

# EXILE □ CHAPTER 2

*by Rabbi Yaakov Feldman*

Like everything else sheer and arduous, our being in exile has not been without its advantages. (And let's refer to the exile from now on by the Hebrew term "galut".)

Galut is said to act as a cathartic of sorts, in that it atones for sins ( Berachot 56A, Ta'anit 16A, Sanhedrin 37B); our being cast here and there around the world has exposed others to G-d and His Torah, and encouraged converts (Pesachim 87B); and it has united us as a people in many ways (Eicha Rabbah, Peticha).

We're told that we were cast into galut in the first place to fulfill a vital mission, which is to "repair the sparks of supernal light" that had been shattered with "the breaking of the primordial vessels", and to "elevate them to holiness" (Otzrot Ramchal, p. 149). Without going into detail about that now, suffice it to say that the implication is that being in galut has allowed us the opportunity to garner-in all that had been "broken" or undone from around the world -- in all senses of the term -- and to thus allow for their repair.

Our having experienced galut and being plunged into darkness will enable us to ascend from it in the end, it will befuddle all doubters and astound all disbelievers (See Ramchal's Tikkun Tephilot #23), and it will also prove G-d's absolute sovereignty.

And finally, being in galut has given us the opportunity to draw closer yet to G-d, and has taught us things we'd ordinarily never have come upon (Tikkunim Chaddashim 47). The implications of all this of course is that G-d has been safeguarding and tending to us \*more so\* now, because of our troubles.

That's not to deny the horribleness of galut, though; for it has clearly taken its toll on our people, and it has come this close to being our undoing, G-d forbid.

Ever sensitive to that, though, G-d Himself is said to have regretted creating the whole idea of galut for all the harm it has done (Sukkah 52B). For aside from bringing about the sorts of things we'll soon depict, galut has made it impossible for us to be privy to Divine guidance (Megillah 12B); it's the greatest cause of our slacking off on Torah study (Chaggigah 5B); it has enabled others to plot against us (Tanchuma, Toldot 5), and is responsible for so much more.

In fact, its effects are said to be equivalent to all the curses cited in the Torah (Sifre, Eikev 43) -- including the fact that "G-d will send upon you cursing, confusion, and failure in all that you set your

hand to do, until you are destroyed and you perish quickly ... (He'll have) pestilence cleave to you ... strike you with a consumption, a fever, an inflammation, with an extreme burning, and with the sword, with blasting, and with mildew; and they shall pursue you until you perish ... Your carcass will be food to all the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and no man shall scare them away ... G-d will strike you with the pox of Egypt and with swellings, with a scab, and with an itch from which you will not be healed ... with madness, blindness, and astonishment of heart, etc." (Deuteronomy 28:15-69). We needn't go far to draw analogies between what's said there and the sorts of things our people suffered in the Holocaust.

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