



RABBI SHALOM

ROSNER

RAV KEHILLA, OHEL EPHRAIM IN NOFEI HASHEMESH
MAGGID SHIUR, DAF YOMI, OU.ORG
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The Secret of a Nation That Stands Alone

The Torah records Bilam's striking description of the Jewish people:

“הן עם לבדד ישכון ובגויים לא יתחשב”

Behold, it is a nation that dwells alone and is not reckoned among the nations. (Bamidbar 23:9)

At first glance, this phrase can sound isolating and even troubling. Are we meant to be alone, detached and separate from the world?

Yet, as developed by Rabbi Greenberg in *Midarkei HaParasha*, this description is not a weakness but a statement of profound uniqueness and strength.

ALONE, BUT NOT ISOLATED

Bilam, a prophet of the nations, recognized something essential about Klal Yisrael. *Am*

Levadad Yishkon does not mean disconnection. Rather, it means that the Jewish people operate under a different reality. We are distinct. The rules that govern other nations such as the natural flow of history, rise and fall, strength and decline, do not fully apply to us.

A NATION BEYOND HISTORY

This idea has been noted not only by our sages, but even by the greatest thinkers among the nations.

The French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre

acknowledged that the Jewish people cannot be understood through ordinary historical frameworks. They are, in his words, *“beyond time.”*

Similarly, figures such as Winston Churchill recognized that regardless of one's personal feelings toward

the Jewish people, one cannot deny their extraordinary and unique role in world history. And perhaps most famously, Mark Twain marveled: All the great empires - Egyptians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans - rose with power and noise, and then disappeared. *“The Jew saw them all... and remains.”* What is the secret of this eternity?

THE HIDDEN MEANING OF “הן”

A beautiful insight highlights this uniqueness. The pasuk states *Hein Am Levadad Yishkon*. The word “הן” (*hein*) hints to something that stands alone. In numerical patterns,



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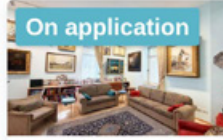


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most numbers pair naturally. 1 with 9, 2 with 8, and so on. But 5 stands alone. Similarly, among the tens, 50 stands alone. The two letters from which the word hein is comprised are the letter hey (5) and nun (50).

So too, the Jewish people, represented by “Hein”, stand apart, not as outsiders, but as something fundamentally different.

THE QUESTION THE WORLD CANNOT ANSWER

Throughout history, observers have noticed the same phenomenon: A small nation that is numerically insignificant, yet central to the story of humanity. It is constantly persecuted, scattered and challenged, yet never disappearing. The world asks the question again and again: What is the secret of Jewish eternity?

Rav Kook provides the answer with clarity: The eternity of the Jewish people is not natural,

rather it is divine. It is rooted in our connection to Hashem. We are not sustained by power, land, or numbers but by a relationship.

Am Levadad Yishkon is not a statement of loneliness. It is a statement of identity. We are not alone because we are abandoned. We are alone because we are different. Because we carry something eternal. Because we are connected to something beyond history.

In a world that constantly pressures us to blend in, to conform, to become like everyone else, the Torah reminds us: Our strength is not in being like the nations. Our strength is in being true to who we are.

The nations rise and fall, but a people connected to eternity endures. May we merit to embrace that uniqueness, to live it proudly, and to strengthen our connection to Hashem, so that we continue to stand, not alone, but eternally. ■