

# THE DOUBLE NATION

*by Shlomo Katz*

## Parashat Va'etchanan

**Va'etchanan: Nachamu**  
**Volume XVIII, No. 40**  
**13 Menachem Av 5764**  
**August 31, 2004**

**Sponsored by**  
**Harvey and Betty Kramer**  
**in honor of the aufruf of their son Yaakov**

**Today's Learning:**  
**Machshirin 4:2-3**  
**O.C. 256:1-257:2**  
**Daf Yomi (Bavli): Bechorot 49**  
**Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Nazir 17**

The haftarah, which gives this Shabbat its name "Shabbat Nachamu," opens: "Nachamu, nachamu" / "Comfort, comfort My people - says your G-d. Speak to the heart of Yerushalayim and proclaim to her that her time [of exile] has been fulfilled, that her iniquity has been conciliated, for she has received from the hand of Hashem double for all her sins."

R' Yitzchak Isaac Halevi Herzog z"l (first Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Israel; died 1959) commented on these verses as follows in a 1948 address: How are these verses different when we read them today from when they were read in the past? In the past, the fulfillment of these verses was in the distant future. Today, these verses relate all at once to the present, the near term, and the distant future. How so?

Chazal comment on these verses, "She [i.e., Yerushalayim] sinned doubly, she was doubly punished, and she was doubly consoled." Yisrael / the People of Israel has a double nature. On the one hand, it is a nation; anyone who says that Judaism is only a religion is mistaken. On the other hand, anyone who thinks that Yisrael is a nation like any other nation is mistaken, and is misleading others. Yisrael is a holy nation, with the loftiest mission, given from G-d, of any nation. Therefore, when Yisrael sins,

its sin is a double sin.

Yisrael is not the only nation that has been exiled from its land; many nations, large and small, have experienced this fate. However, those nations, once they are destroyed, disappear. They assimilate and no memory remains of them, and, at the same time, their suffering ends. Such is not the lot of Yisrael. An invisible "hand" forced Yisrael not to assimilate, but rather to remain apart and dispersed, and to suffer without end. Why? Because Yisrael is a nation destined for greatness, specifically, for moral greatness - for that greatness which in the awesome future will be the lot of all of mankind. Therefore, they were doubly consoled: In the future, there will be open miracles. For now, the time for open miracles has not yet come, but certainly miracles have taken place and will continue to take place . . . (Ha'techukah Le'Yisrael Al Pi Ha'torah III p.258)

---

*"Ve'shinantam / You shall teach them thoroughly . . ." (6:7)*

The word "ve'shinantam" also can mean "you shall sharpen." Thus, our Sages teach that one must study Torah until its words are "sharp in your mouth," i.e., until one knows the material thoroughly and clearly.

R' Avraham Yaakov Hakohen Pam z'l (rosh yeshiva of Torah Vodaath in Brooklyn; died 2001) writes: The work Birkat Shmuel [by R' Boruch Ber Leibowitz z"l; died 1940] notes that a person's obligation to study Torah has two components, one qualitative and the other quantitative. Our verse alludes to the quality of one's Torah learning. As for quantity, we read (Yehoshua 1:8), "You shall contemplate it day and night."

However, R' Pam continues, one is exempt from studying Torah at any moment in which he must work for a living. One should not think that earning a living merely mitigates the prohibition of bittul Torah / wasting time from Torah study. To the contrary, at a time when one must work, that is his mitzvah, not studying Torah. After all, we are commanded (Devarim 11:14), "You shall gather in your grain, your wine, and your oil." (See Berachot 35b.)

Of course, writes R' Pam, the opposite side of the coin is that one must be honest with himself. One who is working more than he must to attain luxuries is not exempt from Torah study. One should remember that "By the sweat of your brow you shall eat bread" (Bereishit 3:19) was a curse.

The story is told of a chance meeting in approximately 1916 between R' Yosef Eliyahu Henkin (rabbi in Russia and later on New York's Lower East Side; died 1973) and R' Avraham Yishayahu Karelitz z"l (the Chazon Ish; 1878-1953) in the waiting room of the rabbi of Stuyepitz, R' Yoel Sorotzkin z"l. Although older than R' Henkin, the Chazon Ish was unknown to most people at that time. While both men waited for the Stuyepitz Rabbi, R' Henkin said to his fellow visitor, "Shalom aleichem! What is your name?"

"Avraham Yishayahu Karelitz," came the answer.

"What do you do?"

"I am a storekeeper." (In fact, Mrs. Karelitz kept a store while her husband learned full time.)

"And when does a Jew learn?" R' Henkin prodded.

"When there is time, one learns," the unknown visitor responded.

"And what brings you here?"

"The rabbi has sent for me."

R' Henkin imagined that his fellow visitor had been sent for because one of his customers or suppliers had lodged a complaint against him with the rabbi. How great was R' Henkin's surprise when he learned why R' Sorotzkin has sent for R' Karelitz - he wished to ask R' Karelitz to serve as rabbi of Stuyepitz while R' Sorotzkin had to travel away from the town for several months.

Was the Chazon Ish being flippant when he said, "When there is time, one learns"? No, says R' Pam. That is in fact one's obligation!

(Atarah La'melech p. 156)

---

*"You shall be greatly beware for your lives." (4:15)*

R' Moshe Chaim Luzzato z"l ("Ramchal") writes: Among the deterrents to serving Hashem with zeal is excessive trepidation and fear of what time may bring, of heat and cold, of accidents, of illness, of winds, etc. As King Shlomo wrote (Mishlei 26:13), "The lazy person says, 'There is a lion on the road'." Chazal condemned this trait, attributing it to sinners. Rather, the proper rule of conduct is (in the words of Tehilim 37:3), "Trust in Hashem and do good, dwell in the land and cultivate faith."

One might ask: Chazal have instructed that a person be especially attentive to his well-being and not place himself in danger, even if he is righteous. In line with this, the Gemara (Ketubot 30a) says, "Everything is in the hands of Heaven except chills and fevers." The Torah (in the verse quoted above) commands the same thing, all of which indicates that a person should not place his trust in G-d in this area! Does this teaching not contradict what was stated in the first paragraph?

Ramchal answers: Know that there is fear and there is fear. There is appropriate fear and there is foolish fear. On the other hand, there is confidence and there is recklessness. Hashem has invested man with intelligence and judgment so that he may follow the right path and protect himself from the instruments of injury that have been created to punish evildoers. One who chooses not to be guided by wisdom and exposes himself to dangers is displaying not trust, but recklessness.

The type of fear and self-protection which is appropriate is that which grows out of wisdom and intelligence. It is the type about which it is said (Mishlei 22:3), "The wise man sees evil and hides, but the fools pass on and are punished." "Foolish fear" is a person's desire to have multiple levels of protection, such that he devotes himself to building up these layers of protection and neglects Torah and Divine service. The criterion by which to distinguish between the two types of fear is implied in Chazal's statement (Pesachim 8b), "Where there is a likelihood of danger, it is different." Where there is an identifiable risk of injury, one must be careful, but where there is no apparent danger, one should not be afraid.

(Mesilat Yescharim, ch. 9)

On a related theme, R' Avraham Yeshayahu Karelitz z"l (see above) writes: There is a deep-rooted misconception in people's minds regarding bitachon / trust in Hashem. To many people, bitachon implies an obligation to believe that, when a person stands at a crossroads where there are two roads before him with an uncertain future ahead and with a possibility of a good outcome or an outcome which is not good, the good outcome is inevitable. These people think that if they doubt this at all, they are lacking bitachon.

That is not a correct understanding of bitachon at all. Unless it has been prophetically foretold, the future is never certain, for who can know Hashem's judgment or how He repays men for their deeds. Rather, bitachon is the belief that nothing in the world is left to chance, that everything that happens under the sun has been ordered by Hashem. When a person encounters a situation in which, according to the laws of nature, he is in danger, and that person strengthens himself and remembers that nothing is left to chance and that nothing in the world can prevent Hashem from coming to the rescue, that person is practicing bitachon.

(Emunah U'bitachon, ch.2)

---

## Letters from Our Sages

This week's letter was written by R' Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook when he served as Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Yerushalayim. It is printed in Igrot Ha'Reiyah, Vol. IV, No. 980.

B"H, In the holy city, Yerushalayim, may she be built and established,

11 Tishrei 5680 [October 5, 1919]

## An Open Letter

To the honorable board of the organization, Mizrachi: . . .

I think that the question has three parts:

- 1)** Regarding the halachah-is it permitted or prohibited?
- 2)** Regarding the good of the community-can anything good come to the Jewish people either from a positive answer or a negative answer?
- 3)** Regarding the ideal-does our moral consciousness negate this thing or demand it?

Regarding the halachah, I have nothing to add to those rabbis who preceded me . .

It remains for us to deal with [the question from] the perspective of the good of the community. Regarding this, I think that we are obligated to inform all of our brothers from the various factions-all of whom certainly seek the good of our nation and the broadening of our rights in Eretz Yisrael-that the declaration by the British government [i.e., the Balfour Declaration], which planted a delicate shoot that may grow into the redemption, is based primarily on the viewpoint from which the best of the nations in general and the British in particular see our rightful connection to Eretz Yisrael as something sanctified by Heaven. They are influenced to this outlook by the Tanach which is considered holy by the majority of civilized peoples in our day . . .

The enemies of Yisrael, from both within and without, make use of the accusation that the Jewish youth has lost its connection to the Holy Book and therefore has no right to the Land of the Tanach. We are obligated to stand guard to demonstrate to all that the soul of Yisrael is alive in its true form and the Land of the Tanach belongs to the People of the Tanach . . . This will come about specifically by protecting our true form according to the decrees of the Torah and its laws, which guide us towards a life that will elevate our honor and lead us towards a higher freedom and redemption.

---

Copyright © 2004 by [Shlomo Katz](#) and **Torah.org**.

The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ('lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah'), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at **Torah.org** start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page. Text archives from 1990 through the present may be retrieved from <http://www.acoast.com/~sehc/hamaayan/>.

*Hamaayan needs your support! Please consider sponsoring Hamaayan in honor of a happy occasion or in memory of a loved one. Did you know that the low cost of sponsorship - only \$18 - has not changed in seventeen years? Donations to HaMaayan are tax-deductible.*