

# A LESSON IN EXILE & REDEMPTION

*by Rabbi Pinchas Winston*

## Friday Night:

*Ya'akov left from Be'er Sheva and went to Charan. (Bereishis 28:10)*

YA'AKOV LEFT: The Torah only had to say, "Ya'akov went to Charan." Why did it also mention his leaving? Because when a tzaddik leaves a place, it leaves an impression. While he is in a city, he is its splendor and glory, and when he leaves it, so too does its splendor and glory leave. (Rashi)

If this is true when a tzaddik only leaves in a city, how much more so is this the case when he or she leaves the world!

Just last week, the Jewish world (and the world in general) lost one of its foremost Gedolei HaDor, Rabbi Elazar Menachem Mann Shach, zt"l, of B'nei Brak. Even though Rabbi Shach was reported to have reached the age of 107 years, nevertheless his death came as a shock for the Jewish people because of what he represented, and because it also came on the heels of the passing of another of the Gedolei HaDor, Rabbi Avraham Pam, zt"l, of New York.

To lose two such great rabbis in succession is overwhelming for those who can appreciate what they mean to the world. "Tzaddik yesod olam" -E6 We learn that the righteous person is the foundation of the world" (Mishlei 10:25). They represent the pillars upon which the entire world stands, and even if mankind does not recognize and acknowledge this, Heaven does, and it is Heaven that calls the shots in history.

Though it is true that tzaddikim act as a form of atonement for the generation that survives them (Moed Katan 28a), nevertheless the loss leaves a gaping hole in the spiritual fabric of society, thereby endangering the world in general. Historically, something always seems to go wrong in a big way after the passing of a great Torah leader.

To be a gadol hador today, especially in Eretz Yisroel, is to be controversial. In the struggle for the future of Eretz Yisroel, and in the broader sense, of the entire Jewish people, Gedolei HaDor are forced to render decisions that are bound to be wrongly evaluated by those far less learned in Torah than they are, especially when many of those people have little or no respect for Torah in the first place. That was true in Avraham's, Yitzchak's, and Ya'akov's time as well.

Sure Gedolim can become political; it is hard not to enter politics and become that way. Unlike many

politicians who are in it to achieve political ambitions, Gedolim are there to better achieve the master plan of creation as set forth by G-d. How that is true is not always clear to us bystanders, but their fear of G-d is what directs them, and our "faith in the wise men" (Emunas Chachamim) is what is supposed to bridge the gap between our understanding of the situation and theirs.

L'havdil (elef havdolos), we see the same thing with respect to secular governments. How many politicians carry through with campaign promises that got them elected in the first place? Was it just that they stopped caring once they got elected? That would be political suicide, although many short-sighted politicians have been guilty of just that.

Usually what happens is that, after gaining office and a better understanding of ALL the issues of office, certain promises become unfeasible. One can assume that leaders are privy to far more information than the average person, and it is often this extra information that rounds out the "big picture" and results in decisions that the man on the street can't totally fathom, providing the leaders are honest in the first place.

How much more so is this true of the Gedolim of any particular generation whose grasp of Torah and its immutable truths is so vast and complete, whose fear of G-d and consequences of sin is so much deeper than the average Jew. They see things we cannot see, and they see things that we also see, but in ways that we cannot see.

To be a Torah giant with fear of G-d, is to be privy to all kinds of information and insights that can result in decisions that do not make sense to people who do not share that information and level of fear of G-d. Furthermore, to be on such a high spiritual level and in such a position of responsibility, means to draw down extra Heavenly help, as the Talmud states:

... secrets of G-d to those who fear Him. (Shabbos 77b)

Honor of Torah today is at an all-time historical low, and therefore respect for her followers is extremely low as well. However, that does not reduce the size of the gaping hole left behind by the Torah scholars that are taken from within our midst; if anything at all, it greatly increases it.

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## Shabbos Day:

*Ya'akov loved Rachel and said, "I will work for you for seven years for Rachel, your younger daughter."*  
(Bereishis 29:18)

Who doesn't know the story of how Ya'akov went to work for his future father-in-law, Lavan, to earn the right to marry Lavan's younger daughter, Rachel? Was there anything wrong with doing this? Seemingly not! On the contrary, Ya'akov's willingness to work so hard for his future wife only

exemplified his love for her and his sense of self-sacrifice. The Torah certainly doesn't make a big deal about this decision to work for his wife.

Yet, according to the Arizal, the obvious is not so obvious, as the following piece indicates:

Ya'akov Avinu did not trust in G-d enough, as it says, "Why do you say, O' Ya'akov, and declare, O Israel -- My way is hidden from Hashem . . ." (Yeshayahu 40:27), for he should have trusted in Him, as it says, "for I will not forsake you" (Bereishis 28:15). He spent all that time in the house of the evil Lavan watching his sheep, humbling himself before him, just to marry his daughters. Thus, he served Lavan for the sake of a wife, as it says, "Ya'akov served for . . . Rachel" (Bereishis 29:20). Thus, he was punished, because "for a wife he guarded" (Hoshea 12:13). (Sha'ar HaGilgulim, Chapter 36)

In other words, if Ya'akov was meant to marry Rachel, G-d would have arranged it somehow, without the need to spend so much time in the house of Lavan. Though everything seems to have worked out in the end for Ya'akov and his new family, in truth, a tikun was still necessary for this lack of trust in G-d at this early point of the Jewish people's history.

According to the Zohar, the Arizal explains, when a man marries a woman, he gives to her a part of his soul (Ruach):

Ya'akov left one Ruach in Rachel and one in Leah. The Ruach which he left in Rachel went to Binyomin her son. This is the sod of "As her soul was departing -- for she died . . ." (Bereishis 35:18). For, the Ruach that he gave to her was her Nefesh, as it is known, and it left her in order to go into Binyomin her son; therefore, Binyomin could not be born until the Nefesh of Rachel left. However, the Ruach that he put into Leah reincarnated into Avigayil HaNaviah, the wife of Naval HaCarmeli. In truth, she should have been a male, but instead, was made a female because of the sin of serving Lavan for a wife. Therefore, the Ruach that he gave to Leah, a spark from Ya'akov became literally, "for a wife he guarded," that is, Avigayil.

(That is, a wife that was "guarded" so that eventually she could marry Dovid HaMelech. Her status and life's circumstances were the direct result of Ya'akov decision to work for his wives.)

This is the sod of what Avigayil told Dovid, 'that which your maidservant has brought (haivie) to my master' (I Shmuel 25:27). The word "brought" is in the masculine, as opposed to 'haiviah' in the feminine, to allude to the fact that her root was masculine and not feminine.

(That is, from Ya'akov Avinu himself, a male.)

Therefore, in Nevi'im her name is once written without a yud, to indicate that she came from Ya'akov Avinu, who made the monument (gal) with Lavan; hence, "Avi-gal."

(At the end of this week's parshah.)

As we have discussed, Lavan reincarnated into Naval HaCarmeli. Since Ya'akov served Lavan, his Ruach reincarnated into Avigayil, who was married to Naval to serve him as a wife.

In other words, the father (Lavan) became the husband (Naval) of the woman (Avigayil) who came from the son-in-law's (Ya'akov) Ruach via the daughter (Leah). Simple enough, no? Wait - it gets better:

After Lavan reincarnated into Naval, he still possessed an aspect of the Original Snake. Therefore, he (Dovid) had to work hard for so many years to guard the sheep of Lavan HaArami, until he could take that aspect which was the Ruach that Ya'akov put into Leah, which was Avigayil, and marry her. Dovid HaMelech himself was the gilgul of Adam HaRishon, and therefore, he too had to remove another aspect from Naval that was still in the hands of the snake. Therefore, Dovid had to do as Ya'akov did, and watch the sheep of Lavan, as it says, "They were a wall over us" (I Shmuel 25:16), until he could marry Avigayil.

What is to be gained by knowing all of this? Plenty. However, at the very least, it reminds us once again, of how complex history really is, and therefore, of how careful one ought to be in judging the events of the present and past.

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### **SEUDAH SHLISHIS:**

*Ya'akov saw the face of Lavan, and behold, it was not towards him as before. G-d said to Ya'akov, "Return to the land of your fathers and the place of your birth, and I will be with you."* (Bereishis 31:2-3)

This dvar Torah will focus on the concept of exile. The Melave Malkah section will discuss redemption.

Forget the fact that Lavan was Ya'akov's father-in-law; he was one of the original and most dangerous anti-Semites, as the Haggadah reminds us: An Arami wanted to destroy our father. This is why Bilaam, the reincarnation of Lavan, hated the Jews of his time so much as well.

Hence, because Lavan was a prototypical anti-Semite, the above posuk is a prototype for identifying anti-Semitism early on in its revelation, and advice as to how to respond to it. However, before we understand this, we have to first understand the purpose of Jewish history - from a Kabbalistic point of view.

Jewish history is about collecting sparks, Holy Sparks to be precise. When G-d made creation, one of the primary spiritual elements He used was Nitzutzei Kedushah - Holy Sparks - which act as the spiritual life force for all that physically exists. For the sake of free-will, they began in the world of spiritual impurity, and every time a person learns Torah or performs a mitzvah, the spark is said to be drawn out of the world of impurity and transferred to the world of holiness.

Even though the sparks are spiritual entities, they are somewhat tied to the physical reality, some being more accessible in some parts of the world more than in others in certain time periods. G-d works all of that out, our job only being to use the sparks available to us in the best way whenever

we can and wherever we may be at the time.

For the Jew, all of life comes down to this; everything else that happens around us no matter how real or how serious is just the historical vehicle to give us access to the sparks of that time. Depending upon our willingness to "redeem" the sparks available to us, G-d will "shape" the events of our day to allow us to get the job done, ready-or-not.

In the good old days, G-d brought the sparks to us. For example, when the Jewish people lived in Eretz Yisroel in Shlomo HaMelech's time, gentile nations came from far and wide to see the "wise king" and bearing wonderful gifts. Well, at least that is what THEY thought they were; really they were "carriers" of Holy Sparks from outside Eretz Yisroel brought to the Jewish people within their Holy Land.

However, when the Jewish people ceased to appreciate this wonderful Divine assistance and their role within the perfecting of creation, G-d told them, "If you won't redeem the sparks from where you are, then YOU go out and get them." Thus, you have the definition of "exile" in a nutshell: Jewish redemption of Holy Sparks beyond the borders of Eretz Yisroel, or under foreign occupation while in Eretz Yisroel.

The duration of any particular exile is determined by one thing and one thing only: the Holy Sparks to be redeemed there. As long as there are sparks to be redeemed in an exile, the exile will continue. If there is a "golden era" for the Jews in a particular place in the world at a particular time in history, it is because the Jewish people have hit the climax of the spark-redemption process in that area of the world for that era.

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### **MELAVE MALKAH:**

There is a set amount of sparks in every part of the world and as the Jewish people reach that limit, that phase of exile comes to an end. Not only does it come to an end, but we are even told not to return there, as in the case of Egypt, for there is no purpose for a Jew in a place devoid of such sparks, needing redemption.

At such a point in history, there comes the time to "move on" to continue the work in another part of the world, if that is what G-d determines needs to be done. In a nutshell, that is the concept of "Redemption."

This is the reason why the Jewish people have gone to the "four corners of the world," in search of every last spark they are expected to redeem before history as we know it comes to a close with the advent of the Days of Moshiach. With nowhere else to turn to redeem sparks, it becomes time to return home to Eretz Yisroel, once and for all. That is the concept of "Geulah Shlaimah" - Complete or Final Redemption.

How do we know when that is, when we can't really see the sparks being used up, or how many are left? Like Ya'akov before us who understood the purpose of exile more than any other Jew, we pay attention to the attitude of the host nation of our time. When their attitude changes towards us, even slightly for the negative, we don't assume that it is what they had for breakfast that day or they are having a bad day in the Stock Market. Rather, we take it as a Divine sign that our work is coming to an end, and with it, this final stage of exile - no matter how much we have been enjoying ourselves until then.

Imagine a contractor who has been hired to remodel your house. When he begins the job, you are excited to see him show up early in the morning, and as long as the job is in progress, you anticipate his arrival daily. However, as the job comes to a close and the work nears completion, you long for the time that he will no longer come and intrude on your privacy. If he shows up after the work is complete and he has been paid, then he becomes a nuisance and a cause for anger, if not hostility.

Ya'akov understood, as we must too, that even though the gentile world has free-will, the way they act towards the Jewish people is a function of Divine Providence. As we have said previously, anti-Semitism is a form a Divine communication between G-d and the Jewish people, a way of telling us that in no uncertain terms, our job in that part of the world at that time is over, and that it is time to move on.

If, like Ya'akov, we listen to the message and take it seriously, then everything work out well for us and the whole world. If not, and we become like the contractor who just keeps showing up and wears out his welcome, then Jewish history speaks for itself. It can never just "blow over" once the sparks have been spent in that part of the world. Since we Jews are in the business of finding and redeeming Holy Sparks, then we'll never find business in a place where the sparks are no more.

At this VERY late stage in history, and after having been almost every place in the world we might be expected to go en masse, and with the golden era seemingly ending, it is time to consider the status of our work and to read the writing on the wall.

Have a great Shabbos,  
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