Two Camps – Vayishlach

הַשִּׁעוּר מֻקְדָּשׁ לִרְפוּאַת שִׁמְעוֹנָה בַּת שָׂרָה

Shiurim Main Menu

וְיַעֲקֹב הָלַךְ לְדַרְכּוֹ וַיִּפְגְּעוּ בּוֹ מַלְאֲכֵי אֱ-לֹקִים. וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב כַּאֲשֶׁר רָאָם מַחֲנֵה אֱלֹקִים זֶה וַיִּקְרָא שֵׁם הַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא מַחֲנָיִם. וַיִּשְׁלַח יַעֲקֹב מַלְאָכִים לְפָנָיו אֶל עֵשָׂו אָחִיו וכו' (בראשית לב, ב-ד)

Out of all three Avot, Yaakov, to my mind, *most* typifies the "modern" Jew of our day and age - in all his manifestations. You would have to look long and far to find a Jew today who resembles Avraham (perhaps the Lubavitch Chassidim?) or who resembles Yitzchak. In the different stages of his life Yaakov, reflects many strata of today's Jewry.

Yaakov was born a "sabra", in Israel. Until age 76 he was a full-time yeshiva "bochur". At age 77, Yaakov became the first יוֹרֵד, the first Israeli to leave Israel and go live a foreign land, Charan. During his twenty years in the Diaspora, Yaakov worked for a living and his Torah study was put on the "backburner". Aged 97, Yaakov became the first תּוֹשָׁב חוֹזֵר, a born Israeli who returns from חוּץ לָאָרֶץ to *resettle* in Israel. In Israel, Yaakov became a landowner, built a home, ran a thriving family enterprise in the sheep business and raised a מִשְׁפָּחָה בְּרוּכַת יְלָדִים of twelve sons. At age 130, Yaakov once again left Israel to go live the remainder of his life in Egypt. Upon his death, his children returned his remains for burial here in Israel.

Last week, I watched a discussion on Youtube between a panel of three Israeli rabbis and one Lubavitch rabbi (a little unbalanced – although the Lubavitch rabbi held his own pretty well against the three). The topic of the debate is whether it is better to leave the Diaspora and come settle in Israel (the three Israeli rabbis) or to remain in the Diaspora and care for the communities there and be an אוֹר לַגּוֹיִים in the Diaspora (the Lubavitch rabbi). The Israeli rabbis touted the virtues of living in Eretz Yisrael, living the fulfilment of the prophecies, observing מִצְוֹות הַתְּלוּיוֹת בָּאָרֶץ, etc. The Lubavitch rabbi argued that when Shlomo HaMelech built the Beit HaMikdash, all the nations flocked to Israel, the light unto the nations. However, due to our sins, we were dispersed amongst the nations and until the Mashiach comes it is our job to bring the light of HKB"H to the nations, living amongst the nations.

It was very much what the Israelis call a שִׂיחַ חֵרְשִׁים, a "conversation of deaf people", because neither side managed in any way to convince the other. Both were so entrenched in their own viewpoint, neither expressed any open mindedness to the others' opinion. It was like a zero-sum game.

I would like to address this highly controversial topic through the prism of the series of parshiyot we are currently reading.

Let's begin at the end. There is no dispute regarding the final result. *Everyone agrees* that when HKB"H sends Mashiach and the Geulah commences בביי"א, we will all move to and live in Israel (the *real* Israel - according to the borders described in the Torah, במדבר לד). The Beit HaMikdash will be rebuilt and we will finally achieve our role as an אוֹר לַגּוֹיִים.

The dispute is only "What to do in the period *before* the Geulah commences and HKB"H sends the Mashiach?"

The Avot lived prior to the Geulah and behaved accordingly.

When Lot's shepherds started grazing their sheep on land that didn't belong to them, a feud ensued between Lot's shepherds and Avraham's shepherds (בראשית יג, ח). Lot maintained that since the land had been given by Divine promise to Avraham, they were the owners of the land. Avraham disagreed and held of the opinion that the Divine promise had not yet commenced. Later, Avraham had to purchase land from Efron to bury Sarah. If the land already belonged to him, he would not have needed to do so.

Yitzchak was born in and never left Eretz Yisrael. The psukkim describe how he redug the wells that Avraham originally dug, which were subsequently sealed up by the פְּלִשְׁתִּים. The Torah tells of disputes over the wells between Yitzchak and Avimelech, the names of the wells reflecting the nature of the disputes (בראשית כו, יט-כב). If Yitzchak was the rightful owner of the land and the wells, why did he have to kowtow to Avimelech?

Yaakov returns to Eretz Yisrael in this week's parsha. He panders to Eisav and is fearful of him. What about HKB"H's promise? Isn't Yaakov the rightful owner of the land? Later in the parsha we read about the episode with Dina and Shchem the son of Chamor. When Shimon and Levi behaved as if they "owned" Eretz Yisrael and killed all the male inhabitants of Shchem, Yaakov severely rebuked them (בראשית לד, ל) עֲכַרְתֶּם אֹתִי לְהַבְאִישֵׁנִי בְּיֹשֵׁב הָאָרֶץ.

How did the Avot know this? After בְּרִית בֵּין הַבְּתָרִים HKB"H says to Avraham - (בראשית טו, טז) וְדוֹר רְבִיעִי יָשׁוּבוּ הֵנָּה כִּי לֹא שָׁלֵם עֲוֹן הָאֱמֹרִי עַד הֵנָּה. Am Yisrael will eventually inherit Eretz Yisrael according to the Divine promise, but only after the sin of the Emorites will be complete.

The Avot knew for sure that the promise would not be fulfilled in their generation, it is a passuk meforash. The question is when is דּוֹר רְבִיעִי?

This is a famous machloket between Rashi and the Ramban. Rashi says it is the fourth generation from Yehuda, i.e יְהוּדָה, פֶּרֶץ, חֶצְרוֹן, כָּלֵב. We know that

Eretz Yisrael was conquered in the time of Yehoshua and Kalev. The Ramban, on the other hand, says that it is referring to the fourth generation of Emorites. The Ramban says that "Emorites" refers to *all seven nations* occupying Canaan, but the Emorites are specifically mentioned because they were the fiercest.

בְּמִעוּט שְׁקִידָתִי I have not managed to find a source for this, but I would like to suggest an additional possible perush for the above passuk, that the fourth generation in question is referring to the twelve sons of Yaakov *mamash* (not their descendants). In other words - Avraham (generation 1), Yitzchak (generation 2), Yaakov (generation 3), the Twelve Tribes (generation 4).

According to this reasoning, it is possible that in the generation of the sons of Yaakov - the Geulah could have commenced.

Following the episode with Dina, the passuk says וַיֹּאמֶר אֱ-לֹקִים אֶל יַעֲקֹב קוּם עֲלֵה בֵית אֵ-ל וְשֶׁב שָׁם וַעֲשֵׂה שָׁם מִזְבֵּחַ לָאֵ-ל הַנִּרְאֶה אֵלֶיךָ (בראשית לה, א). HKB"H tells Yaakov to go up to "Bet-El" and build a mizbeach. The Gemara (פסחים פח ע״א) says that Bet-El refers to the *Beit HaMikdash* (Avraham called the Mikdash הַר, Yitzchak called it שָׂדֶה and Yaakov called it בַּיִת).

Imagine that! If the Twelve Tribes would have not imploded in the debacle of selling Yosef to Egypt, if they would have assumed their roles as Tribes – *in their own generation*, the Geulah could very possibly have begun *already then* – the 4th generation from Avraham.

Yaakov would have built the Beit HaMikdash on Har HaMoriah. HKB"H would have then descended on Har Hamoriah and given them the Torah. In the Midrash (מדרש תהלים [שוחר טוב], מזמור סח, אות ט׳) it says that Har Sinai was not a mountain that existed before Matan Torah. HKB"H broke off a piece of Har HaMoriah (like hafrashat challah) and transported it to Midbar Sinai and this was Har Sinai on which the Torah was given to Moshe. Therefore, in essence, the Torah was given on *Har HaMoriah*! This is the way it will be in the time of the Geulah, when HKB"H sends Mashiach –

עֲתִיד הקב״ה לְהָיוֹת יוֹשֵׁב בְּגַן עֵדֶן וְדוֹרֵשׁ, וְכָל הַצַּדִּיקִים יוֹשְׁבִים לְפָנָיו, וְכָל פָּמַלְיָא שֶׁל מַעְלָה עוֹמְדִים עַל רַגְלֵיהֶם, וְחַמָּה וּמַזָּלוֹת מְיִמִינוֹ שֶׁל הקב״ה, וּלְבָנָה וְכוֹכָבִים מִשְּׂמֹאלוֹ, והקב״ה דּוֹרֵשׁ תּוֹרָה חֲדָשָׁה שֶׁעֲתִיד לִיתֵּן עַל יְדֵי מָשִׁיחַ. (ילקוט שמעוני, ישעיהו, רמז תכ״ט)

This was the original plan. This was the promise made to Avraham after בְּרִית בֵּין הַבְּתָרִים. The hatred of the brothers toward Yosef delayed this plan *another* 4 generations (like Rashi says above).

How did this calamity originate? Some say it was because of next week's parsha Vayeishev. The Midrash (תנחומא, פרשת וישב, סימן א) says וַיֵּשֶׁב - לְשׁוֹן צַעַר הוּא.

This is *exactly* what the claim of the meraglim in the Midbar was. "Look what happened to Yaakov Avinu – he wanted to 'settle' in Eretz Yisrael and this is what happened! Eretz Yisrael *corrupts*! Am Yisrael get too comfortable and they *forget HKB"H* - וַיִּשְׁמַן יְשֻׁרוּן וַיִּבְעָט (דברים לב, טו). Better to stay here, protected in our cocoon in the Midbar rather than risk that". This is exactly the same claim of the modern day meraglim, the Neturei Karta, etc. Go settle in Israel? Do you know what happens to Yidden that go settle in Israel, they go off the derech and become shkotzim! Israel *corrupts*!"

We know the meraglim were wrong (the original and modern-day ones). The Torah tells us so – they were severely punished. The reason people go off the derech in Israel is not because Eretz Yisrael corrupts chas veshalom, it is because of hatred within Am Yisrael. The reason the Geulah did not begin in the time of Yaakov's sons was because of *their hatred for one another*, it had nothing to do with Eretz Yisrael, it is a flaw in *Am Yisrael*, not the land.

After that short introduction we can begin the shiur.

Getting back to the Youtube debate above, the Lubavitch rabbi says that after the destruction of the Mikdash, the role of Am Yisrael is to be a light unto the nations, dwelling within the nations. He did not say what his source for that was. Perhaps he is referring to the Shevet Musar, R' Eliyahu HaKohen from Izmir, who says –

אַבְנֵי הַמִּקְדָּשׁ פִּיזְרָם הקב״ה בְּכָל הָעוֹלָם, דִּכְתִיב *תִּשְׁתַּפַּכְנָה אַבְנֵי קֹדֶשׁ בְּרֹאשׁ כָּל חוּצוֹת* (איכה ד, א), וּבְכָל מָקוֹם שֶׁנּוֹפֵל אֶבֶן, נִבְנָה שָׁם בֵּית הַכְּנֶסֶת אוֹ בֵּית הַמִּדְרָשׁ (אגדת אליהו על הירושלמי, מסכת ברכות, פרק ה, הלכה א)

When the Mikdash was destroyed, the fragments of the stones of the shattered Mikdash were dispersed throughout the world (like falling meteorites) and everywhere one of these stones fell, a shul or a beit midrash was subsequently built. The Zohar adds, when the Geulah commences, all these stones will be be gathered together once more and from them the 3rd Beit HaMikdash will be rebuilt (זוהר חלק ב׳, דף רמ ע״ב).

According to the Lubavitch panelist, until the Geulah begins, Jews in the Diaspora have a role of being a light unto the nations – within the nations, building shuls and batei midrash and living devout Jewish lives, so that the goyim can gaze upon them in wonder. It is not surprising that this was said by the Lubavitch panelist, because this is *precisely* the derech of the late Lubavitche Rebbe – to send shlichim (rays of light) to every forsaken corner of the world (to be a light unto the nations?).

There is no question that the Rebbe succeeded in his mission of sending shlichim all over the world. There is not a place in the world where Chabad cannot be found (well *almost* nowhere – there is no Beit Chabad in North Korea,

Yemen, Lebanon, Qatar, etc. for example). The question is *what* these shlichim in all these way-out places are achieving. Are they achieving the mission of being a light unto the goyim, or … *a light unto the lost/wayward Jews* who land up in these G-d forsaken places? I believe it is the latter.

As to their effect on the goyim, I believe it to be bordering on infinitesimal, or if any at all it is a *negative* impact, arousing envy and jealousy and turning the shlichim into a target. Most of the terror attacks against Chabad in the world have been perpetrated in … the USA! Over 64% of all attacks against Chabad in the last 25 years have been in America! - Crown Heights (1991), Brooklyn Bridge (1994), Crown Heights (2014), Poway, California (2019), San Francisco (2023), Fort Lauderdale (2024), Crown Heights (2024), Punta Gorda, Florida (2025), Brooklyn (2026).

If the late Rebbe's vision was to rescue the *Jewish neshamot* from every dark corner of the world, then I believe that mission *is* being achieved. Chabad are doing sterling work in that regard and their presence there is vital, to continue this work and save as many Jewish neshamot as possible.

However, the claim that we are being a light unto the goyim *whilst living amongst* the goyim is patently false. In fact, it is *genetically encoded* in the human race - to be false. HKB"H *does not want* us to live among the goyim – He says so specifically in the passuk (במדבר כג, ט) הֶן עָם לְבָדָד יִשְׁכֹּן. HKB"H has programmed it genetically and *circumstantially* that every time we outstay our welcome amongst the goyim, we arouse their animosity and they spit us out! There may be brief periods when we rise to positions of influence and power amongst the goyim, e.g the Golden Age in Spain (915-1492), in Poland (1580-1764), in the USA (today, as we speak), but the end is inevitably the same. This is not conjecture, it is history.

The only way we can be a light unto the goyim, the *only time it ever worked in history* is when Am Yisrael were living in Eretz Yisrael, with a Beit HaMikdash … like in the time of Shlomo HaMelech.

Yes, history tells us that this period did not last forever. However, it was not the fault of the *location* – Eretz Yisrael, chas veshalom - it was a *flaw within our nation*, division and hatred between Jews. If we want to restore our nation to its destined role, we need to address the *root cause* and work to fix it. This is not news, it is written in Tanach (ישעיהו מט, יז) מְהָרְסַיִךְ וּמַחֲרִיבַיִךְ מִמֵּךְ יֵצֵאוּ.

We are overly engrossed in focusing on our enemies from without, when we should be investing *most of our national resources* to dealing with the enemies from within, within our nation, within ourselves (our yetzer harah). While we are negligent in this regard, our enemies from without are not. They are burning the midnight oil and spending trillions of petro-dollars sowing discord within our nation, turning Jew against Jew. *They* understand better than we do,

ourselves, that the only way to defeat the Chosen People is to turn them against each other! Jew against Jew! They have figured this out by studying history, it is not some "new" wisdom generated by Russia or Qatar.

We are being blindsided. Our real enemy is not external, it is internal. It is when Am Yisrael are split into opposing camps מַחֲנַיִם.

When Yaakov returned to Eretz Yisrael he said farewell to the angels of חוּץ לָאָרֶץ and was welcomed by the angels of Eretz Yisrael. This shows that angels do not only reside in Eretz Yisrael, they also reside wherever Jews are outside Eretz Yisrael. However, the reality of מַחֲנַיִם is *not a good reality*, it is a *necessity* at certain periods in time. The ideal reality is one camp, מַחֲנֵה אֱלֹקִים. Our mission as a nation is to turn מַחֲנַיִם into מַחֲנֵה אֱלֹקִים, only one camp – in Eretz Yisrael.

This is all good and well on a theoretical level, but how do we achieve it on a realistic, practical level?

First, we need to define our "mission statement" as Jews - our destiny.

The **destiny of Am Yisrael** (*personal* and *national*) is –

1. Serving HKB"H by observing the mitzvot (personal)

2. Helping our fellow Jews (national)

3. Living in Eretz Yisrael (national)

4. Building the Beit HaMikdash (national)

We all (me included) need to all take an *honest* look at ourselves and ask the critical question "*Am I fulfilling my destiny as a Jew - A. on a personal level and ALSO - B. on a national level*?" If either, or both, are No, we have to fix the No's and turn them into Yes's.

The first three we can accomplish already now, even though Mashiach has not yet arrived. The fourth we all need to work towards now and will hopefully be fulfilling in reality soon.

1. <u>Serving HKB"H</u>: Simply being an observant Jew on a personal level does not give you both Yes's, unless you are *also* fulfilling one or more of the three items on a national level. Being an observant Jew does not mean you need to be a charedi. A person can be observant without being charedi or dati. There are 613 mitzvot in the Torah. Nobody can keep all 613 mitzvot, it is a physical impossibility (some are only for men, some for women, some for Kohanim etc.) In addition - אֵין אַתָּה יוֹדֵעַ מַתַּן שְׂכָרָן שֶׁל מִצְוֹת (אבות ב, ד), nobody knows the

"importance" of each mitzva. The quantity of mitzvot you observe does not define observance. Never scoff at another Jew! He might be observing only one or two of the mitzvot and be considered *more* observant by HKB"H than someone else who observes hundreds. We are not HKB"H and cannot see inside a person's heart. Someone who externally might appear to you to be non-observant, may in fact be *more* observant than someone wearing a black suit and a streimel. Obviously, we should strive and make a serious effort to observe as many mitzvot as we can.

2. Helping our fellow Jews. What about helping someone who is not a Jew, just a regular human being, does that count? If you are helping your fellow Jews, there is no problem to *also* help someone who is not a Jew. However, helping the goyim in preference to, or chas veshalom at the *expense* of helping your fellow, might seem to you to be helping them, but is in fact not. The best way you help someone who is not a Jew is to help your fellow Jew. When Am Yisrael are achieving their destiny and being a light unto the nations, the other nations of the world are also blessed as a result. All these "self righteous" Jews who are so concerned with humanity and the "poor Palestinians", who actually despise their fellow Jews, are in fact neither helping humanity, nor the Palestinians.

3. Living in Eretz Yisrael: Someone living in Israel can never have two No's. Just by virtue of physically living in Israel, you are fulfilling a major component of your national destiny. Simply living in Israel, however, does not automatically give you both Yes's. You can be living in Israel and only have one Yes. You can be living in the Diaspora and have both Yes's. Obviously, we should all strive and actively work towards moving to Israel. We are eventually going to end up there anyway. It is not easy, not financially, not culturally, not physically - but we need to make the maximum hishtadlut. For almost 2000 years our grandparents prayed and dreamed for a day that we would be able to return to Eretz Yisrael. Compared to the last 2000 years, it has never been easier to accomplish that dream. Paradoxically, *because it is so accessible*, we are not rushing to fulfil the dream. It is like spitting in the face of generations past who perished with the supplication of לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם on their lips.

4. Building the Beit HaMikdash: There are many ways to build the Beit HaMikdash. The most effective is to keep the Beit HaMikdash in high prominence in your awareness. Diligently complete all parts of the davening that specifically focus on the Beit HaMikdash (it may require you arriving at shul a few minutes earlier than you are used to), like the Korbanot in Shacharit and before Mincha. Some people (like me) take it a step further and devote their lives to studying and researching it. You may do the equivalent by donating to and funding study and research. The more we keep the concept of the Beit HaMikdash alive and part of our consciousness, the sooner we will merit seeing it rebuilt.

World Jewry need to address this critical question. *It is no longer acceptable to have only one Yes*. We all need two Yes's. When we all have two Yes's, the Geulah will commence.

We need to fight the external evil forces that sow discord in our nation. This a tough one, because it is funded by global financial powers that far exceed those of the Jewish Nation. We cannot combat it by sheer financial power.

The first and most important item on the agenda is to expose the evil. To bring them out of the shadows into the light - exposing facts and figures for all to see, on media that they do not control. We need to establish reliable sources and platforms of information and spread the word to as many Jews as possible. Many people have dedicated their lives to this purpose.

We need to offer a viable alternative. The only viable alternative is to have two Yes's to the question above. You have no answers to give a student forum on campus if you yourself are not true to your national destiny. Only those who are true to their national destiny can effect a change. You can no longer continue living a lie or even a partial truth.

We also need to expose the collaborators within our own nation who are on the payroll of these evil forces in the world. Many of them are doing it because they lust after money, not because they believe in what they are doing. This includes university professors receiving research grants, politicians, etc. Simply by exposing them will deter many and make them rethink about continuing in that path. If their lust for money outweighs their love for their own people, however, they need to be called out, ostracized and treated like the enemy who is funding them.

This is equally applicable in Israel and in the Diaspora, in politics, in academia, in the media and in entertainment. The enemies of our nation are ahead of us right now and have succeeded to a large degree in splitting us into two camps, מַחֲנַיִם, especially via the "woke" tsunami flooding the world.

It seems that right now, Am Yisrael are against the whole world. When Am Yisrael stand up against our enemies … and win, when we begin to regain the integrity of of our nation and fulfil our destiny - the rest of the world goes into a panic and their instinctive reaction is to continue what they have been doing for the past 2000 years, try make us disappear by any means necessary.

But all is not not lost. There may be powerful forces of evil, but our "kung fu" is more powerful than theirs, we have HKB"H on our side.

We need to remain true to our destiny, fight the evil, both without and within and not pander to it. The Midrash says that if Yaakov would not have bowed down so many times to Eisav the Mikdash would not have been

יֵשׁ אוֹמְרִים: הִשְׁתַּחֲוָה יַעֲקֹב לְעֵשָׂו שֶׁבַע וּכְנֶגְדּוֹ נָטַל מִמֶּנּוּ שֶׁבַע, וְאֵלּוּ הֵן: - destroyed
אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד וְגִלְגַּל וְשִׁילֹה וְנוֹב וְגִבְעוֹן וּבַיִת רִאשׁוֹן וּבַיִת שֵׁנִי. (מדרש הגדול, וישלח)

Most importantly we need to work on restoring the unity of our nation. That should be the top-most item on the agenda, not Iran. If we are united, Iran will fall anyway, if we are not, it doesn't matter if we defeat Iran or not – we will lose. We need to eliminate the מַחֲנִים and work to restore the מַחֲנֵה אֱלֹקִים.

Shabbat Shalom

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