arouse...’ But I have already written about this in my book, that my ‘Organization to Settle Eretz Yisroel’ is not like them.” (The Writings of Rabbi Kalischer, p. 204) See also Rabbi Alexander Moshe Lapidos’ defense of the movement, printed in Shivas Tzion (v. 1 p. 35): “When this movement first began to capture Jewish hearts, there were many who opposed it, but now almost all the opposition is gone. The people have already realized that we have no plans to take the Holy Land from the Turks with sword and bow, and we have no plans to make a government there. Our entire goal is to found an organization of farmers who work the land...and this poses no problem of ‘forcing the end’...”



כי הנך הרה וילדת בן ומורה לא יעלה על ראשו כי נזיר א-להים יהיה הנער  
מן הבטן והוא יחל להושיע את ישראל מיד פלשתים (שופטים יג,ה).

*For behold, you will conceive and bear a son, and a razor shall not go up on his head, for the child will be a nazirite of G-d from the womb, and he will begin to save Israel from the Philistines. (Shoftim 13:5)*

The simple meaning of the word “yachel” is “begin,” as we have translated it above. But the Gemora (Sotah 10a) explains a different level of meaning: “yachel” can also mean “it is nullified,” namely, the oath of Avimelech was nullified. Scripture is about to relate the story of Shimshon’s life and how he terrorized the Philistines. Avraham Avinu and Avimelech, king of the Philistines, had made a sworn covenant with each other (Bereishis 21:23). But since the Philistines fought with and subjugated the Jews, thus violating the oath, the Jews were released from their obligation to keep the oath, and Shimshon was permitted to do what he did.

Some Zionists claim that there is a similar relationship between the oaths of the Jewish people and the nations (Kesubos 111a). The Jewish people was prohibited under oath from going up to Eretz Yisroel “as a wall,” rebelling against the nations, or forcing the end of exile. The nations were prohibited from subjugating the Jews too much. The claim is that since the nations violated their oath by killing six million Jews, the Jewish people is no longer bound by its oaths.

One need not look far to see the fallacy of this argument. Avraham and Avimelech swore not to harm one another, so when one harmed the other the covenant was broken. But why does one nation harming the Jews in exile give the Jews the right to take Eretz Yisroel away from a different nation that occupies the land? Why should one nation suffer for the violation of another nation?

Furthermore, Rabbi Shmuel ben Yitzchak Yaffe in his commentary Yefeh Kol

to the Midrash Shir Hashirim points out that since there is already an oath not to rebel against the nations, the oath about “going up as a wall” cannot mean only taking the land by military force, because that would be superfluous – it would be included in the general prohibition on rebellion. Rather, it means that any effort to take possession of Eretz Yisroel, even with the approval of the nations living there, is forbidden. With this in mind, one cannot possibly say that the oaths are some sort of deal between the Jews and the gentiles, for the oath prohibits Jews from taking the land even when gentiles allow it. The violation of this oath is not a sin against the gentiles, but a sin against Hashem Himself. Violation of the oath against forcing the end, which includes false messiahs and, according to Rashi, even excessive prayer, is certainly not a sin against the gentiles but against Hashem Himself.

Also, although the great destruction wrought by Germany is the worst our people have ever suffered, there is no reason to say that previous massacres such as the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, the destruction of Beitar, the Crusades and the massacres of 1648 (Tach Vetat) did not constitute a violation of the gentiles’ oath. Why then did the Zionist idea sprout only in this most recent century? In previous generations not only was such an idea never entertained, but it was expressly forbidden by the greatest Torah sages of the time. The Amoraim lived after the Roman massacres and yet they recorded the Three Oaths in the Gemora as practical law. The Rambam knew of the early Crusades and also terrible persecutions in his own lands by the Muslims, and yet he warns the Yemenite Jews not to violate the oaths. The same is true of other Rishonim such as the Rashbash (siman 2) and the Rivash (siman 101), and more recent poskim such as the Avnei Nezer and Rabbi Shmuel Salant, who deal with the oaths as practical halacha.

It is interesting to note that Rabbi Yosef Dayana of Lublin, in his work *Kitzur Alshich* (first printed in 1748, and reprinted in the Lewin-Epstein Chumash) on Shir Hashirim 2:7, does connect the oaths of the Jewish people and the nations, but in the opposite direction. The Gemora says that if the Jewish people violates the oaths, Hashem will permit their flesh like the deer and hinds of the field. Rabbi Yosef Dayana explains this to mean that Hashem will release the nations from their prohibition on subjugating Israel too much. He mentions specifically the sin of forcing the end. But as explained above, this is not a sin against the

gentiles, but rather against Hashem. Why then should the gentiles have the right to punish us for it? Clearly, Rabbi Yosef Dayana does not mean that the gentiles are actually released from their oath and are doing a mitzvah by afflicting us. They will be duly punished for exercising their free will. At the same time, their actions against us are part of Hashem's plan to punish us for violating the oaths. "Just as the heavens are high above the earth, so My ways are high above your ways, and My thoughts above your thoughts." (Yishaya 55:9)



# Behaaloscha

וישמע משה את העם בכה למשפחתיו איש לפתח אהלו ויחר אף ה' מאד  
ובעיני משה רע (יא,י).

*And Moshe heard the people crying in families, each man at the door of his tent, and Hashem's anger burned greatly, and in the eyes of Moshe it was bad. (11:10)*

What is the significance of the words “in the eyes of Moshe it was bad”? If Hashem’s anger burned greatly, obviously it was bad! The Noam Elimelech explains this based on a Tosafos in Shabbos 12b. The Gemora says there that a person should not pray in Aramaic because the angels do not understand Aramaic and they will not bring his prayer before Hashem. Tosafos asks: Angels know even a person’s thoughts – how then could it be that they do not understand a prayer said in Aramaic? The commentators all struggle to explain how Tosafos knew that the angels know a person’s thoughts (see Gilyon Hashas). But the Noam Elimelech says that Tosafos did not mean that the angels know all of a person’s thoughts at all times, just the thoughts that go into his prayers. There are certain angels whose job it is to take the prayers up to the Holy One, blessed is He, and make from them a crown for Him. They must be able to distinguish between a proper prayer and one with improper thoughts, and for this they are given the ability to see the thoughts at the time of prayer. Furthermore, the mitzvos or aveiros a person does during the day all flavor his prayer, like spice gives flavor to a food, and the angels can detect those flavors, although they have no independent knowledge of the person’s mitzvos or aveiros.

When the people said, “We remember the fish that we used to eat in Egypt for free” (v. 5) on the surface they were only talking about fish, but in their minds they intended to complain about the marital prohibitions as well (see Yuma 75a).

The rule is that Hashem does not punish a person for a bad thought, only for an action (Kiddushin 39b). According to the Noam Elimelech, this is because Hashem hands down punishment through a system called the Heavenly Court, in which accusing angels bring up a person's sins. Angels cannot see thoughts, so a person is not punished for his thoughts. So at first the Jewish people were not punished for their complaint about "fish". But then Moshe heard them crying, and he prayed for them; and since he, with his great level of understanding and prophecy, knew that they had in mind the complaint about the marital prohibitions, that thought accompanied his prayer. The angels then found out about the Jewish people's hidden complaint, they launched an accusation against them, and Hashem was very angry. "And in the eyes of Moshe it was bad" – he felt bad that he had caused this accusation through his prayer.

The Noam Elimelech writes that he once had a discussion with someone who brought proof that the angels know everything from the story of Yishmoel (Bereishis 21:17 with Rashi). When Yishmoel was dying of thirst, the angels said to Hashem, "How can You save him, when his descendants are going to kill Your children?" Hashem replied, "I judge him only based on what he is right now." If the angels know even the far future, certainly they know a person's thoughts. Reb Elimelech replied that there too, the angels only gathered their information from a prayer. In this case, it was the prayer of Avraham Avinu, "If only Yishmoel would live before You!" (Bereishis 17:18) Avraham Avinu was a prophet and was surely aware of what Yishmoel's descendants would do to the Jews. But he asked Hashem to keep Yishmoel alive because he knew it would be better for the Jews to suffer in exile under Yishmoel than to suffer in Gehinom. When he prayed for Yishmoel, his prayer contained the thought that although Yishmoel would do evil in the future, it was in the Jews' best interest to keep him alive. The angels saw this thought, and that is how they knew Yishmoel's future.

The story of Avraham choosing exile for his children is told in the Midrash: "Hashem showed Avraham four things: Gehinom, the exiles, the giving of the Torah and the Temple. He said to him, 'As long as your descendants are busy with the last two, they will be spared from the first two. But if they leave the last two, they will get the first two. [Since the Temple will one day be destroyed, they will have to get one of the punishments.] Which punishment do you choose for them?' Rabbi Chanina bar Papa said: Avraham chose the exiles. Rabbi Yudan,

Rabbi Idi and Rabbi Chama bar Chanina said: Avraham chose Gehinom, but Hashem chose for him the exiles. According to the opinion that Avraham himself chose the exiles, we can explain the verse (Devarim 32:30), ‘How can one [gentile] pursue a thousand [Jews], or two pursue ten thousand, if not that their rock had sold them; Hashem gave them over.’ ‘Their rock had sold them’ – this means Avraham, ‘and Hashem gave them over’ – this teaches that Hashem agreed to Avraham’s choice. Rabbi Huna said in the name of Rabbi Acha: Avraham was sitting and thinking all that day: ‘What should I choose, Gehinom or exile?’ Said the Holy One, blessed is He, to him, ‘Avraham! Throw away that coin [of Gehinom]!’” (Bereishis Rabba 44:21)

But the Noam Elimelech has added an important fact: that among the exiles Avraham chose was the exile of Yishmoel – that the Jewish people would one day live under the domination of Yishmoel’s descendants. Avraham wanted this for his children because he knew that otherwise, they would have to endure punishment in Gehinom.

This exile of Yishmoel is also mentioned by the Maharsha in Bava Basra 73b. The Gemora says: “Rabbah Bar Bar Chana said: I saw a frog as big as the city Akra Hegronia, which has sixty houses. A snake came and swallowed it, and then a female raven came and swallowed the snake, and it went up and sat in a tree. Imagine how strong that tree must have been!” The Maharsha explains that just as Daniel was shown the successive world empires in the form of wild animals, so too Rabbah Bar Bar Chana was shown a vision of animals as a metaphor for the empires that would rule from the Second Temple until the coming of Moshiach. The frog symbolizes Macedonia and Greece, the snake is Rome, and the female raven is Yishmoel. The raven is an unclean bird, and it was female to symbolize the fact that Yishmoel came from a non-Jewish mother, Hagar. “The raven went up and sat in a tree” means that Yishmoel went up and conquered Eretz Yisroel and lived there, based on the merit of his father Avraham (a tzaddik is compared to a tree – see Bamidbar 13:20) to whom Hashem promised to make Yishmoel a great nation (Bereishis 17:20). Imagine how great the merit of Avraham Avinu must have been, for Yishmoel controls Eretz Yisroel and many other lands until the time of the redemption!

The Zohar (Shemos 32a, end of Va’eira) also speaks of Yishmoel’s domination

over Eretz Yisroel: “The angel of Yishmoel stood for four hundred years before the Holy One, blessed is He, and asked: Does someone who is circumcised have a share in Your Name? He said to him: Yes. He said to him: But Yishmoel is circumcised – why does he have no share in Your Name like Yitzchok? He said to him: This one was circumcised properly and this one improperly. Furthermore, these cling to Me properly, on the eighth day, but these are far from Me for many days. He said to him: Even so, since he is circumcised, should he not get some reward? (Woe to the day Yishmoel was born in the world and was circumcised!) What did the Holy One, blessed is He, do? He distanced the children of Yishmoel from clinging to Above, and gave them a portion below in the Holy Land because of their circumcision. The children of Yishmoel are destined to rule over the Holy Land for a long time, when it is empty of all, just as their circumcision is empty, not complete (i.e. without p’riah). And they will prevent the children of Israel from returning to their place, until that merit of Yishmoel is used up.” Let us accept the decree of exile and wait patiently for that time to come!



# Shlach

ויאמרו אל כל עדת בני ישראל לאמר הארץ אשר עברנו בה לתור אתה טובה הארץ מאד מאד. אם חפץ בנו ה' והביא אתנו אל הארץ הזאת ונתנה לנו ארץ אשר היא זבת חלב ודבש, אך בה' אל תמרדו וגו' (יד, ז-ט).

*And they said to all the congregation of the children of Israel, "The land through which we passed to spy it out is very, very good. If Hashem desires us, He will bring us to that land and give it to us, a land that is flowing with milk and honey. But do not rebel against Hashem!" (14:7-9)*

Rabbi Moshe Tzvi of Savran (d. 1838), when asked by his chassidim if they should move to Eretz Yisroel, said, "It depends. If someone is a true servant of Hashem, separating himself from the vanities of this world, it would be very good for him to go, for the holiness of Eretz Yisroel will help him to reach high spiritual levels. But for those do not serve Hashem truly, who are more caught up in worldly things, it is better for them to live outside of Eretz Yisroel, because Eretz Yisroel is a place of extremes. Just as there is more holiness, so also the evil inclination is more powerful there, and a person can become much worse there than in other places. This is hinted at in the words of Yehoshua and Calev, who said, 'The land is very, very good...but do not rebel against Hashem.' The land is indeed very good, but only for true servants of Hashem, not for those who rebel against Him." (Likutei Shoshanim)

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In a similar vein, the Chasam Sofer writes: Why did Moshe have to send spies to see if the land was "good or bad"? Didn't Hashem promise repeatedly that it was a land flowing with milk and honey? The answer is that as the Ramban

writes in Sefer Haemunah Vehabitachon, Hashem's promises all referred to the spiritual goodness of the land: "a land good and broad" - good for Torah and broad for mitzvos. "Milk and honey" refer to the secrets of Torah, as it says, "Honey and milk are under your tongue" (Shir Hashirim 4:11). The spies were sent to see if the land was physically good as well. (See the Parables of the Dubno Maggid for a similar explanation.) When the spies returned with a bad report, the Jews reasoned as follows: If they are telling the truth, we don't want to go – we will fall by the sword and our wives and children will be taken captive! And if they are lying, how could such righteous people (see Rashi on 13:3) become so wicked? It must be that when they walked through the land, they were spiritually influenced by it to become wicked. If so, the land is a place of spiritual defilement, not of holiness!

To this, Yehoshua and Calev replied: "The land is very, very good." They repeated the word "very" to signify that it was good both spiritually and physically. However, the peculiar nature of the land is that it makes holy people holier, and casts out and defiles the wicked. So if Hashem desires us, the land will truly be good in all ways. But do not rebel against Hashem, like these spies, for if you do it will affect you adversely just as it affected them, and you will not be able to exist there physically either. (Chasam Sofer)



ויאמר משה למה זה אתם עברים את פי ה' והיא לא תצלח, אל תעלו כי אין  
ה' בקרבכם ולא תנגפו לפני איביכם (יד, מא-מב).

*And Moshe said, "Why do you transgress the command of Hashem?!  
And it will not succeed. Do not go up, for Hashem is not in your midst,  
that you might not suffer defeat by your enemies." (14:41-42)*

The Targum Yonasan on Shir Hashirim (2:7) draws a connection between this verse and the Oaths: "After this Moshe received a command from Hashem to send spies to spy out the land, and when they returned from spying they spread a bad report about Eretz Yisroel and they were delayed for forty years

in the desert. Moshe opened his mouth and said, 'I adjure you, congregation of Israel, by Hashem Tzeva-os and by the strong ones of Eretz Yisroel, that you not dare to go up to the land of Canaan until it be the will of Hashem, when all the generation of the war dies out from the camp, just as your brethren the children of Ephraim sinned and left Egypt thirty years before the end, and they fell into the hands of the Philistines of Gath, who killed them. Rather, wait forty years, and then your children will you go in and inherit it.'"

Thus these "mapilim" - Jews who invaded the land without Hashem's permission after the sin of the spies - were actually transgressing this oath written in Shir Hashirim, the same oath that is applied by the Gemora in Kesubos to the Jewish people in exile today. Moshe Rabbeinu's warning to them - "and it will not succeed" - should then apply to a violation of the oath in any generation. Many people are puzzled by the Zionist state's apparent successes. If it is truly a violation of the oath, they wonder, it should have been condemned to immediate failure, like the "mapilim" of Moshe's generation.

Rabbi Tzadok Hakohein of Lublin, in Tzidkas Hatzadik 46 (written 1848, first published in 1913), sheds some light on this question. He writes that the "mapilim" knew that their act was against the will of Hashem, but justified it based on the statement of Chazal, "All that the host tells you to do, you must do, except for leaving" (Pesachim 86b). They understood this to mean that for the sake of coming close to Hashem, one may sometimes violate the command of Hashem; we need not listen when He tells us to leave Him. Despite these good intentions, they were punished severely for their sin. But Moshe said to them, "And it will not succeed" - this time it will not succeed - hinting that there would come a time, in the era known as "the Footsteps of Moshiach," when such a sin would have success. "In the Footsteps of the Moshiach, chutzpah will increase" (Sotah 49b). That is the time when such a brazen idea - to conquer the land in violation of Hashem's command - will meet with some success.

However, we must keep in mind that their success does not change the fact that they are acting against Hashem's command, and that the success is only temporary. Rabbi Yaakov of Lissa (1770-1832), in his commentary Emes Lyaakov on the Agados of the Talmud, also predicts the temporary success of the Zionists and their downfall. The Gemora says in Bava Basra 73b: "Rabbah

Bar Bar Chanah said: One time we were traveling on a boat, and we saw a fish on whose back sand had settled, and a swamp of reeds had grown up on it. We thought it was dry land, so we went up and baked and cooked on it. And when its back got hot, it turned over, and if the boat had not been nearby, we would have drowned.”

The Emes Lyaakov explains this as an allegory: “He (i.e. Rabbah Bar Bar Chanah) saw with holy inspiration that it will happen before the coming of Moshiach that Israel, which is under his dominion, will lift itself up over the other nations. And the nations are called ‘the fish’, and this is what it means, ‘sand settled,’ for chalsa (sand) is from the word choleh (sick), so it means that this nation’s power was weakened, and ‘a swamp of reeds had grown up on it,’ for agma (swamp of reeds) is a language of subservience and lowliness, as the Aruch says, from the words, ‘bowing the head like a reed’ (Yishaya 58:5). In other words, subservience grew on the nation. ‘We thought it was dry land’ – in other words, they thought that their (i.e. the nations’) hopes had dried up, ‘and we went up and baked and cooked’ – in other words, Israel wanted to lift itself up over them and rule over them. ‘And when its back got hot, it turned over’ – in other words, they (i.e. the nations) turned over and became stronger over them. ‘And if the boat had not been nearby we would have drowned’ – in other words, this thing will happen shortly before the redemption, and when they turn over and become very powerful over Israel, if not for the closeness of the redemption, we would have drowned.”



# Korach

ויקהלו על משה ועל אהרן ויאמרו אלהם רב לכם כי העדה כלם קדשים  
ובתוכם ה' וגו' (טז,ג).

*And they gathered against Moshe and Aaron, and said to them, "You have taken too much for yourselves! For all of the congregation are holy..." (16:3)*

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein explained that Korach thought that every Jew is entitled to fulfill the laws of the Torah in accordance with his own understanding. Korach's logic told him that a tallis made of techeiles was exempt from tzitzis, that a house full of seforim was exempt from mezuzah, and that he was entitled to be a kohein. But this is a great error; one must keep the Torah only as explained by the poskim of his time, who possess the traditions and methods of learning passed down from one sage to another throughout the generations. Without this, one is bound to make mistakes, often in the most serious of transgressions. In our long history we have seen many groups of heretics and wicked men who have based their beliefs on some inference from the Torah or the words of Chazal. Only the scholars and sages of the generation are to be entrusted with interpreting the words of Hashem Yisborach.

When the Jewish people said at Sinai, "We will do and we will listen" they were highly praised by Hashem: "Who revealed this secret to My children?" (Shabbos 88a). If their greatness was that they were ready to keep the Torah even before knowing what it said, then we should find that they were praised for saying, "We will do." Why was it important that they also said they would listen? The answer is that if a person promises to "do all that Hashem spoke" it could mean doing anything he feels is the will of Hashem. Many times he will end up doing the opposite of the true will of Hashem. For example, the Rambam

tells in his Laws of Idolatry (1:1) how the generation of Enosh erred in thinking that worshipping the stars was the will of Hashem. Therefore the Jews promised, “We will do and we will listen,” that is, we are ready to do anything, but we will only do what we hear is the true will of Hashem. We will toil in Torah study to understand every mitzvah properly, with all its details, according to the tradition transmitted by the sages; only what they tell us will be considered fulfilling the Torah. Such a promise is indeed worthy of the highest praise. (Darash Moshe)

In our generation as well, we see the religious proponents of Zionism claiming that their beliefs and practices are true to the Torah, and bringing proofs. We must remember Reb Moshe’s words: that the Torah is not open to all to interpret, only to the great poskim of the generation. And none of the great poskim ever issued an halachic ruling permitting the establishment of a state. At the time the state was established, many ruled explicitly that it was forbidden, and the others refused to answer the question. (See Mikatowitz Ad Hei B’Iyar, Chapters 6-8.)



האיש אחד יחטא ועל כל העדה תקצף (טז,כב).

*"If one man sins, will You be angry at the entire congregation?"*  
(16:22)

The Akeidas Yitzchak (Shaar 78) explains that when Moshe Rabbeinu said this prayer, he was speaking about the principle of “arvus,” under which every Jew can be held responsible for what every other Jew does. He prayed, “If one man separates himself by his sins from the body of our nation, will You hold everyone responsible for him? What does he have to do with us?” Hashem’s answer was: “Get away from the tents of these wicked men, and do not touch anything that is theirs, lest you be destroyed with all their sins.” (v. 26) In other words, He agreed to what Moshe said, but only on condition that everyone keep far away from the wicked men. This, says the Akeidah, is the reason for the ancient custom to place a ban of excommunication on a sinner. Even today, when the government has prohibited us from placing bans, we must stay far away from the tents of the

wicked, and then no punishment will come upon us due to them.

The Maharam Schick writes in his responsa (Orach Chaim 303) about the mitzvah of rebuking sinners, “All of the above was said regarding a sinner who is still considered a Jew, but in the case of an apostate who is considered like a gentile, who has separated himself from the Jewish people by his sins, the Akeidah has already explained that this was Moshe’s prayer...and so there is no mitzvah to rebuke him.”

We can apply the Akeidah’s words to the secular Zionists of our time: since they have denied all the foundations of Judaism and separated themselves from our people, we need not worry that we will be punished for their deeds. A state founded and run solely by them would not be counted in the eyes of Hashem as a sin of the Jewish people. However, we must be concerned about the religious Zionists, for they are definitely part of our nation and the principle of “arvus” – shared responsibility – applies to them. It is their participation in the state that causes us all to be responsible for this great sin. How great then is our obligation to rebuke them and bring them back to the true path of Torah!



הלא קציר חטים היום אקרא אל ה' ויתן קלות ומטר ודעו וראו כי רעתכם  
רבה אשר עשיתם בעיני ה' לשאול לכם מלך (שמואל א' יב,ז).

*Is it not the wheat harvest today? I will call to Hashem, and He will  
make thunder and rain, that you might know and see that your evil is  
great that you have done in the eyes of Hashem, to ask for yourselves a  
king. (Shmuel I 12:17)*

Why did Shmuel choose this miracle – rain in the summer – to teach the people that they should not have asked for a king? And why are the words out of order? It should have said, “And see that in the eyes of Hashem you have done a great evil.” Rabbi Azariah Figo (1579-1647) in his work Binah L’itim explains that in truth, we must first ask why it was wrong of the Jews to request a king, in

light of the fact that appointing a king is a mitzvah, and in light of Yaakov Avinu's prophecy, "The scepter shall not depart from Yehudah..." (Bereishis 49:10) The Ramban in his commentary to that verse in Bereishis provides an answer: that the right time for the rule of the tribe of Yehudah – Dovid Hamelech and his house – had not yet arrived. Rabbi Azariah explains that there were kings of other nations ruling at that time, and Hashem did not want the monarchy of Dovid to begin until these other monarchies had fallen. Thus when the people requested a king, they were forcing the hour, and so in place of a king from the chosen tribe of Yehudah, they were given Shaul, from the tribe of Binyamin, the last of the tribes. And because Israel trespassed over the border of the nations, so to speak, by appointing a king of their own while the nations' kings were still ruling, they caused the nations to trespass against them later. Had they waited till the proper time, perhaps no other nation would ever have been able to dominate them.

Since the request for a king would have been proper in the right time, but in the wrong time it was considered a sin and an ominous event, it is exactly comparable to a request for rain in the summer. When rain falls in its proper time, it is a blessing and a good fortune; we always ask for rain in our prayers in that season. But we do not pray for rain in the summer, and if someone does so accidentally he must repeat his prayers, for rain in that season is not desirable. Shmuel said to the people, "Your request is similar to the request I am about to make: I will call out to Hashem and He will send rain now, in the summer. Had you waited till the proper time to ask for a king, it would have been fine, but now you have acted foolishly, for you are implying that there is something lacking in the providence of Hashem, Who planned for you to have a king later, not now."

This the meaning of the words, "The evil is great that you have done in the eyes of Hashem." The "eyes of Hashem" is a metaphor for hashgacha – providence – as it says, "Constantly the eyes of Hashem your G-d are on it" (Devarim 11:12). Shmuel told them: "Your sin is that you deny the eyes of Hashem, which are watching over you constantly. Your request implies that you do not trust in Hashem's providence, and that therefore you need a king to lead you." (Binah L'itim, Drush 24)

# Chukas/Balak

ויאמר ה' אל משה ואל אהרן יען לא האמנתם בי להקדישני לעיני בני ישראל לכן לא תביאו את הקהל הזה אל הארץ אשר נתתי להם (כ,יב).

*And Hashem said to Moshe and Aaron, "Because you did not believe in Me, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you will not bring this congregation into the land that I have given them."  
(20:12)*

The Torah says (Devarim 3:26) that Moshe beseeched Hashem to change this decree, but Hashem said, “There is much for you; do not speak to Me again about this matter.” Rashi, quoting the Sifri, explains that “there is much for you” refers to the World to Come. Rabbi Tzadok Hakohein of Lublin explains this according to the Midrash Tanchuma (Chukas 10): Moshe wanted to lead the people into Eretz Yisroel, but Hashem said, “You were the leader of the generation that left Egypt and died in the wilderness. If you lead this new generation into the Land, it will appear as though you don’t care about the old generation, and you are leaving them behind. I want you to be buried together with your people outside the Holy Land, so that you can lead them into the Land in the World to Come, when the dead are resurrected. If you leave them behind now, people will think that the generation that died in the wilderness has no share in the World to Come.” This is the meaning of “there is much for you” – there is an important job for you in the World to Come: to lead your people into the Land.

Hashem told Moshe not to pray anymore, because had he continued, his prayer would have been so powerful that perhaps the decree would have been annulled, and that is not what Hashem wanted. We find a similar instance, writes Reb Tzadok, in the case of the oath forbidding the Jewish people to force the end of exile. Rashi (Kesubos 111a) explains this to mean not praying too much

for the redemption. There have been certain individuals, such as Rabbi Chiya and his sons (Bava Metzia 85b), whose prayer was so powerful that they could have brought about the redemption before its proper time. But this was not what Hashem wanted.

The Gemora teaches us that even if we think the time of redemption has arrived because of the great merits of the Jewish people, or because of the great sins of the gentiles, we must not make any move on our own, for it is not the proper time desired by Hashem. This is the meaning of the other oaths mentioned there, not to go up “as a wall” and not to rebel against the nations. “Wall” is a metaphor for the steadfastness of the Jewish people, as it says (Shir Hashirim 8:9), “If she is a wall, we will build upon her a silver crown.” The Midrash says that this verse refers to Avraham Avinu when he was challenged by Nimrod to worship idols. Hashem said: If he is strong like a wall, I will save him. Thus, the prohibition on going up as a wall means that the Jewish people should not think that if they are faithful and good, this automatically means that the redemption will come. The prohibition on rebelling against the nations means that even if the nations are evil and cruel to the Jews, we may not assume that the time of redemption has come and take the license to rebel against them. The time of the end remains hidden, and no one can know if the deeds of the gentiles are enough to cause the redemption to come. Also, perhaps their measure of evil is not yet full, and Hashem waits to punish a people until its measure of evil is full, so that He can pay them all at once and wipe them out (Sotah 9a). For these reasons we are not allowed to make any assumptions and begin praying too much for the exile to end. (Pri Tzaddik, Va'eschanan 1)



וישמע הכנעני מלך ערד ישב הנגב כי בא ישראל דרך האתרים וילחם  
בישראל וישב ממנו שבי (כא,א).

*And the Canaanite, king of Arad, who dwelt in the south, heard that Israel was coming by way of Asarim, and he fought with Israel and took a captive from them. (21:1)*

Rashi says that this was really Amalek; they are called Canaanites because they switched to the language of Canaan in order to mislead the Jews. The Jews would pray to Hashem to help them defeat the Canaanites, and the prayer would be ineffective. But the trick did not work, because the Jews saw that they dressed in the style of the Amalekites, and their language was that of the Canaanites. Unsure as to who they really were, they prayed in an unspecific way: "If You give this people into my hands..."

If they really wanted to fool the Jews, why didn't they change their style of dress as well? The answer is that if they had changed both their language and their dress, they would have really been considered Canaanites, and a prayer to defeat the Canaanites would have been effective. We see from here that one who adopts the language and dress of a nation is considered a true part of that nation.

Furthermore, even now that they only switched their language, the Torah calls them "Canaanites" and not "Amalekites." Apparently even adopting the language of a people is enough to be considered a member of that people, to a certain extent. The same applies to those Jews who, although remaining religious and dressing in religious style, speak and conduct their lives using the Zionist language known as "Ivrit," a language created and developed by heretics, deniers of the Torah and enemies of Hashem. They have thereby become an integral part of the Zionist state; this serves to explain their enthusiasm to participate in it and identification with some of its major goals.



ועתה הנני הולך לעמי לכה איעצך אשר יעשה העם הזה לעמך באחרית  
הימים (כד, יד).

*"And now that I am going to my people, let me counsel you what this  
people will do to your people in the end of days." (24:14)*

Rashi explains that the "counsel" refers to Bilam's advice on how to cause

the Jews to stumble in immorality. Rashi is thus forced to split up the verse and say that “what this people will do to your people” is a separate statement. The Satmar Rov once said that perhaps we could understand the connection between the two halves of the verse. Bilam said to Balak, “The Jews are a holy people, scrupulously moral; every one of them can trace his lineage back to Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov. It would be impossible to get them to sin among themselves. The only way to get them to sin is to offer them your daughters. This is now. But with my prophecy I can see far into the future, and I see that in the end of days, before the coming of Moshiach, there will be a Jewish group who will be worse in immorality than the worst of nations. They will draft girls into the army, something no other country does, and their country will be a center of immodesty and perversion. They will murder unborn babies at a higher rate than any other Western nation (one million babies in the first 30 years of their statehood). At that time, the tables will be turned, and it will be this Jewish group influencing your people to become worse. So let me advise you now to cause the Jews to sin, just as they will do to you in the end of days.” (Toros Ve’uvdos Mibeis Raboseinu, p. 330)

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When the Satmar Rov lived in Eretz Yisroel in 1946, he was once walking at night from the Montefiore neighborhood where he lived during the summer to the Bayis Vegan neighborhood, to visit the Belzer Rov. It was 1:00 at night, and he was walking with his talmid Reb Chaim Mordechai Steinberg. They passed the Beis Hakerem section, and there they saw on one street a long line of parked cars. “What’s this?” asked the Rebbe. “It’s a nightclub where the Zionist youth are spending the night in dancing and revelry,” said Reb Chaim Mordechai. They walked on, and a while later, they noticed an area in an open field, lit up brightly with electric lights. “What’s over there?” asked the Rebbe. “Just as the Zionists spend their nights at the club, the Arabs have a place over there where they hold parties late at night,” said Reb Chaim Mordechai. The Satmar Rov then commented with a pained expression, quoting Tehillim 106:35: “‘They mingled with the gentiles, and they learned their ways.’ The Arabs never had this kind of culture, but they learned from the ways of the Zionists.” (Peulas Tzaddik Lechaim, p. 67)

# Pinchas

פנחס בן אלעזר בן אהרן הכהן השיב את חמתי מעל בני ישראל וגו' לכן  
אמר הנני נתן לו את בריתי שלום (כה,יא-יב).

*Pinchas, son of Elazar, son of Aaron the kohein, turned away My anger from the children of Israel...therefore, say: behold, I am giving him My covenant of peace. (25:11-12)*

The Satmar Rov, speaking in Bnei Brak in 1952, asked: Why was this a fitting reward for Pinchas's act? Furthermore, the Targum Yonasan ben Uziel adds to verse 12 the following words: "And I will make him a living angel and he will live forever to announce the redemption at the end of days." Why was this a fitting reward?

The Yalkut at the beginning of the parsha explains it more clearly: "Pinchas is Eliyahu. The Holy One, blessed is He, said: You made peace between Israel and Me in this world, so in the future as well you will make peace between Me and my children, as it says (Malachi 3:23-24), 'Behold, I am sending you Eliyahu the prophet before the coming of the great and awesome day of Hashem, and he will bring back the hearts of the fathers to the children.'"

Many Jews at the time saw Pinchas as a promoter of divisiveness and a starter of fights, who in his arrogance stood up against the entire tribe of Shimon and its well-respected leader. Thus we find that they degraded him (Rashi 25:11) and even wanted to excommunicate him (Yerushalmi Sanhedrin 48b). But in truth, he who acts with zeal and starts a dispute for the sake of the honor of Heaven is actually bringing peace and unity between the Jewish people and Hashem. On the other hand, those who make peace and unity with the wicked are actually causing disunion between the Jewish people and their Father in

heaven. Therefore, since it seemed that Pinchas was causing disunion, Hashem spoke and proclaimed that he was actually a promoter of peace, and his reward was to be the announcer of the redemption, the time when there will be true peace between the Jewish people and Hashem and among the Jewish people themselves. Until that time, there cannot be complete peace and unity, for it is necessary to keep separate from the wicked. (Divrei Yoel p. 153)

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ובני קרח לא מתו (כו,יא).

*And the sons of Korach did not die. (26:11)*

Rashi says that the sons of Korach had thoughts of repentance at the last moment, so when Korach and his family fell into Gehinom, the sons were given a high place to sit on. In 1869 the Reform movement in Hungary, known as the Neologist movement, took over the official Jewish community organizations in each town. The Ksav Sofer and other leaders of the generation went to Budapest and asked the government that the Orthodox Jews be given the right to make their own separate organizations. Eventually their request was granted. The Ksav Sofer said at the time, “Now I have a new explanation of Tehillim 79 - ‘A song of Assaf, G-d, gentiles have entered Your property, they have defiled Your holy sanctuary, they have made Jerusalem into rubble.’ The question is: why is this called ‘a song?’ It should be called ‘a lamentation!’” Rashi answers that Assaf was happy that Hashem took out His anger on the wood and stone of the Temple, and not on the Jewish people themselves. Tosafos answers that Assaf, who was descended from Korach, rejoiced that the gates of the Temple sunk into the earth, for Hashem will surely bring them back up, and when He does, He will bring out the sons of Korach from the earth as well. But now I have a new answer: Assaf rejoiced that the destruction was wrought by gentiles and not by rebellious Jews, for when the reformers of our own people rule over us, it is much worse!”

**את הכבש אחד תעשה בבקר ואת הכבש השני תעשה בין הערבים (כח,ד).**

*One lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the second lamb in the afternoon. (28:4)*

The Gemora (Berachos 27a) says that the word “morning” means the first four hours of the day. Consequently, the morning Shmoneh Esrei prayer, which takes the place of the everyday offering, must be said during the first four hours of the day.

In 1953, after the passing of Rabbi Zelig Reuven Bengis, the Av Beis Din of the Eidah Chareidis, the members of the Eidah wanted to appoint the Satmar Rov as the next rov of Yerushalayim. But there were some who opposed this idea, saying, “How can we appoint as the rov of Yerushalayim a rebbe who davens after the proper times?” Reb Matisyahu Davis went to ask the Brisker Rov. The Brisker Rov strongly endorsed the choice of the Satmar Rov, and explained, “Davening late is the peculiar problem of Chassidim, and it is not the problem of our generation. The heresy of Zionism, on the other hand, is a much more serious problem, and it has already spread to almost all of the Jewish people, including some chareidim. In all the world, there is no true fighter against Zionism like the Satmar Rov, who is ready to give up all his honor and resources just to publicize the pure principles of emunah. There is no one as good as him for the position of Av Beis Din of the Eidah Chareidis, for the war against Zionism outweighs everything else.”

Then he added, “The Satmar Rebbe has a tradition from his fathers; war against the wicked is well-rooted in his family. His father the Kedushas Yom Tov and his grandfather the Yitav Lev were among the main fighters against the wicked [reformers] in Hungary. They established the standard of hisbadlus (separatism), and so they saved thousands of religious Hungarian Jews from being captured by Haskalah, as they were in Lithuania and Poland.”

He related that Rabbi Yehoshua Leib Diskin was a great fighter against Chassidism as long as he was in Europe, but from the time he came to Yerushalayim and onwards he never spoke a bad word about Chassidim. In fact,

one of his main talmidim was Reb Yeshaya Orenstein, a Chabad Chassid. “The reason for the change,” explained the Brisker Rov, “was that when he came to Yerushalayim and saw the great danger of the Chovevei Tzion, who dressed and acted like bnei Torah, and seemed to be coming to promote the great mitzvah of settling in the Land of Israel, when in truth their main objective was the heretical idea of nationalism; and also the danger of the maskilim who dressed like the religious Jews but had the goal of capturing innocent young souls for their modern schools, Reb Yehoshua Leib decided that now all arrows must be directed at them; we must fight side by side with the Chassidim against them.

“Today,” the Brisker Rov concluded, “the problem of the hour is Zionism. We must use all our strength against them – un tzvei milchamos ken men nisht firen (we can’t fight two wars at once).” (Uvdos Vehanhagos Leveis Brisk, v. 4 p. 67)



# Matos/Masei

והורשתם את הארץ וישבתם בה כי לכם נתתי את הארץ לרשת אתה  
(לג,נג).

*And you shall take possession of the land and live in it, for to you I have given the land to inherit it. (33:53).*

The Ramban in his commentary to the Torah and in Sefer Hamitzvos argues that this verse is a commandment, not merely a promise as Rashi interprets it. He says that the commandment to live in Eretz Yisroel should be counted as one of the 613 mitzvos, and that this is why Chazal say (Sotah 44b) that Yehoshua's war against the Canaanites was a "milchemes mitzvah," an obligatory war. It was not a war just for the sake of killing the Canaanites, like the war against Amalek, but a war to conquer the land. If the Canaanites had left the land, there would no longer have been any mitzvah to fight them.

Then the Ramban adds that when Chazal say that anyone who lives outside Eretz Yisroel is as if he worshipped idols (Kesubos 110b), and that living in Eretz Yisroel is equal to all the other mitzvos (Sifri Re'eh 80), they are referring to this mitzvah. Thus we see that the mitzvah applies even during exile.

Some people mistakenly think that the Ramban means that the mitzvah during exile is the same obligation as during the time of the Beis Hamikdash: to conquer the land and drive out its inhabitants. But this is incorrect - this would be forbidden by the oaths against taking over the land "as a wall" and "forcing the end" of exile (Kesubos 111a). Rather, he means that if an individual Jew lives in the land, he fulfills a mitzvah. This is apparent from the Ramban's choice of words: "If so, it is a positive commandment for all generations, in which every one of us is obligated, even during the exile." (Vayoel Moshe 2:2)

This is explained by the Rashbash (Responsa, #2): “There is no doubt that living in Eretz Yisroel is a great mitzvah at all times, both during and after the time of the Temple, and my grandfather the Ramban counted it as one of the mitzvos, as it says, ‘You shall take possession of it and live in it,’ and so is the opinion of my father the Rashbatz in his work Zohar Harakia. And even according to the Rambam who did not count it as a mitzvah, it is at least a Rabbinic mitzvah, besides the many other benefits of living there. However, during exile this is not a general mitzvah for all Jews, but on the contrary it is forbidden, as the Gemora says in the last chapter of Kesubos, that this is one of the oaths that the Holy One, blessed is He, made the Jews swear: that they not hurry the end and not go up as a wall. Go and see what happened to the children of Ephraim when they hurried the end! However, it is a mitzvah for any individual to go up and live there, but if there are considerations that prevent him he is not obligated.”

Similarly, Rabbi Shmuel Salant quotes the law that a wife may force her husband to move to Eretz Yisroel (Kesubos 110b), and then asks why – even according to the Ramban, he says, there is no obligation on every Jew to move to Eretz Yisroel, since this is one of the Three Oaths. He therefore explains that she can only force him to move if she is willing to move even without him. In that case, if he refuses to come along, he is not fulfilling his marital obligations to her, and he must divorce her. But if she wants to move only with him, then he has no obligation to move. (Printed in Tzefunos, year 3 issue 1, p. 46)

The Rambam does not count living in Eretz Yisroel as one of the 613 mitzvos. The Megillas Esther explains that this is because the mitzvah only applied in the ancient Temple times, and the Ramban only counts mitzvos that apply for all times. This is a very strange statement by the Megillas Esther, for surely the mitzvah to live in Eretz Yisroel will apply in the times of Moshiach, and the Rambam counts mitzvos that will come back into force only in the times of Moshiach, such as terumah, maaser, challah, and all the mitzvos of the Temple service.

The Minchas Elazar explains that in the time of Moshiach, the mitzvah to

conquer the land and expel its inhabitants will not simply come back into force like terumah and maaser. Moshiach will come in a miraculous way, predicted by a prophet; he himself will be a prophet close to Moshe Rabbeinu's level (Rambam Teshuva 9:2), and he will be able to tell each Jew what tribe he comes from (Melachim 12:3). He will succeed in getting all Jews to repent (Melachim 11:4), a feat no one could accomplish under normal conditions. All the gentile nations will call in the name of Hashem (ibid.), and they will come to hear Moshiach as well (Teshuva 9:2). The statement of the Gemora (Shabbos 63a), quoted by the Rambam (Melachim 12:2), that "there is no difference between this world and the days of Moshiach except the subjugation of the nations," means that in the general world there will be nothing miraculous, but Moshiach himself will be a wondrous person. Thus the Jewish people will not have to conquer Eretz Yisroel in those future times; Moshiach, with his influence over the nations, will solve that problem. It is thus incorrect to say that the mitzvah of taking over the land will apply in the future, for even in the future it will not be a mitzvah for the Jewish people; it will be Moshiach's task. (Minchas Elazar 5:16)

The Minchas Elazar adds that nowadays, since the Zionists have made living in Eretz Yisroel the center of their ideology, even the Ramban would agree that we should not put effort into this mitzvah. This is comparable to the one-stone altar called a matzeivah, which was used by the Avos and was beloved to Hashem at that time, but later became forbidden because the idol worshippers had begun to use it (Rashi on Devarim 16:22).



ואביא אתכם אל ארץ הכרמל לאכל פריה וטובה ותבאו ותטמאו את ארצי  
ונחלתי שמתם לתועבה (ירמיה ב,ז).

*And I brought you to the luscious land, to eat its fruit and its good,  
but you came and defiled My land, and My property you made into an  
abomination. (Yirmiyah 2:7)*

Some Zionists have claimed that it is better for irreligious Jews to live in

Eretz Yisroel than elsewhere in the world. They based themselves on the Yalkut on Eichah 3:20: “Said the Holy One, blessed is He: If only the children of My people would be in Eretz Yisroel, even if they defile it!” But the true meaning of the Yalkut is in line with the Ramban in his introduction to the book of Devarim. The Ramban says that the reason Moshe Rabbeinu told the Jews all the stories of how they rebelled in the wilderness, and how Hashem Yisborach forgave them, was so that they should not be afraid to enter Eretz Yisroel. The Jews might have said, “How can we live in Eretz Yisroel? Everyone commits some sins, and in that holy land where everything proceeds with strict justice, we will be punished immediately.” Therefore Moshe taught them how merciful and forgiving Hashem Yisborach is. He wants his children to stay in the land He gave them, even though they sin occasionally. This is what the Yalkut means: “If only the children of My people would be in Eretz Yisroel” – as long as they are My people, even if they commit some sins. But those who completely turn their backs on Hashem, His people and the Torah have no place in the Holy Land. (Vayael Moshe 1:103. See also pp. 133-4.)



# SEFER DEVARIM



# Devarim

לא תוסיפו הביא מנחת שוא קטרת תועבה היא לי חדש ושבת קרא מקרא  
לא אוכל און ועצרה (ישעיה א,ג).

*Stop bringing vain offerings; it is abominable incense to Me. On Rosh Chodesh and Shabbos you call an assembly, but I cannot bear sin and a prayer gathering. (Yishaya 1:13)*

Rashi explains: “I cannot stand when your hearts are sinful, leaning toward idolatry, and at the same time you hold a prayer gathering, for the two things cannot go together – to call a prayer gathering to come together before Me, while the sin of idolatry is in your hearts, and you do not remove it from your hearts.” In these difficult times, as we pray for the safety of our brethren in Eretz Yisroel, we must be careful to remove the idolatry of Zionism from our hearts. We must know how to pray and what to pray for.

The Zionists organize gatherings to pray for the success of the Zionist state and its army. But we, who recognize that their state is a great sin and is actually the root cause of all this danger, must not join their gatherings, lest we seem to be supporting their position. This point was explained by the Satmar Rov. When the children of Israel stood at the shore of the sea and the Egyptian army approached from behind, the Torah says, “The children of Israel cried out to Hashem. And they said to Moshe, was it for lack of graves in Egypt that you took us to die in the desert? What is this you have done to us, to take us out of Egypt?” (Shemos 14:10-11) The Ramban asks: How could they cry out to Hashem for help and at the same time reject the help He had already given them by saving them from Egypt? He answers that there were actually two separate groups of Jews. The righteous cried out to Hashem, while the wicked rejected Him and said it would have been better if He had never saved them from Egypt.

But if so, why did Moshe Rabbeinu answer them, “Hashem will fight for you, and you will be silent”? Why should they have been silent? At least the righteous group should have continued to pray for help! The Satmar Rov explains that when the wicked cry out with blasphemy, we must be silent and not join them, even if we are going to say proper prayers. Although the words we are saying are completely different, yet when our voices join with theirs we give them support. The bystander who listens may not notice the difference, and it may appear to him that everyone has in mind the same sin. Therefore, although Hashem loves the prayer of the righteous, He does not want it to be said together with the blasphemy and insults of the wicked. (Al Hageulah V'al Hatemurah, Chapter 10)

\* \* \*

What should our prayers be? In 1956 during the Zionist war in Sinai, the Satmar Rov said: “We see now the fulfillment of the Gemora in Chagiga 5a: Rabbi Yochanan would cry when reading the following verse (Devarim 31:21): ‘And it shall come to pass when great and competing evils come upon them...’ What is the meaning of ‘great and competing evils’? Rav said: Evils that become competitors to each other, like the hornet and the scorpion. Rashi explains that the cure for a scorpion bite is hot water, and for a hornet bite cold water. Switching the cures will lead to danger. Thus, when one is bitten by both a hornet and a scorpion, the bites become competitors, and there is no cure. So too today in the Holy Land: whichever path we choose, the Jewish people will be in danger. If the gentiles win the war, there will be danger for the Jewish people. And if the heretics win, the danger is even greater, for who knows what will come next? For whoever believes in Hashem Yisborach and His Torah knows that every step of the way is forbidden, and Moshe Rabbeinu told the Jewish people, “Why do you transgress the word of Hashem? And it will not succeed.” (Bamidbar 14:41) And the Ibn Ezra says that any transgression of the word of Hashem will not succeed. Besides the danger to life, the honor of the heretics will be uplifted, as they have tested G-d and escaped. And this is a worse danger, as Chazal say: One who causes his fellow to sin is worse than one who kills him (Rashi on Devarim 23:9). We have no other option but to merit immediately the coming of Moshiach, and he will nullify them like the dust of the ground. Since it will happen through the king Moshiach, it will certainly happen with mercy and kindness. Let us

fall into the hands of Hashem, not into the hands of men! We have no other solution to the problem of the hornet and the scorpion. Neither of the two paths is good. The only thing to do is to stand between the oven and the stove and cry to Hashem Yisborach, that He shine a little bit of emunah into the hearts of the Jewish people. The Creator is capable of anything, and He has the power to save. Let us not make any plans or counsel, only ask of Hashem Yisborach.” (Chiddushei Torah, Parshas Vayishlach, 5717)

In another place, the Satmar Rov writes: “The Gemora in Sanhedrin 98a says: The son of Dovid will not come until the low kingdom is gone from Israel. Rashi explains that the Jewish people will have no political regime, even a weak and poor one. So we see that before the coming of Moshiach that low state will have to disappear, otherwise it is impossible for Moshiach to come. The existence of the state is thus preventing the redemption. A similar statement is made by the Rambam in his Letter to Yemen. But we need the mercy of Heaven, that the state disappear only through some Heavenly force, through Hashem Yisborach, not through the gentiles, for if, G-d forbid, it happens through the gentiles there will obviously be a great danger to Jews. May Hashem Yisborach have mercy on us and on all His people Israel.” (Introduction to Vayael Moshe, p. 8)

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There are some Jews who understand that Zionism is wrong, yet feel that now there is no option but to support the Zionist army in their fight against the Arab enemy. They are forgetting that the Zionists are actually causing all this aggression by stubbornly holding onto their state. As another example of this, in 1967 most people were under the impression that the Zionists went to war only in self-defense. But the Satmar Rov said at that time, “I heard that the religious Zionists announced that this war was necessary and obligatory according to Torah [in order to save the Jewish people from danger]. But it is obvious and known to all who see truth that all these troubles, including the danger of the war, came upon us only as a result of the existence of that Zionist state...it is the Zionist government that aroused the anger of the Arabs by provoking them in various ways, and if not for the stubbornness of its wicked leaders the danger of the war would never have been. And even now, if they were to give up their state and their government, there is no doubt that they would take Hashem’s

anger away from the Jewish people. Had they done this, the entire calamity – the danger of the war and the loss of Jewish lives – would not have come upon them. And for every minute that they hold on to their power they are offending the Creator, blessed be He, with violation of the oaths and rebellion against the nations, which the holy Torah has forbidden and for which we have been warned of a severe punishment... And even naturally speaking, if they were to give up their government and Zionist state, there is no doubt that the United Nations would be able to find some way to prevent war, bloodshed and loss of Jewish lives.” (Al Hageulah V'al Hatemurah, Chapter 44)

# Vaeschanan

צדיק הוא ה' כי פיהו מריתי וגו' (איכה א, ח).

*Hashem is righteous, but I rebelled against His mouth. (Eichah 1:18)*

The Gemora in Taanis 22b tells the story of how the righteous king Yoshiahu was killed in battle by the Egyptian soldiers. The king of Egypt was passing through Eretz Yisroel to fight against Assyria, and he had no intention to fight Yoshiahu. But Yoshiahu thought that his generation was worthy of the blessing, “No sword shall pass through your land” (Vayikra 26:6), which means even an army on its way to another land. This was a mistake – he himself was a tzaddik, but his generation was not worthy. Had he asked Yirmiyahu the prophet what to do, he would have told him that he was mistaken, and that he should not go to war. But he did not ask. He went out to fight the Egyptians, and they shot arrows into him until his body was full of holes like a sieve. As he lay dying, Yirmiyahu saw his lips moving, and he bent over to see what his last words would be. Yoshiahu said, “Hashem is righteous, but I rebelled against His mouth.” His neglecting to consult with the greatest sage of the generation was considered rebellion against Hashem, and for this he was punished.

Rabbi Avigdor Miller once told this story, and then commented that not only must one ask the gedolim, but one must know how to ask. This was the lesson the Jewish people learned from the war of Pilegsh Bagivah (the concubine at Givah). Before each of the three days of battle, the tribes consulted with Hashem through the Urim Vetumim. But on the first two days they lost to the tribe of Binyamin, and on the third day they won. Why did they lose on the first two days? Because they did not ask the Urim Vetumim the crucial question: whether or not they would win. The first time, they asked which tribe should go into battle first, and Hashem said, “Yehuda.” The second time, they asked whether they should go into battle at all, and Hashem said, “Go.” The third time, they

finally learned that they had to ask if they would win, and Hashem replied, “Go, for tomorrow I will give them into your hand.” (Shoftim 20:28, Shevuos 35b)

The reason it is so important to ask whether one’s plan will be successful is because without that, the question becomes a mere formality. The asker is saying, “I have already decided that this is the best plan. I’m not coming to ask you whether this plan is the most likely to succeed. I’m just asking you for permission to do it.” If the rabbi says yes, it could mean, do it and go bankrupt, or do it and risk your life. Rabbi Miller concluded, “You see a remarkable thing from here. Very many people ask, and they pride themselves on their virtue, but it’s evident from the way they ask that this is what they wish. I won’t mention the name of a good Orthodox organization that has a company of sages whom they consult. They really consult them. But they consult them in such a way that the sages see that’s the only way. And so when the sages say yes, it’s like forcing them in one direction. The proper way would be, not that these people should initiate the plan and then go to the sages to have it approved. They should ask their sages, what plans should we initiate? That’s the way to ask. You draw up a whole plan, a whole outline, and then you bring it to your group of sages and you say, what do you say to this? What, are they going to fight with you? They’re happy to have Orthodox Jews who are loyal to them. They might even lose these. So they say yes. That’s not asking. You have to go to them and be explicit: what do you say? What should be done? Not, do you approve of this? What should be done? And the sages should draw up the plan. And if they don’t want to draw up the plans, it means no plans should be drawn up.” (Tape #74)



**והפיץ ה' אתכם בעמים ונשאתם מתי מספר בגוים אשר ינהג ה' אתכם  
שמה (ד, כז).**

*And Hashem will scatter you among the nations, and you will be left few in number among the nations where Hashem will lead you. (4:27)*

The Malbim explains based on Pesachim 87b that this is a kindness Hashem

does for us: to scatter us among the nations so that if some of the nations make decrees against us or destroy us, those of us living under other nations will survive. This is the connection between the two parts of the verse: since you will be scattered, you will be left, even if you are few in number, that is to say, even if the gentiles destroy some of you.



נחמו נחמו עמי יאמר א-להיכם (ישעיה מ,א).

*Console, console My people, says your G-d. (Yishaya 40:1)*

When the Brisker Rav would be called up for the Haftorah during the Seven Weeks of Consolation, he would always cry. He explained, “Throughout history, the hope of every Jew was always hanging on the words of the prophet, “Console, console My people” and “It is I, it is I, Who consoles you” (51:12) – and all the other verses of consolation spoken by Hashem through His true prophets, promising that Hashem Himself will redeem us. This promise breathed life into every Jew. But now, the Zionists have come and created a new vision, claiming that there is a natural solution to the “Jewish problem.” Jews must take their fate into their own hands, they say. They think that their state somehow saves the Jewish people, when in reality it is the worst exile of all.” (Uvdos Vehanhagos Leveis Brisk, v. 4 p. 189)



על הר גבה עלי לך מבשרת ציון הרימי בכח קולך מבשרת ירושלים הרימי  
אל תיראי אמרי לערי יהודה הנה א-להיכם (ישעיה מ,ט).

*Go up on a high mountain, announcer of Zion; lift up your voice with strength, announcer of Jerusalem; lift it up, do not fear, say to the cities of Judah: here is your G-d. (Yishaya 40:9)*

Rashi notes that the word “announcer” is in the feminine, while later on (52:7) the word “announcer” is used in the same sense, but in the masculine. Rashi explains that if the Jewish people deserves it, the redemption will come quickly like a man, but if not, it will be weak like a woman and will be delayed until the End.

Based on this, Rabbi Yonasan Eybeshutz explains the verse in Shir Hashirim (2:7), “I adjure you, daughters of Jerusalem, not to arouse or awaken the love before she desires.” Here too, the word “techpatz” – she desires – is in the feminine. The meaning is that the Jewish people, who is the speaker in this verse, cries out to the nations (the “daughters of Jerusalem”) with a curse and an oath: “Do not arouse and do not awaken the love towards the ingathering of Israel!” Even if all the Jews are ready to go to Jerusalem, and all the nations agree, still she cries out that, G-d forbid, she will not go there. For the end is hidden, and perhaps now is not the true time, only a temporary moment of favor. In a short time they will sin, and be forced into exile again, G-d forbid, and that exile will be worse than the previous one. Therefore she requested that they not go until “she desires,” that is, until the time arrives when the earth is filled with knowledge. After that time, the Creator promises that the Jewish people will never lack anything, for that is the true time. Therefore, the prophet Yishaya calls the announcer feminine, for the end of the exile will be slow in coming, but once it comes, “Lift up your voice with strength” – for there will be nothing to fear. There will never be, G-d forbid, another exile, for “say to the cities of Judah, here is your G-d” – He Himself will come and redeem you. (Ahavas Yonasan)



# Eikev

ואכלת ושבעת וברכת את ה' א-להיך על הארץ הטבה אשר נתן לך (ח,י).

*And you shall eat and be satisfied, and bless Hashem your G-d for the good land He gave you. (8:10)*

The Gemora says (Berachos 48b) that the first three blessings of Birkas Hamazon are alluded to in this verse: “bless” refers to the first blessing, “land” to the second, and “good” to the third, which discusses the Beis Hamikdash. The fourth blessing, “Who is good and does good,” was added by the Sages after those killed in the war of Beitar were allowed to be buried.

In Perek Shirah we learn: “The animals of the field say, ‘Blessed is He Who is good and does good.’ The deer says, ‘And I will sing of Your strength, and praise in the morning Your kindness.’”

Rabbi Yaakov Emden in his siddur explains that the “animals of the field” is a hidden reference to the Jews killed in Beitar. By revolting against the Romans, they transgressed the oath against forcing the end of exile, and thereby incurred the punishment: “I will permit your flesh like the deer and hinds of the field.” (Kesubos 111a) This is why they are called “animals of the field.” They are now living (=chayos) in Gan Eden, and every day they say, “Blessed is He Who is good and does good,” the blessing composed by the Sages after their death. (These words were meant to imply that only Hashem will do good for us in the future; we will not fight for ourselves. See the Hirsch Siddur, p. 703, quoted on p. 137.)

The song of the deer, “I will praise in the morning Your kindness,” is mentioned immediately afterwards because after the war of Beitar the Jewish people learned not to force the end, only to wait and hope for the “morning,” the

end of exile known only to Hashem. (Siddur Yaavetz)

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Rabbi Meir Arik, in a speech at a gathering of rabbonim in Pressburg in 1921, said: “When one Jew wants to do a mitzvah for the sake of Heaven, the Satan tries to prevent it. When a large number want to do a mitzvah, the Satan uses all his methods to stand in their way and ruin their plans. This is because the more Jews involved in a mitzvah, the greater the sanctification of Hashem’s name. When ten Jews recite Birkas Hamazon together, they say, ‘Let us bless our G-d.’ When there are a hundred (according to one opinion in the Mishnah) they say, ‘Let us bless Hashem our G-d.’ When there are a thousand, they say, ‘Let us bless Hashem our G-d, the G-d of Israel.’ And when there are ten thousand, they say, ‘Let us bless Hashem our G-d, the G-d of Israel, G-d Tzeva-os, Who sits on the cherubim.’ (Berachos 49b)

This is true of all mitzvos, and certainly of the mitzvah of settling in Eretz Yisroel, a mitzvah which Chazal say is equal to all other mitzvos (Sifri Re’eh, 12:29). Certainly the Satan uses all his methods to prevent Jews from doing this mitzvah. Therefore it is no wonder that when great tzaddikim like the Baal Shem Tov and the Vilna Gaon tried to come to Eretz Yisroel, they turned back in the middle of their trips. We do not know their reasons, but one thing is clear: that the Satan was afraid that these holy men would come there and fulfill the mitzvos of the land. And even simple, G-d-fearing Jews who want to come to the land and fulfill its special mitzvos run into difficulties and obstacles, and endure much suffering.

And now we see great enthusiasm for the mitzvah of settling in Eretz Yisroel among Jews who are very far from Torah and mitzvos, and a large percentage of them are even known to be open enemies of the Torah. They go up to the land by the tens of thousands, and the Satan does not stand in their way at all. On the contrary, he helps them, and fills them with enthusiasm and strong will. The Satan, through his emissaries, gives this mitzvah very great publicity, for he knows how much he will gain from it. (Recorded by Rabbi Yaakov Teitelbaum in his book Kol Yaakov, pp. 15-16)

כִּי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם הוּא אֱלֹהֵי הָאֱלֹהִים וְאֲדֹנֵי הָאֲדָנִים הָאֵל-לֹהֵי הַגְּדוֹל הַגְּבוּר  
וְהַנּוֹרָא אֲשֶׁר לֹא יֵשׂא פָנִים וְלֹא יִקַּח שֹׁחַד (י,יז).

*For Hashem your G-d is the G-d of powers and the Master of masters,  
the great, mighty and awesome G-d, Who shows no favoritism and takes  
no bribe. (10:17)*

A religious politician once came to the Brisker Rav to request his approval to take a certain action, promising that this action would bring much benefit to the yeshivos in Eretz Yisroel. The Brisker Rav said, “It is written that G-d does not take bribes. What does this mean? How could anyone give a bribe to G-d, Who owns the entire world? The answer is that when one strengthens Torah study by giving in on other areas, when one tries to cover up a sin with a mitzvah, that is a bribe to G-d. And G-d does not accept bribes.” (See Rabbeinu Bechaye and Sforno.)

During the fight over the drafting of girls, one rosh yeshiva suggested to the Brisker Rav that the Zionists might be so angry at the charedim’s refusal that they would begin drafting yeshiva boys. It might be wise to be more lenient on the issue of national service for girls, in order to keep the yeshivos strong. The Brisker Rav said, “Heaven forbid to permit the forbidden in order to strengthen Torah study. We find that when the Beis Hamikdash was burning, the kohanim went up on the roof and threw the keys up to the sky, saying, ‘Since we did not merit to be trusted caretakers, we are giving the keys back to You.’ A hand came out of the sky and took the keys (Taanis 29a). So too, if we cannot continue the study of the Torah except by permitting serious sins, then we are not responsible to continue it. We leave Hashem responsible to fulfill His own promise that the Torah will never be forgotten.” (Mishkenos Haro’im, p. 842)

למען ירבו ימיכם וימי בניכם על האדמה אשר נשבע ה' לאבותיכם לתת להם  
כימי השמים על הארץ (יא,כא).

*So that your days and the days of your children may be many, on the land which Hashem promised to your ancestors to give them, like the days of the heavens above the earth. (11:21)*

A man once asked Reb Moshe Leib Sassover if he should move to Eretz Yisroel. Reb Moshe Leib replied, “The Gemora in Berachos (8a) says that Rabbi Yochanan could not understand how there could be old people in Babylonia, since the Torah says, ‘that your days be many, on the land which Hashem promised’ – and not in other lands. But when he found out that these old people spent many hours in the shuls, he realized that this was the secret of their longevity. The Maharsha explains that a shul anywhere in the world has the same level of holiness as Eretz Yisroel, and thus the time spent in shul is considered like time spent in Eretz Yisroel. So,” concluded Reb Moshe Leib, “if you know that you and your family can live all the time on the same level of holiness as if you were in a shul, then go to Eretz Yisroel; but if you can’t live in a shul, you shouldn’t live in Eretz Yisroel either.” (Chakal Yitzchok, Parshas Shelach, p. 474)



# Re'eh

והיה המקום אשר יבחר ה' א-להיכם בו לשכן שמו שם שמה תביאו את כל  
אשר אנכי מצוה אתכם וגו' (יב,יא).

*To the place which Hashem your G-d will choose to make His name rest  
there, there you will bring all that I command you. (12:11)*

The Torah never mentions Jerusalem by name; it only refers to “the place Hashem your G-d will choose.” Rabbi Chaim ben Betzalel, brother of the Maharal, explains that this is to teach us that all places in the world are suitable for the service of Hashem, and can be called “the place Hashem will choose.” The Gemora says (Kesubos 110b) that anyone who lives outside Eretz Yisroel is as if he has no G-d. This means, writes Rabbi Chaim, only if he makes his permanent dwelling there and has no hope of returning to the Holy Land. Such a person mingles and assimilates with the gentiles, since he plans to live with them permanently. But a Jew who is constantly waiting for the redemption, whose eyes and heart are always on Eretz Yisroel, is definitely not considered like an idol worshipper. And on the contrary, he is considered as if he were standing in the midst of Eretz Yisroel. This is our intent when we face Eretz Yisroel during prayer – that it should be considered as if we were standing there. Any place where such service of Hashem takes place, no matter in what part of the world, is called “the place Hashem will choose.”

Similarly, writes Rabbi Chaim, when Chazal say (Kesubos 111a) that one buried outside Eretz Yisroel will arise at the Revival of the Dead painfully, by rolling through underground tunnels to Eretz Yisroel, they are only speaking about someone who did not love the Holy Land. But those who loved the Land during their lives and waited for the redemption, even in death do not depart from that holiness that was inscribed on the tablet of their hearts. Hashem left us as an insurance Moshe Rabbeinu, the master of prophets, who is buried

outside the Land, but loved the Land very much. He Who brings up his bones will bring up as well the bones of all those who hoped to Him and waited for His redemption. (Sefer Hachaim, Section 5, Chapter 1)



ובא האות והמופת אשר דבר אליך לאמר נלכה אחרי אלהים אחרים אשר  
לא ידעתם ונעבדם, לא תשמע אל דברי הנביא ההוא או אל חולם החלום  
ההוא כי מנסה ה' א-להיכם אתכם לדעת הישכם אהבים את ה' א-להיכם  
בכל לבבכם ובכל נפשכם (יג,ג-ד).

*If the sign or wonder comes true, promised by the prophet who said, "Let us go after other gods unknown to you and serve them," you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer, for Hashem your G-d is testing you, to know if you love Hashem your G-d with all your heart and soul. (13:3-4)*

The Sforno explains that since the prophecy was clearly false, the miracle must have been performed through the use of witchcraft or some other trick. According to this, the Torah means that “Hashem is testing you” by not preventing the false prophet from using these magical powers.

But the Ramban understands that the miracle was not the work of the prophet but of Hashem himself. In order to test the Jewish people, Hashem shows the prophet a dream foretelling a miracle, which later comes true. A similar explanation is given by the Smag in his preface to the positive commandments: “Since the prophet has no power to change the Torah based on signs and wonders, how then does he have the ability to perform a sign or wonder? The Torah says, ‘For Hashem your G-d is testing you’ – that this sign or wonder was not done with the power of the prophet’s idolatry, but the Holy One, blessed is He, makes this sign to test the Jewish people.”

The Rambam in his letter to Yemen also seems to share their opinion. He

addresses the issue of the false messiah who existed at that time in Yemen, who had reportedly performed wondrous miracles and attracted to his following many people and some Torah scholars. The Rambam writes that this false messiah was probably mentally unstable, not purposely deceiving people. According to the Rambam, the miracles cannot have been intentional tricks performed by him, but direct acts of Hashem to test the people.

In Avodah Zarah 55a we find that Rava the son of Rav Yitzchak asked Rav Yehuda: “There is an idol in our town, and when the world needs rain it appears to its worshippers in a dream and commands them to slaughter a man, and then rain will come. They slaughter a man and rain comes.” Rav Yehuda replied that the Torah says in reference to the sun, moon and stars, “Hashem apportioned them to all the peoples under all the heavens” (Devarim 4:19). Rav said that the word “chalak” (apportioned) has a double meaning – it means that Hashem gives them a chance to slip, in accordance with the principle that he who tries to defile himself is given opportunity to do so.

This Gemora explains not only how the miracle happens, but why Hashem makes it: because the idolworshippers made the choice to defile themselves. The Ibn Ezra in his commentary here takes this even further: he explains that Hashem tests the Jews with this miracle “because they left the false prophet alive and did not kill him” as the Torah commands. Even without a positive effort to sin, their failure to take early action against the false prophet is enough to warrant their being punished with a difficult trial.

The Ibn Ezra is speaking about the false prophet in the time when the Jewish courts had the power to execute him. But his words apply to us even today, for we must keep as far as possible from those who induce us to change our principles of emunah, not leaving any impression that we agree with them. When we are silent in the face of their challenge, thus implying consent, and worse yet, if we give them any encouragement or help, we are increasing their power to test our emunah. Hashem then gives them the ability to perform miracles and wonders, leading even more Jews astray. (Vayoel Moshe 1:46)

Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman records the words of the Chofetz Chaim: “Many G-d-fearing Jews ask: What has Hashem done to us, to give such power to the heretics? But the answer to this question is explicit in the Torah: When a prophet arises in your midst, and he performs a miracle... So it is written openly in the Torah that it is possible for a false prophet who comes to lead us astray and promises as a sign that the sun will stand still tomorrow, that Hashem will give him the power to actually make the sun stand still. Why? For Hashem is testing you. If so, in these final years before Moshiach, regarding which it is written, “I will bring the third part in fire, and refine them like silver, and test them like gold” (Zecharya 13:9) – that there will be refinement after refinement and test after test, it is no wonder that such power is given to false prophets, for Hashem is testing us!”

The Chofetz Chaim added, “The nature of everything is to become as strong as it can possibly be just before its time comes to disappear. Thus a candle flickers brightly just before going out, and the darkest hour is just before dawn. So when the days approach when we will see the fulfillment of the verse, ‘I will cause the unclean spirit to pass from the earth’ (ibid. 13:2) the uncleanness becomes strong with its last remaining power, with such a strength never seen before. We can infer from this that the days of the redemption are soon to come.” (Omer Ani Maasai Lamelech, section 30)



# Shoftim

ולא תקח שחד כי השחד יעור עיני חכמים ויסלף דברי צדיקים (טז, ט).

*And do not take a bribe, for the bribe blinds the eye of the wise and twists the words of the righteous. (16:19)*

The Torah says in Bamidbar 33:55 that the idol worshippers left in Eretz Yisroel will be “like barbs in your eyes and thorns in your sides.” The Ramban explains this to mean that they will blind the Jews’ eyes figuratively, i.e. lead them astray, just as “the bribe blinds the eye” is meant figuratively. The Midrash Tanchuma (Masei 8) elaborates further on this based on the verse, (Iyov 35:11) “He teaches us from the beasts of the earth, and from the birds of the sky He makes us wise.” G-d exhorted the Jewish people to learn from the example of the ox given by Eliyahu to the idolatrous prophets to be offered up to the Baal in the great test on Mount Carmel (Melachim I 18:25). The ox refused to go, and even when Eliyahu explained to it that it too would be instrumental in sanctifying G-d’s name, it said, “I swear that I will not move until you physically hand me over to them.” And He told them to gain wisdom from the birds of the sky, the ravens that were commanded to bring meat to Eliyahu when he was hiding (ibid. 17:4). The ravens refused to enter King Achav’s house to get the meat, even for the noble purpose of sustaining the righteous Eliyahu, for the house was full of idols. Instead they went all the way to King Yehoshafat’s house in Jerusalem. Similarly, G-d told the Jewish people to make sure no idol worshippers were left in the land, for even being near them and seeing their actions would have an effect on them.

The Satmar Rav explains that the reason it was necessary to bring the examples of the ox and the ravens is that otherwise, the Jews might reason as follows: “The Torah only commanded us not to live together with them for fear

that we might be influenced by them. But we will not be influenced.” (King Solomon made a similar argument when he married a thousand wives – see Sanhedrin 21b.) Therefore G-d told them: Look at the ox – even when it knew it could sanctify My name by going to the Baal (as actually happened in the end), and it would certainly not lead anyone astray, still it refused to go. And look at the ravens: they would not even enter a house that had idols in it, even to bring food to a tzaddik, even though the tzaddik would not know where the food came from, and no one would speak to the ravens or influence them toward idolatry. (Vayoel Moshe 1:129)



**על פי שנים עדים או שלשה עדים יומת המת וגו' (יז,ו).**

*By the testimony of two witnesses or three witnesses a man shall be put to death. (17:6)*

The Mishnah in Makos (5b) tells us that Rabbi Akiva said regarding this verse, “The Torah is coming to teach us that if the witnesses were proven to be plotting, false witnesses (edim zomamim), the third witness receives the same punishment as the first two. Although the first two would have accomplished the crime just as well without him, since he joined them he joins in their punishment.”

When the Zionist state was proclaimed and the Holy Land was bathed in bloodshed, one religious Jew who was a participant in the provisional government came to visit the Brisker Rav. He said, “I will not exaggerate and say that we religious have a great influence in the government, but our influence is not too small.” The Brisker Rav replied, “Previously I thought that you had no influence at all, and even in that case you would share in the blame for the blood that is being shed. Now that I hear you say that you do have some influence, and not too small, even if you succeed in getting all the Jews to put on Rabbeinu Tam tefillin, I do not envy your portion, because of your responsibility for what is happening.” (Lechoshvei Shmo, Sivan 5748, p. 8)



שום תשים עליך מלך אשר יבחר ה' א-להיך בו מקרב אחיך תשים עליך  
מלך לא תוכל לתת עליך איש נכרי אשר לא אחיך הוא (יז,טו).

*You shall surely place over yourself a king, whom Hashem your G-d will choose; from among your brethren you shall place over yourself a king; you may not place over yourself a foreign man who is not your brother. (17:15)*

When the wicked King Herod came to power, he realized that he was descended from slaves, and that the Rabbis interpreted the Torah's words "from among your brethren" to mean that a slave cannot be king. Fearing their opposition, he killed all the Rabbis, leaving only Bava ben Buta to be his advisor. He put out Bava ben Buta's eyes, and then went to him, pretending to be someone else, and said, "Look what that wicked slave is doing!" "What should I do about it?" said Bava ben Buta. "Curse him," said Herod. "One may not curse a king," said Bava ben Buta. "But he is not a king," said Herod. "But he is at least a rich man, and one may not curse a rich man. He is at least a leader, and one may not curse a leader in one's people," said Bava ben Buta. "That is only if he behaves like a member of one's people," said Herod, quoting the words of the Rabbis. "But I am afraid of him," said Bava ben Buta. (Bava Basra 3b)

Here we see that Bava ben Buta agreed in principle that it would be a good idea to curse King Herod, except that he was afraid of him. But in Melachim I 18:46, it states that Eliyahu the prophet ran in front of the chariot of the wicked King Achav. Rashi says there that he did this not simply out of fear, but because it is the right thing to give honor to royalty.

The difference is that Achav was a real king, appointed by a prophet, whereas Herod was a slave and had no status of royalty at all. A real king must be honored even if he is wicked, but not someone who lacks the status of a king. (The Jerusalem Talmud, Horayos 3:2, states that all the kings of the Ten Tribes up till and including the dynasty of Yehu had the legal status of kings; those afterwards

took power by force.) If this was true of Herod, in the time of the Second Temple when the Jewish people had the right to rule their own country, then certainly today when the entire state is forbidden by the Torah and its leaders have no status of leadership at all, there is no reason to give them honor. (Vayael Moshe 1:132)



כי תצא למלחמה על איבך וגו' ומי האיש אשר ארס אשה ולא לקחה ילך  
וישב לביתו וגו' מי האיש הירא ורך הלבב ילך וישב לביתו וגו' (כ,א-ח).

*When you go out to war against your enemies... whoever betrothed a wife and did not marry her should go back to his house... whoever is afraid and soft-hearted should go back to his house. (20:1-8)*

The Mishnah in Sotah (44b) says that this applies to an optional war, but in an obligatory war everyone must go out, even the groom from his room and the bride from her wedding canopy. The Ridvaz in his commentary to the Rambam (Melachim 7:4) asks how the bride could go to war – is this not contrary to the standard of modesty demanded by the Torah? He therefore explains that the Mishnah means that since the groom leaves his room and goes to war, the rejoicing is postponed and thus the bride leaves her wedding canopy; but she does not go to war. Alternatively, he says, she goes to help her husband fight by supplying him with food and water. The Sefer Hachinuch (603) also says that women never fight, even in the obligatory war against Amalek. This is his rationale for exempting women from the mitzvah of remembering Amalek through the reading of Parshas Zachor.



# Ki Seitzei

כי תבנה בית חדש ועשית מעקה לגגך ולא תשים דמים בביתך כי יפל הנפל  
ממנו (כב,ח).

*When you build a new house, you shall make a fence for your roof,  
and you shall not place blood upon your house, if someone falls from  
it. (22:8)*

The Gemora in Bava Kama 46a says that anyone who keeps a dangerous animal or a shaky ladder in his house violates the prohibition, “you shall not place blood upon your house.” The Shulchan Aruch (Choshen Mishpat 427:8) lays down the general principle: “And so too with any stumbling block that endangers human life, it is a positive commandment to get rid of it and keep away from it, as it says, ‘Take heed to yourself and guard your life strongly’ (Devarim 4:9). If he did not get rid of the stumbling blocks that lead to danger, he violates a positive commandment, as well as the negative commandment ‘you shall not place blood.’”

The Gemora also says in Taanis 20b, “A person should never go in a dangerous place and say, G-d will make a miracle for me. For perhaps G-d will not make a miracle for him, and even if He does, the cost of the miracle will be deducted from the person’s merits.” The Gemora relates that Rav Huna had some barrels of wine in a house that was falling apart. He did not want to go in and take them out, lest the house collapse on him. But when the great tzaddik Rav Adda bar Ahava came to visit him, Rav Huna deliberately brought him to this house and discussed Torah with him while he carried out the barrels. He trusted that because of the great merit of Rav Adda the house would not collapse. As soon as he finished taking out the last barrel, the house collapsed. Rav Adda then became angry at Rav Huna, because he understood that although G-d had protected

him, it had cost him merits.

The Shulchan Aruch (ibid. sections 9-10) continues and states that the Sages went a step further and prohibited things that contain a small possibility of danger: “The Sages prohibited many things because of danger to life. Some of them are listed in Yoreh Deah... Anyone who transgresses these things and the like, saying, ‘I am endangering only myself – why should anyone care?’ or ‘I am not worried’ – is given the punishment of lashes for violating the words of the Sages. And whoever is careful about these things, may the blessing of good come upon him.” The Rema in Yoreh Deah 116:5 says, “And so too a person must avoid anything that leads to danger, for danger is more serious than a prohibition, and we must be more afraid of a possible danger than of a possible prohibition.”

Rabbi Moshe Rivkes, in his commentary *Be'er Hagolah* at the end of *Choshen Mishpat*, explains: “In my humble opinion the reason why the Torah commands us to guard our lives is because the Holy One, blessed is He, created the world in His kindness to bestow good upon His creations, so that they might recognize His greatness and do His service, fulfilling His mitzvos and Torah, as Scripture states, ‘All that is called in My name, I created for My honor’ (Yishaya 43:7), and to give them reward for their effort. When someone puts himself in danger, it is as if he is rejecting the will of his Creator, as if he desires neither His service nor His reward, and there is no greater dishonor and impudence than this.”

Rabbi Avigdor Miller explained, “The Gemora says that a man should never go where there’s danger, because maybe a miracle won’t happen. So what if it won’t happen? He’s willing to take the risk! The answer is, if something does happen then he is a murderer, because his body is not his property. That’s the point. It’s like sending a little boy to run across the street in the middle of traffic and buy a pack of cigarettes. What would they say about him? The sender says, ‘I don’t mind.’ So he’s a murderer if he sends himself.” (Tape #167)

The Brisker Rov said already in 1937, when England’s Peel Commission proposed to partition the Holy Land and designate a piece for a Jewish state: “The Arabs will not let the partition happen quietly and peacefully; there will be bloodshed. And it is forbidden that even one Jew be killed in order to found a Jewish state. Even if all the laws of the state would be according to Torah, and

the prime minister would be Reb Chaim Ozer, this does not take away from the prohibition to found a state through the spilling of Jewish blood.” And early in 1948, he wrote a letter pleading with other gedolim to find some way to intercede in the negotiations and prevent the founding of a state. “In general,” he wrote, “a Jewish state will mean a constant situation of warfare, and who knows what its end will be?” (Peninei Rabbeinu Hagriz, p. 148) History has shown how bitterly true his prediction was. The Zionist state has brought the Jewish people into seven wars, costing 26,000 Jewish lives, in addition to the thousands killed and wounded in random terrorist attacks. It is clearly the most dangerous place in the world for a Jew to be. Let us fulfill the command of the Torah to stay far from danger, and merit the words of the Shulchan Aruch, “May the blessing of good come upon him!”



לא יוכל בעלה הראשון אשר שלחה לשוב לקחתה וגו' ולא תחטיא את  
הארץ אשר ה' א-להיך נתן לך נחלה (כד,ד).

*Her first husband who divorced her may not go back and take her...  
and you shall not make sinful the land which Hashem your G-d gives  
you as an inheritance. (24:4)*

The Rambam, in his introduction to Sefer Hamitzvos, establishes rules for what is to be counted in the list of 613 commandments and what is not to be counted. He says (shoresh 5) that when the Torah states a commandment and then adds “you shall not make sinful the land” or “you shall not defile the land” that this is not a separate commandment but a reason for the commandment. The Ramban asks that if so, it should only be forbidden to violate these commandments in Eretz Yisroel. The Megillas Esther answers that we have an established rule that any commandment that has nothing to do with produce of the land applies anywhere in the world; this general rule overrides any possible inference we could make from the verses in one particular place. In any case, the dispute between the Rambam and the Ramban is only over what should be counted in the list of 613. All agree that violating these mitzvos in Eretz Yisroel

is a much more serious offense.



ארבעים יכנו לא יסיף פן יסיף להכתו על אלה מכה רבה ונקלה אחיך  
לעיניך (כה,ג).

*Forty he shall lash him, no more, for if he lashes him more than these,  
your brother will be degraded before your eyes. (25:3)*

The Mishnah in Makos 22a says, based on the orally transmitted interpretation of the Torah, that a person gets 39 lashes and not 40. The Talmudic sage Rava commented, “How foolish are most people, who stand up before a Torah scroll but not before a Torah scholar! For in the Torah it says forty, but the Rabbis came and deducted one.” Rabbi Chaim of Brisk once quoted this Gemora and then commented, “It seems that the main accomplishment of a rabbi is to save a Jew one beating!” (Nesivos Raboseinu, p. 235)

The religious proponents of Zionism claim that their beliefs and practices are true to the Torah, and bring proofs. But the Torah is not open to all to interpret, only to the great poskim of the generation (see p. 169). And none of the great poskim ever issued an halachic ruling permitting the establishment of a state. Who knows how many beatings the Jews could have been saved, had they listened faithfully to the poskim?



# Ki Savo

וירעו אתנו המצרים ויענונו ויתנו עלינו עבדה קשה (כו,ו).

*And the Egyptians did evil to us, and afflicted us, and placed upon us  
hard labor. (26:6)*

The Hagaddah of Pesach connects the words “and the Egyptians did evil to us” with the verse in Shemos 1:10, “Come, let us deal wisely with them, lest they increase, and when there is a war they will join our enemies, and fight against us and leave the land.” What is the exact connection? Seemingly, “doing evil” should have been connected with some words describing the suffering the Egyptians inflicted on the Jews.

The Maharatz Chajes explains that “the Egyptians did evil to us” means that they attributed evil traits to us, seeing us as a nation that would join the enemies of its host, rebel and leave the land with a strong hand, against the host country’s will. The truth, however, is that such a thought never occurred to the Jewish people. We have a tradition passed down from our forefathers not to rebel against the ruler, unless Hashem sends His angel to bring us out with open miracles. In that case, the ruler himself will be forced to admit that G-d is right and He brought this about.

And, he continues, the same will is true of the future redemption, for which we are currently waiting. When the redemption arrives, all of humanity will be raised to such a high level that there will be no need for revolt, war, or weapons between men or between nations. This is what is promised to us in the Tanach. But until the coming of Moshiach, G-d forbid that we should lift our hand against the king and transgress his law.

Thus the Hagaddah explains that not only did Pharaoh afflict our bodies with slavery, but he further wronged us by thinking us to be rebels, who plan all day to join his enemies and fight against him. He did not know that our trust is only in G-d, that He Himself will redeem us in a miraculous way, not through wars and revolts. (Kol Sifrei Maharatz Chajes, Toras Neviim)



והפיצך ה' בכל העמים מקצה הארץ ועל קצה הארץ ועבדת שם אלהים  
אחרים אשר לא ידעת אתה ואבתיך עץ ואבן (כח, כד).

*And Hashem will scatter you among all the nations, from one end of the earth to the other, and you shall serve other gods that you and your fathers did not know, wood and stone. (28:64)*

The Ramban in his comment on v. 42 points out that all the curses in this parsha – the diseases, the pestilence, the failing of the crops – come upon the Jewish people only as long as they are still in Eretz Yisroel. This is apparent from v. 21: “Hashem will cause pestilence to cleave to you, until he drives you from the land...” Once they are in exile, the Torah says (v. 36): “Hashem will lead you and the king you will appoint over yourself to a nation that you and your fathers did not know, and there you will serve other gods, wood and stone.” The only curse is that they will be subservient and pay taxes to the gentiles, who worship wood and stone. But otherwise Jews in exile will lead successful lives. After v. 36 the Torah goes back and lists more curses that will come upon them in Eretz Yisroel, and then again in v. 64 it says that they will be scattered in exile and serve the nations. They will have no rest and their lives will be unstable, but they will be allowed to live and their crops will grow. This is because the exile itself is atonement, and G-d’s promise holds true: “And despite this, when they were in their enemy’s lands, I did not reject them nor revile them to destroy them, to annul My covenant with them, for I am Hashem their G-d” (Vayikra 26:44).

We know that G-d watches over the Jewish people in exile, and as we say in the Hagaddah, “Not only one, but in every generation they arise against us to

destroy us, and the Holy One, blessed is He, saves us from their hands.” However, the Ramban is teaching us that this promise to watch over us applies only when we have the atonement of living in exile. If the Jewish people were to go back and live in Eretz Yisroel before the atonement of exile is complete, even if the gentile nations gave them permission to do so, they would, G-d forbid, be vulnerable to those who wish to destroy them, for they would not have G-d’s special protection. A small community of Jews may live in Eretz Yisroel, since the decree of exile is being fulfilled with the majority of the nation. But a large scale movement in which nearly half the world’s Jews (5 million out of 12.9 million) live in Eretz Yisroel during exile is quite a dangerous phenomenon. (Vayael Moshe 1:14)



אלה דברי הברית אשר צוה ה' את משה לכרת את בני ישראל בארץ מואב  
מלבד הברית אשר כרת עמם בחרב (כח,טט).

*These are the words of the covenant that Hashem commanded Moshe to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moav, besides the covenant He made with them at Chorev. (28:69)*

Rabbi Dov Ber Treivish, rav of Vilna during the Gaon’s lifetime, in his commentary Shir Chadash on Shir Hashirim, discusses the oath: “I have adjured you, daughters of Jerusalem, not to arouse or awaken the love before it is desired” (2:7). This oath occurs three times in Shir Hashirim, and the Gemora (Kesubos 111a) says that it refers to the Three Oaths that are in effect during the Jewish exile: not to go up as a wall, not to rebel against the nations, and that the other nations not subjugate the Jews too much. When and where, asks Rabbi Dov Ber, did the Jewish people accept this oath?

He answers that at Mt. Sinai and again in the land of Moav, we accepted the entire Torah with a covenant and an oath. Included in that oath was the warning that if we would not keep the Torah, all the misfortunes listed in Parshas Bechukosai and Ki Savo would come upon us. These misfortunes culminate in our going into exile and living under the nations (Vayikra 26:33 and Devarim

28:64). Therefore, included in the oath of the Torah is the acceptance of the yoke of exile, not to rebel against it, and not to attempt to end it on our own. (Shir Chadash)

This resolves a question posed by the Satmar Rov in Vayoel Moshe 1:34. The halacha is that one cannot impose an oath on unborn people (Yoreh Deah 228:35). If so, how can the oaths at the giving of the Torah and the Three Oaths of exile apply to future generations who were not alive at the time the oaths were made? Regarding the oaths at the giving of the Torah, says the Satmar Rov, we can say as Chazal say (brought by Rashi on Devarim 29:14) that the souls of all Jews who would ever live, as well as the souls of converts who would later convert, were present at the giving of the Torah and at the covenant in Moav. But what about the Three Oaths?

He answers based on the Midrash Rabbah (Yisro 28) that all the words of the prophets were derived from Sinai, and thus the scroll of Shir Hashirim, in which the Three Oaths are written, was said then as well. The Avnei Nezer (Yoreh Deah 454) answers that the oath was imposed on the roots of the Jewish souls in Heaven, and the gentiles' oath was imposed on the angels of each nation. But according to the Shir Chadash the question is answered simply: the command to stay in exile until the redemption comes is implicit in the warnings of the Torah about exile, which were accepted under oath.



# Nitzavim/Vayeilech

ושב ה' א-להיך את שבותך ורחמך ושב וקבצך מכל העמים אשר הפיצך ה'  
א-להיך שמה (ל,ג).

*And Hashem your G-d will bring back your captivity and have mercy on you, and He will once again gather you from all the nations where Hashem your G-d scattered you. (30:3)*

The Abarbanel writes that we learn from this passage that at the time of the future redemption G-d Himself will bring back our exiles, in contrast to the time of the Second Temple when the Jews returned to Eretz Yisroel by the permission of the Persian emperor Cyrus. That settlement, since it was established at the command of a mortal human being, was temporary; it came to an end with the destruction of the Second Temple 420 years later. But the future settlement will be established by G-d Himself, and therefore it will be permanent. (Mashmia Yeshuah, Mevaser 2, Nevuah 3)

To attempt to restore the Jewish kingdom in Eretz Yisroel by the permission of a government, in a manner similar to the settlement sponsored by Cyrus, would not only be going against the promise written in these verses; it would be an outright violation of Jewish law. This is clear from the words of Rabbi Yisroel of Shklov in his halachic work Pe'as Hashulchan, Laws of Eretz Yisroel, Chapter 1, Section 3. There he quotes the words of the Rashbash (Responsa, #2): "There is no doubt that living in Eretz Yisroel is a great mitzvah at all times, both during and after the time of the Temple, and my grandfather the Ramban counted it as one of the mitzvos, as it says, 'You shall take possession of it and live in it,' and so is the opinion of my father the Rashbatz in his work Zohar Harakia... However, during exile this is not a general mitzvah for all Jews... it is a mitzvah for any individual to go up and live there, but if there are considerations that

prevent him he is not obligated. For example, if reaching the Holy Land would involve dangerous travel through deserts or by sea, or if in his own country he has property and an income while in the Holy Land he might not have enough income, or if he has no money to pay for travel and will have to beg from others, he is not obligated.”

The Pe’as Hashulchan explains in a footnote: “The Rashbash wrote this because the Gemora says in Kesubos (111a) that the Jewish people were made to swear not to go up as a wall. If the mitzvah of settling the land were an obligation on every Jew, then all Jews would go there and this would be a violation of the oath. Therefore he explains that it is not an obligatory mitzvah, and thus if there are other considerations he should not do it. If his wife does not wish to come with him he should not divorce her and go, for perhaps he will not find another wife there, or perhaps he will find one but it will cost too much. The Sages even say that one may leave Eretz Yisroel to get married (Rambam Melachim 5:9) – certainly then one should not lose his wife by going there. Similarly if he has children and cannot leave them he should not go.” (Rabbi Yisroel of Shklov wrote these words after he had lost his parents, wife and four children in the plague that decimated the population of the Holy Land in 1813.)

Why did the Rashbash and the Pe’as Hashulchan see the oath as a reason to say that the mitzvah must not be obligatory? Why couldn’t they have answered simply that the oath forbids taking the land by force, but if the ruling power gives permission for any or all Jews to immigrate, they are obligated to come? Evidently it was obvious to them that the oath forbids any mass immigration, even with permission from the ruling power.



**כי ישוב ה' לשוב עליך לטוב כאשר שש על אבותיך (ל,ט).**

*For Hashem will once again rejoice over you for good, as He rejoiced over your ancestors. (30:9)*

Rabbi Aryeh Leib Kagan, son of the Chofetz Chaim, related that once someone read to the Chofetz Chaim a line from the Haskalah newspaper Hameilitz: “We hope that some day we will be like Bulgaria, which rose up from its lowly status as a Turkish province and is today [1908] an independent nation like all other nations.” The Chofetz Chaim cried and said, “Is it for this that our blood was spilled for 1800 years – in order to reach the level of Bulgaria? The Torah says, ‘And Hashem your G-d will bring you to the land that your ancestors inherited, and you will inherit it, and He will be good to you and make you more numerous than your ancestors’ (Devarim 30:5). And it states further: ‘For Hashem will once again rejoice over you for good, as He rejoiced over your ancestors’ (ibid. v. 9). And in the words of the prophets it is written, ‘And kings will be your babysitters, and their noblewomen your nurses; they will bow to the ground to you, and lick the dirt of your feet, and you will know that I am Hashem, and those who hope to Me will not be ashamed’ (Yishaya 49:23).

“Furthermore, we are promised that the Jewish people will repent, as it states, ‘And you will repent and hearken to the voice of Hashem and do all of His commandments’ (Devarim 30:8). And the prophet Yechezkel (36:24-27) explains this more: ‘And I will take you from the nations, and gather you from the lands, and bring you to your land. And I will splash upon you pure waters and you will become pure, from all your defilements and all your idols I will purify you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will place into you, and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh, and give you a heart of flesh. And My spirit I will place in your midst, and make you walk in My laws, and My ordinances you will keep and do.’ Similar prophecies are found in Yirmiyah (30:18) and Zecharya (8:7).” The Chofetz Chaim went on about this for a long time. (Kol Kisvei Chofetz Chaim, p. 78)



העידתי בכם היום את השמים ואת הארץ החיים והמות נתתי לפניך הברכה  
והקללה ובחרת בחיים למען תחיה אתה וזרעך (ל,ט).

*I call witness to you today heaven and earth: I have placed life and death before you, the blessing and the curse; and you shall choose life, so that you might live, you and your offspring. (30:19)*

Rashi says: “The Holy One, blessed is He, said to Israel: Look at the heavens that I created to serve you. Have they ever changed their ways? Did the sun ever fail to rise from the east and light up the world? Look at the earth that I created to serve you. Did it ever change its ways? Did it ever fail to sprout when you planted it? Did it ever grow barley when you planted wheat? If the heavens and the earth, which are not rewarded or punished, never failed to do their jobs, then you who are promised reward or punishment should certainly keep the commandments of the Torah.”

The Midrash Rabbah on Shir Hashirim (2:7) says that when G-d imposed the terms of the exile on the Jewish people through an oath, He swore by the heavens and the earth. The Maharal explains this in a manner similar to the Rashi quoted above. The heavens and the earth keep to the order of nature decreed by G-d, never changing; in the same way the Jewish people must keep the order of exile decreed by G-d. And just as the heavens and earth, if they were to change their nature and order, would bring havoc and destruction to the world, so too if the Jewish people leaves the exile decreed on them by G-d it would mean destruction for them, G-d forbid. Therefore they must not violate the decree. (Netzach Yisroel, Chapter 24)



# Rosh Hashanah

יום טוב של ראש השנה שחל להיות בשבת במקדש היו תוקעים אבל לא  
במדינה (משנה ר"ה ד,א).

*When Rosh Hashanah fell on Shabbos, they would blow shofar in the Temple but not anywhere else. (Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 4:1)*

The Gemora explains that the Torah permits blowing shofar on Shabbos, but the Sages forbade it, lest someone come to carry a shofar (“shema yaavirenu”) in the street. Rabbi Yosef Chaim Zonenfeld once commented, “Blowing shofar on Rosh Hashanah is a definite mitzvah, and carrying the shofar in the street is only a possibility. Yet we push aside a definite mitzvah for fear of a possible sin. Taking money from the wicked is definitely not a mitzvah, and when one takes money there is not only a possibility of “shema yaavirenu” – that the wicked might induce us to sin – but it is a certainty. So it is surely forbidden to take!” (Mishkenos Haro'im, p. 466)



הנני מביא אתם מארץ צפון וקבצתי מירכתי ארץ וגו' בבכי יבאו  
ובתחנונים אובילים וגו' (ירמיה לא,ז-ח).

*Behold I will bring them from the land of the north, and gather them from the far reaches of the earth... With weeping they will come, and with mercy I will lead them... (Yirmiyah 31:7-8)*

The Metzudas David explains that the “weeping” refers to repentance. G-d

will redeem the Jews and gather their exiles after they repent and pray to Him.

The Rambam also writes in his Laws of Teshuva (7:5), “Israel will only be redeemed through repentance. And the Torah has already promised that Israel will repent at the end of their exile, and then immediately they will be redeemed, as it says (Devarim 30:1-3), ‘And it shall come to pass when all these things come upon you...you will repent to Hashem your G-d...and Hashem will return your captivity...’” In his Laws of Kings (11:4) he writes that Moshiach will get all the Jews to repent and keep the Torah. Thus it seems that the Rambam’s view is that Moshiach will appear before the Jews have repented, he will get them to repent, and only then will he begin putting the redemption into action – gathering the exiles and building the Temple, etc.

But in the Gemora (Sanhedrin 97b) there seems to be a dispute about this: “Rav said: All the times for the redemption have passed, and the only thing lacking is repentance and good deeds. Shmuel said: The mourner has spent long enough mourning. (Rashi explains that according to Shmuel, Israel have suffered enough exile, and they will be redeemed even without repentance.) This dispute is the same as the dispute of the following Tannaim. Rabbi Eliezer says: If Israel repent, they will be redeemed, and if not, they will not be redeemed. Rabbi Yehoshua said to him: If they do not repent they will not be redeemed?! Rather, the Holy One, blessed is He will cause a king to arise whose decrees are as harsh as Haman’s, and then they will repent.” The Gemora is saying that Rav is like Rabbi Eliezer, and Shmuel is like Rabbi Yehoshua. If so, we see that Rabbi Yehoshua really holds that repentance is not a prerequisite for redemption, just like Shmuel, and although he says that there will be a harsh king who will make them repent, this is not really a requirement. So the question is, why did the Rambam rule according to Rabbi Eliezer and not Rabbi Yehoshua? Usually the rule is that we follow Rabbi Yehoshua. And even if we say that Rabbi Yehoshua really does make this harsh king a requirement, we could not say that the Rambam is following Rabbi Yehoshua, because the Rambam says that Moshiach will get the Jews to repent; he mentions nothing about a harsh king.

Furthermore, Rabbi Yochanan also agrees with Shmuel and Rabbi Yehoshua, for he says (98a), “The son of David will come either in a generation that is entirely innocent or in a generation that is entirely guilty. A generation that is

entirely innocent, as it says (Yishaya 60:21), 'And your people are all righteous, forever they shall inherit the earth.' A generation that is entirely guilty, as it says (ibid. 59:16), 'And He saw that there was no man, and He was silent but there was no one praying.' And it says (ibid. 48:11), 'I will act for My own sake.'" This is a prediction, not a cause-and-effect. Being "entirely guilty" (i.e. a large percentage – see Taz Orach Chaim 582:3) obviously does not cause the redemption to come; Rabbi Yochanan is making a prediction that if the Jews do not merit the redemption on their own and the exile drags out for a long time before the pre-determined time limit arrives, the people will be in a low spiritual state when the redemption comes. In any case, we see that Rabbi Yochanan also allows for the possibility of redemption without repentance. The halacha always follows Rabbi Yochanan over Rav; why then does the Rambam rule that repentance must precede the redemption?

Furthermore, it is odd that the Rambam's stated source - a clear verse in the Torah Devarim 30 - is not mentioned at all in the Gemora. One who reads further in the Gemora will see that Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua each quote several verses to support themselves, and the Rambam's source text is not among them. How, in fact, do Rabbi Yehoshua, Rabbi Yochanan and Shmuel get around the Rambam's verse? If the Torah foretells that the Jewish people will repent before the redemption, then how can Rabbi Yehoshua say that it is possible for the redemption to come without repentance?

The answer is that although the word "redemption" is used by both the Gemora and the Rambam, it is used to mean two different things. In the Gemora the word "redemption" means the appearance of Moshiach: Rabbi Eliezer holds that Moshiach will not appear until the Jewish people repents, and Rabbi Yehoshua holds that he might appear before they repent, and he will get them to repent. However, all agree that Moshiach will not take any action to start the process of gathering the exiles etc. until there is repentance. In the Rambam the word "redemption" means the process of gathering the exiles and building the Temple. This, the Rambam says, will not happen until the Jews repent. So the Rambam in his Laws of Teshuva is going according to all opinions. The Rambam in his Laws of Kings, where he says that Moshiach will get them to repent, could also fit with all opinions. Although Rabbi Eliezer says that there must be repentance before Moshiach even appears, he agrees that after Moshiach comes there will

be a higher level of teshuva. This is mentioned in Pirkei Rabbi Eliezer Chapter 43, where Rabbi Eliezer's opinion is quoted with the following addition: "But the Jews will not do the great teshuva until Eliyahu comes, as it says (Malachi 3:23-24), 'Behold I am sending you Eliyahu...and he will bring back the hearts of the fathers...'" (Vayoel Moshe 1:40-41)



נְדִיבֵי עַמִּים נֹאסְפוּ עִם אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם כִּי לֹא-לֵהִים מִגְנֵי אֶרֶץ מֵאֵד נֶעְלָה  
(תהלים מז,י).

*The nobles of the peoples gathered, the people of the G-d of Avraham,  
for to G-d are the shields of the land, He is greatly elevated. (Tehillim  
47:10)*

Rabbi Yaakov Yechezkel Greenwald, the Pupa Rov, once explained this verse as follows: The gedolim of the Jewish people must gather to find a way to resist the test of Zionism. Why is the test so great? Because the shields of the land, the Zionists who claim to be protecting the Holy Land, are to G-d – they claim to be acting for the sake of G-d. They encourage immigration to their state, saying “me’od naalah” – let us put great effort into aliyah. But the very fact that they stress this mitzvah so much and at the same time treat lightly the other 612 mitzvos is the proof that they are not acting for the sake of G-d, and the whole thing is no more than a ploy of the Satan to get Jews to sin. This is a general rule we have learned from our teachers, that when we see a man who is very enthusiastic about a certain mitzvah and feels no resistance to doing it, we must suspect that it is the work of the evil inclination, for if he were truly doing a good thing, the evil inclination would be trying to cool down his enthusiasm. (Bracha Us’hilah on Tehillim, p. 175)

# Haazinu

ואמר אי אלהימו צור חסיו בו, אשר חלב זבחימו יאכלו ישתו יין נסיכם  
יקומו ויעזרכם יהי עליכם סתרה (לב,לז-לח).

*And He will say, where are their gods, the rock in which they trusted,  
who ate the fat of their offerings, and drank the wine of their libations?  
Let them arise and help you, and be a shield to you! (32:37-38)*

The Torah is predicting that in the last days of the exile, the Jewish people will be worshipping idols, and G-d will say, “Why should I help you? Let your idols save you!” Then they will repent and see that G-d is the only one Who controls the world, they will cast away their idols, and G-d will redeem them.

Similarly, in Parshas Nitzavim it says that the last generation of Jews, as well as gentiles, will see the destroyed Holy Land and say, “Why has Hashem done this to this land? Why was this great anger aroused? And they will say, because they left the covenant of Hashem, G-d of their fathers...and they went and worshipped other gods and bowed to them, gods that they did not know.” (29:23-25)

In Parshas Vayeilech as well, it states, “And I shall surely hide My face on that day, because of all the evil that they did, turning after other gods... And evil will befall you at the end of days, when you do what is evil in the eyes of Hashem, to anger Him with the work of your hands.” (31:18,29)

Thus all the past three parshiyos contain predictions that the Jews will worship idols in the end of days. Yet we know that the Talmud says (Yuma 69b) that G-d took the inclination for idol worship out of the world 2300 years ago, in answer to the prayers of the Jews, and that since then it has been unheard

of among the Jewish people. How then will this prediction be fulfilled? The answer is that “avodah zarah” or “other gods” does not mean only the worship of statues – it means any denial of G-d’s control over the world and attribution of that control to other forces or entities. In that context Zionism, with its claim that the Jewish people are in exile only because of their own weakness and can redeem themselves on their own initiative and with their own power, is a form of idolatry.

Indeed, we find that several gedolim characterized Zionism as idolatry. Rabbi Elchonon Wasserman, in his piece entitled “Ikvesa Demeshicha”, points out the references to idolatry in Parshas Haazinu, and explains them as referring to the various ideologies that swept the world in his time: Liberalism, Socialism, and Communism. Then he writes: “Apart from those ‘isms’ which are shared by all the nations we are blessed with an exclusively Jewish ‘ism’, that is, a Nationalism which aspires to bequeath to the people of Israel a redemption, material and especially spiritual. Its aim is to set up a new Hebrew people which will know how to ‘shake off from itself the dust of the preceding generations’ and to proclaim ‘Hush! Do not mention the name of G-d.’ Its plan of action is also very simple: to drive G-d out of the house of Israel, and from the hearts of the children of Israel. And if you ask: who will stand up for us in time of trouble? Will come the reply: We ourselves – ‘my power and the might of my hand.’ Who are the ‘we’? These are the leaders, our ‘national’ youth, the heroes who brought about a state of war between the Hebrew people and the Kingdom of Heaven. Will these bring us the Redemption? They fancied that it would not be denied them to drive G-d out of our boundaries, that the thing was not difficult. G-d’s power is greater than theirs and we stand now like smitten fools. We are not merely fools, but ‘fools among fools who are taught and do not learn.’ We are taught, we are chastised, and our ears are still closed to reason. It is written, ‘And the redeemer shall come to Zion and to those who repent of sin (pesha) in Jacob’ (Yishaya 59:20). The word ‘pesha’ means rebellion, as in the verse, ‘Then Livnah rebelled’ (Melachim II 8:22). Thus it is a prerequisite for redemption that the rebels repent, and as long as our leaders do not cease to rebel against the Kingdom of Heaven, redemption is impossible.”

The Brisker Rav said, “Two things are certain: 1) Zionism is idolatry, and 2) every Jew living in Eretz Yisroel stumbles in Zionism.” (Uvdos Vehanhagos

Leveis Brisk, v. 4 p. 197)

His father, Reb Chaim Soloveitchik, made a similar statement. Rabbi Refoel Zalman Levine, son of “the Malach” Reb Chaim Avraham Dov Ber Levine, related that he was with his father in Minsk on Lag Baomer 1917 when the Zionists were making a “flower day” to benefit their Jewish National Fund. Whoever gave some money received a little flower to hang on their clothing. Reb Refoel Zalman came to his father’s house with a flower on his shirt. The Malach was at that moment in the middle of his prayers, but he stopped right away and admonished his son about the evil of Zionism. Reb Refoel Zalman argued that there were some rabbis who belonged to the Mizrachi, and they debated the issue for a while. That afternoon, Reb Refoel Zalman was walking in the street when he saw his father coming toward him together with another man whom he did not recognize. “Say hello to the world-renowned gaon, the Brisker Rav,” said his father. Only then did he realize with trepidation that he was standing before Reb Chaim. His father turned to Reb Chaim and said, “This is my son. He has a question to ask you.” Reb Chaim said to Reb Refoel Zalman, “Ask your father, he can answer questions.” The Malach said, “No, from me he won’t accept the answer.” Reb Chaim said, “You’ll go home and explain it a little better and then he’ll accept it.” The Malach said, “This is a question related to emunah.” Reb Chaim stopped in the middle of the street and said, “What is your question?” Reb Refoel Zalman managed to stammer out the question. At that point they happened to be standing on Novominsker Street at the corner of Perhavsky Street, and there was a big church there. Reb Chaim looked up and then said, “If you have an extra six-coin to throw out for idolatry, better give it to this idolatry [he pointed to the church] and not there [the Zionists] because this idolatry is less defiled than the other.” (Mishkenos Haro’im, p. 270)



כי ישרים דרכי ה' וצדקים ילכו בהם ופושעים יכשלו בהם (הושע יד, י).

*For the ways of Hashem are straight, the righteous walk in them, and the sinners stumble in them. (Hoshea 14:10)*

Rabbi Yehuda Greenwald, rav of Satmar, once quoted the above verse and wrote that the Chasam Sofer said that it could be punctuated as follows: “For the ways of Hashem are straight; however if the righteous walk in them together with sinners, they will stumble in them.” King David began the book of Tehillim with the words, “Fortunate is the man who did not walk in the counsel of the wicked, or stand in the way of sinners, or sit in a place of scorners.” Certainly he did not mean to warn against joining the wicked and doing as they do – that is obviously wrong. Rather his intent was to warn against joining the wicked even when they propose some plan for the sake of Heaven, to uphold the Torah. (Shailos Utshuvos Zichron Yehuda, Siman 200)

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The Chovos Halevavos writes about this verse “the sinners stumble in them” in Shaar Yichud Hamaaseh, Chapter 5: “If you are a Torah scholar, the evil inclination will try to cause you to err in your wisdom and actions using arguments and proofs from logic, from Scripture and tradition. If your mind is clear and strong you will see the fallacy in his proofs, but if not he will convince you and overpower you more completely than he does others, since he is leading you with proofs from the Torah on which you rely. Once he has your confidence he will lead you on to rely on him even in matters you do not understand, and eventually you will believe in complete falsehood. Then your wisdom will be your own enemy and your mind the cause of your downfall... as it says, ‘For the ways of Hashem are straight, and the righteous walk in them, but the sinners stumble in them.’ For wisdom, when guided in the proper path, is the cure for every sickness, but when taken off the path, is itself a sickness that has no cure and does not heal.”

This same concept is explained in Sanhedrin 38b. The Gemora there quotes the Mishnah in Avos (2:14): “Be diligent in Torah study, and know what to answer to a heretic.” Rabbi Yochanan said, “This was only said regarding a gentile heretic, but to a Jewish heretic one should not reply, for he will only become worse.” Rashi explains that a “gentile heretic” means a gentile who tries to bring proofs to the Jewish heretics from the words of the Torah. Since he is not learned in Torah and does not have his arguments thought out, he will recognize the truth when he hears your reply. But a Jewish heretic is someone who has

learned Torah and nevertheless perverted its principles. No matter what Torah arguments you give him, he will not accept them. And on the contrary, whatever you tell him will cause him to become worse. Since he uses his Torah knowledge to bolster his position, the more knowledge he has, the worse he will become.



# Succos

מאת ה' היתה זאת היא נפלאת בעינינו (תהלים קיח, כג).

*Hashem caused this to come about, it is wondrous in our eyes. (Hallel, Tehillim 118:23)*

The Metzudos David explains that this chapter of Tehillim will be said by the Jewish people upon their redemption from exile. It begins, “Give thanks to Hashem for He is good,” and then continues, “From the straits I called out to Hashem...” and describes the travails of exile. When the exile is over and the Temple is built, we will say, “Open for me the gates of justice,” the gates of the Temple, “I will go in through them and give thanks to Hashem...the stone that the builders discarded has become the cornerstone; Hashem caused this to come about” – not by our own power. “It is wondrous in our eyes” – and we cannot understand how such a complete redemption took place, something that would never have happened naturally. “This is the day that Hashem made,” the day of the redemption; “we will rejoice and be happy in it” for this redemption will surely last forever, unlike the accomplishments of human beings, which do not last.

Alternatively, the Radak explains that the nations of the world are the speakers here, and they will say when the redemption comes, “This redemption is so wondrous that it could only have been done by G-d. Why then should we be upset at the Jewish people’s success? Let us rather rejoice with them, for this is day that G-d made - the clear work of G-d.”



אני פי מלך שמר ועל דברת שבועת א-להים (קהלת ח,ב).

*I keep the word of the king, and the matter of the oath of G-d. (Koheles 8:2)*

Rabbi Aryeh Leib Zunz explains that Israel says during its exile, “I keep the word of the kings of my host nations, and never rebel against them, because G-d made me take an oath on this matter.” This refers to the oath in the last chapter of Kesubos (111a) that prohibits us from rebelling against the nations. On the contrary, we must always remember and teach our children the statement of our Sages (Berachos 58a), “A kingdom on earth resembles the kingdom in Heaven.” We must be humbly grateful for the kindness and generosity of the leaders of nations, and show our gratitude in all ways possible. (Melo Ha’omer)

King Solomon expresses the same idea in another verse, “Fear Hashem, my son, and the king; and do not join changers” (Mishlei 24:21). The Malbim explains: Fear Hashem when it comes to matters of religion, and fear the king in matters of civil law; do not join those people who wish to change the political regime, to revolt against the king and replace him with a different government. For if you do this you are ignoring also the fear of Hashem, Who commanded that you fear the king.

When the children of Israel passed by the land of Edom on their way to the Promised Land, G-d told Moshe to warn the people, “They will be afraid of you, but be very careful. Do not start up with them!” (Devarim 2:4) Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel said, “If when they are afraid of us the Holy One, blessed is He, told us to be very careful, now that we are in exile, surrounded by them, all the more so!” (Midrash Lekach Tov, Parshas Devarim)

Yishaya the Prophet said, “And the people did not return to the one who smote them, and they did not seek Hashem Tzeva-os” (9:12). The Gaon of Vilna explains: When Hashem causes Israel to be subjugated by a nation, the right thing is to accept their rule with love and humble ourselves under the hand of that nation. This is what Yirmiyah the Prophet said (27:17), “And they shall serve the king of Babylonia and live.” During that subjugation we must seek Hashem

with all our hearts. (Commentary of the Gra on Yishaya)

The prime example of the Jewish attitude toward gentile leaders is found in the story of Yaakov's meeting with his brother Esav, who wanted to kill him. He sent Esav a lavish gift, several herds of animals led separately by his servants. The Torah says that Yaakov instructed the first servant to tell Esav, "This is from your servant Yaakov, a gift sent to my master Esav." Then it says, "And he commanded also the second one, also the third one, also all those who went after the flocks" (Bereishis 32:20). Rabbi Kalonymus Epstein of Cracow (d. 1823) asks: Why does the Torah mention the second and third specifically, and the rest generally? It should say "he commanded the fourth and the fifth and the sixth," or it should just say "he commanded all those who went after the flocks."

The answer is that Yaakov's conduct was a model for the Jews in all future exiles, and the herds he sent symbolized the respective exiles. There are four exiles: Babylonia, Persia, Greece, and Rome. The first three herds are mentioned specifically because they each symbolize the Jewish people's subjugation to one particular empire. But the fourth exile includes not only Rome but the many other kings and governments that have ruled over the Jews throughout the past 2000 years. Yaakov commanded us, his descendants, to follow his example in the first, second and third exiles, and in all subsequent exiles. If we do so, then just as Yaakov's bowing and gifts softened Esav's heart and transformed him into a friend who did him no harm, the same will be true of any nations who wish to harm us. When they see that we humble ourselves before them, not using belligerent words but rather words of appeasement, accepting their rule upon us, they will sweeten and be unable to harm us at all. (Maor Vashemesh, Parshas Vayishlach)



# Vezos Habracha

ויאמר ה' אליו זאת הארץ אשר נשבעתי לאברהם ליצחק וליעקב לאמר  
לזרעך אתננה הראיתך בעיניך ושמה לא תעבר (לד, ד).

*And Hashem said to him, "This is the land that I promised to Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, saying, to your seed I will give it. I have shown it to you in your eyes, but you will not cross over there." (Devarim 34:4)*

The Midrash (Parshas Masei, on Bamidbar 34:2) says that this teaches that Hashem showed Moshe a vision of Gehinom. Moshe began to be afraid, but Hashem said, "I have shown it to you in your eyes, but you will not cross over there." Where does the Midrash see in this verse any reference to Gehinom? The verse is only saying that Moshe was permitted to see Eretz Yisroel.

The answer is based on the Midrash in Bereishis Rabba 44:21: "Hashem showed Avraham four things: Gehinom, the exiles, the giving of the Torah and the Temple. He said to him, "As long as your descendents are busy with the last two, they will be spared the first two. But if they leave the last two, they will get the first two. [Since the Temple will one day be destroyed, they will have to get one of the punishments.] Which punishment do you choose for them?" Rabbi Chanina bar Papa said: Avraham chose the exiles. Rabbi Yudan, Rabbi Idi and Rabbi Chama bar Chanina said: Avraham chose Gehinom, but Hashem chose for him the exiles... Rabbi Huna said in the name of Rabbi Acha: Avraham was sitting and thinking all that day: "What should I choose, Gehinom or exile?" Said the Holy One, blessed is He, to him, "Avraham! Throw away that coin [of Gehinom]!"

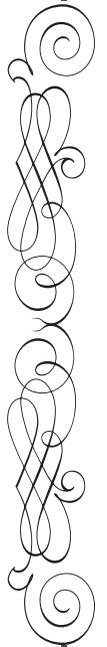
Thus by enduring the exile we are sparing ourselves the suffering of Gehinom. When G-d showed Moshe Eretz Yisroel, He also showed him the entire future

of the Jewish people, including the exile when they would be expelled from the Holy Land. Moshe was very upset over this, so G-d showed him Gehinom so that he would know what the Jewish people were being spared by living in exile. (Vayoel Moshe 1:113)





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