



GEULAS YISRAEL

RABBI MOSHE TARAGIN

RAM YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

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Ya'akov's Mapping of Galus

Each of our Avot represents a different stage of Jewish history. Their lives set patterns that guided the unfolding of our history.

Avraham was a pioneer, and his story mirrors the early chapters of Jewish history - from his selection, through the miracles in Mitzrayim, to our first entry into Eretz Yisrael. These were the formative years, when our identity was forged and our people first took shape.

Yitzchak carved the pattern for the intermediate stage of our history - the golden age of Jewish sovereignty, when we lived with autonomy in our own Land. He never left Eretz Canaan, and his life reflects that long, radiant era of nearly a thousand years, when Jewish civilization flourished in its homeland.

PATTERNS OF EXILE

Ya'akov left the Land of Israel twice - once fleeing the murderous rage of his brother,

and once drawn down to Egypt by tensions that erupted in Yosef's sale and disappearance. His life reflects the third stage of Jewish history: the long, wandering saga of exile.

We still await the fourth stage - our full geulah. Yet the details of that future remain deliberately concealed. Unlike the earlier stages, we possess no clear roadmap and no personality in Sefer Bereishit to model this final chapter. It remains hidden in the will of Hashem, who guides history toward its end.

Now that we have begun our return to Jewish history and our return to redemptive history, we can finally look back at exile with clearer eyes. Exile was not a pause in our story, nor a long interval in which our history felt muted. In the thick of that darkness, perspective was impossible; suffering rarely grants us the luxury of reflection.

But as we ascend from those challenging journeys, and as Jewish history regains momentum, we can begin to study the third stage of our history - the past 2,000 years - with deeper understanding. Ya'akov's life becomes our prism, allowing us to trace the trials and triumphs of one of history's great human miracles - the survival and endurance of a nation scattered across the world yet never erased.

DIVINE GUARANTEES

Before Ya'akov leaves the Land of Israel,

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he receives the famous vision of the ladder, with Hashem standing above it and promising protection, sustenance, and an eventual return. Avraham had no such moment before his own descent into exile.

We take the notion that Hashem protects us in exile for granted, but Ya'akov could not. Until that vision, it was reasonable to imagine that divine providence was bound to the Land of Israel - that Hashem's presence could be fully encountered only in His Land.

Hashem's promise from atop the ladder reshapes our understanding of His presence. Though that presence is encountered most intensely in Israel, He assures Ya'akov that His protection will accompany him even in distant lands. It is the first message of exile: we may walk foreign roads, but never alone.

On the eve of Ya'akov's second descent - this time into Egypt, as recorded in Vayigash - Hashem introduces an even bolder idea. Not only would Ya'akov be protected in Egypt; the Shechinah itself would go with him. By this point, the bond between Hashem and His emerging nation had already grown stronger. Wherever we wandered, Hashem would share our journey.

As Hashem assures Ya'akov:

אֲנִכִּי אֵדָד עִמָּךְ מִצָּרְיָמָה וְאֲנִכִּי אֵעֲלֶךְ גַּם־עִלָּה

Across the long night of exile, this promise became our hidden anchor. Even as we were expelled from Israel, we never lost divine supervision. And we knew that the Shechinah traveled with us into galut. When we prayed for redemption, we prayed not only for our people to return home, but for the Shechinah to return to its place in Israel.

BRINGING WELFARE

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delivers prosperity: he reaches the well, rolls the massive boulder on his own, and enables the gathered shepherds to water their flocks. Likewise, during his twenty years in Lavan's home, Lavan's fortunes soared. Even Lavan admitted that his newfound wealth flowed from Ya'akov's long stay. Part of his hesitation to release Ya'akov was simple fear of what his departure would mean for Lavan's future.

Across generations, Jews have lived this pattern. Even in exile and cast as outsiders, we consistently contributed to the economic, social, and moral fabric of the lands in which we dwelled.

For thousands of years we did so quietly, from the margins, shut out from the full avenues of civic life. Over the past two hundred years, as we were gradually welcomed into broader society and granted equal opportunity, our contributions became far more visible.

This shift enabled us to more fully embody the promise that Hashem articulated to Avraham - *ve'hyei beracha* - to serve as a

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wellspring of blessing. For generations this blessing unfolded quietly; in the modern era it has surfaced more openly.

SHIFTING WINDS

Yet the story of galut is never one-dimensional. No matter how deeply we enrich our surroundings, there comes a moment when jealousy and resentment flare. Admiration turns sour, and the esteem in which we were once held is eclipsed by anger. Eventually even Lavan could no longer tolerate Ya'akov; he whispered accusations to his shepherds and stoked suspicion. Sensing the shifting winds, Ya'akov fled before the situation spiraled beyond repair.

So, too, with our long journey through exile. Jewish life in any host nation is always temporary. Eventually hatred takes root so deeply that it veers into the irrational: even as societies acknowledge how much Jews contribute, they cannot bear our presence.

Sadly, the pattern repeats itself. Empires that cast us out often tumble soon after - partly because they have discarded a remarkable human resource, and partly as a consequence of their hostility toward the nation of Hashem.

GUARDING OUR BOUNDARIES

Faced with these cycles of deceit and

simmering hostility, Ya'akov responds with deliberate separation. Though he lived under Lavan's roof, he clearly preserved distance. He built his own household and spiritual world, keeping his family and flocks distinct from Lavan's. The sheep stayed apart - and so did the shepherds and families. Though Lavan hosted him, Ya'akov ensured that his cultural and religious identity remained intact.

Throughout our long exile, even when we were transplanted into foreign cultures and participated in the civic life around us, we maintained a measure of insularity. At times this separation protected us from religious dilution and assimilation. At other times it safeguarded our national spirit, preventing us from absorbing the cultural norms of the lands in which we lived. Across generations, Bilaam's haunting description - *hen am levado yishkon* - echoed through Jewish history, shaping our fate and preserving our identity.

PERILOUS COMFORT

Still, life in exile offers opportunity as well as dangers.

While in galut, Ya'akov is anything but passive. He builds a large family - four wives, eleven children - and accumulates considerable wealth.

In many ways it is easier to raise a family outside the spiritual turbulence of the Land of Israel. Hashem's Land is charged with divine energy, often marked by conflict and upheaval. Any nation that lives there senses - openly or subtly - the Land's sacred weight.

In the relative calm of Aram Naharayim, away from the turbulence of Eretz Yisrael, Ya'akov is able to raise his family in peace. But this comfort threatens to ensnare him. He nearly becomes trapped by his own



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success. At the beginning of the parsha he dreams of heavenly angels ascending a divine ladder; twenty years later, his dreams revolve around sheep. Life in chutz la'aretz has absorbed him so completely that he almost doesn't make it back. Angels must visit his dreams and command him to return before it is too late.

When he finally reenters the Land, he immediately confronts Esav, who is determined to bar his reentry and avenge the loss of the *bechorah*. Despite Esav's many flaws, he has lived in Eretz Yisrael for the past twenty years, and that spiritual standing terrifies Ya'akov far more than Esav's physical strength.

After escaping Esav, Ya'akov then faces the upheaval of Shechem. His family is unprepared for that upheaval. They grew up quietly on the sidelines in Aram Naharayim and had not been hardened by the tumult and moral intensity of life in the Land of Hashem.

Many in our generation face a similar dilemma. In countless ways, it is easier to raise a family and secure financial stability outside the intensity of life in Israel. Life in this Land presents financial strain, political insecurity, and spiritual challenges that are felt far less acutely abroad. Some even argue that they prefer remaining in chutz la'aretz because, on the surface, it seems easier to raise children there.

Yet despite the allure of that choice, many who remain and thrive in Chutz La'aretz face two real risks: becoming too rooted in exile, and arriving in Israel unprepared for the struggles, tensions, and demands that life in the Land of Hashem inevitably presents.

AFTER GEULAH BEGINS, STRUGGLES

All of this leads naturally to the final lesson.

The pace of redemption is rarely swift. Lavan deceived Ya'akov at the very outset of his marriage, slipping Leah in place of Rachel. Years later, after Yosef was born, Lavan swindled him yet again. Chazal view this pattern as a foreshadowing: "before our redeemer arrives and even after his birth, our nation will continue to endure persecution and domination."

Yosef would redeem the family and one day redeem our people. Yet even his birth did not end Lavan's deceit.

We, too, have begun our redemption. But many imagine - naively - that once the geulah begins, our struggles will evaporate and our adversaries will vanish. Ya'akov's odyssey teaches otherwise. Even after Yosef's birth, even after redemption begins to dawn, the hardships persist.

Ya'akov fashioned many of the great templates of Jewish history. His twenty years in Lavan's home remain one of the clearest models of Jewish life in exile - and of the long, uneven road toward redemption. ■



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