

The Quality of Exile: Its Function in Keeping the Jewish People Going Thousands of Years

A Jew looks at the exile with dread. One sees the pogroms, the concentration camps, the ghettos, and in the Medieval times, the constant expulsions by the anti-Semitic peoples of Germany, France, and even Great Britain. Starting with Yaakov, G-d had a plan concerning how to isolate the Jewish People, whether it is in Egypt where Yosef put the holy nation in Goshen or when Yosef made the Egyptians non-complacent in their own country to disarm them of their pride. This ensured that the Egyptians could not say that we are the official people of the land and are here longer than you.

The concept of isolation is the key to the existence of the Nation of Israel, although it is true that many Jews are intermingled with the non-Jewish culture. It says in the Book of Isaiah: "in its shadow we will be like the Gentile world" (Isiah). This was the battle cry of many renegade Jews. They wanted to be a Jew in their homes and a non-Jew in public. One of the outstanding examples was Moses Mendelsohn who wanted to have a relationship with the German intellectuals. This resulted in Mendelsohn having non-Jewish offspring and his followers being the founders of the Reform movement. This movement destroyed the Jews of Germany spiritually. At the core of this accursed movement was the idea of imitating the ways of the non-Jews. Unfortunately, this had a pronounced influence on the Jewish People, playing an important role in the spiritual and physical demise of the holy nation. When it comes to abandoning Torah, it is tantamount to dying spiritually. If there is no solidarity in the foundation of belief in G-d, there is virtually nothing stopping a person from marrying a non-Jew, bringing more impurity into the world.

The only chance one has in combatting this adulteration is by undertaking a deep study of Torah combined with a serious attempt at working on one's character traits, this will bring him closer to G-d. To value oneself as a Jew, one must realize where their origins lie. Avraham, the forefather of Israel was an individual whose parents were idolaters and who tried to hand over their child to Nimrod, the Hitler of that era. One can see the tremendous challenge of the Evil Inclination. The people knew that there was no power in their idols, yet permitted it to be a manifestation of the lusts and desires of that time.

In spite of the temptations for idolatry, Avraham, through his intellect, came to all the prodigious principles in the Torah without the Torah being given. Avraham so desired the truth that G-d, who is well above imagination, granted his request. This is not to say that the test of sacrificing his son Yitzchak on the altar was Avraham's sole reason for greatness. Rather, he was tested, passing time and time again, all the while doing acts of kindness throughout his ordeals. Thus, Avraham trained himself in kindness and his task to sacrifice the future of the Jewish Nation was a test against kindness. This extraordinary achievement led G-d to refer to Avraham as a person who is aware of G-d in the highest degree.

Furthermore, Yaakov was the one quintessential paradigm of integrity, emulating G-d in this attribute. One must acquire the trait of honesty in this long and bitter exile. Despite

being cheated repetitiously, he remained in a state of absolute truth. This saved him from Laban, his father-in-law, one of the greatest cheaters in all of Torah history. Clearly, G-d was putting Yaakov in a tribulation that would accompany him to the next world.

Further, this is a lesson for the generations to come. To deserve G-d's protection in the area of business and ethical conduct, one must be Torah observant. Laban told Yaakov that he had the ability to harm him but the Almighty spoke to him, warning him not to speak good or bad to Yaakov. The merit which caused the Almighty's protection of Yaakov was his honesty. This is the reason the Jewish Nation was not decimated at that time.

Money earned in fraudulent ways will leave the person. Today, more than ever before, people want to live above their standards. This will get them nowhere, only to a higher standard (the sky is the limit). To accommodate these high standards of living, one goes into fraudulent business which can cause legal and monetary problems. Then they start maxing out their credit cards. Not long afterwards they declare bankruptcy and think that this is permissible. The Torah does not condone anyone going into debt. G-d gives a person enough for their spiritual and materialistic expenses. It is a test from G-d to see if one will favor materialism or not.

One should appreciate every gift they receive from heaven. For instance, one's ability to get off a bed depends on muscle coordination, the brain and balance so that one can stand up. Only G-d can guarantee every motion of the body without a doubt. Even the top doctors cannot replace what G-d gives us. For one to deny this kindness is one of the worst sins of 'denial of good', which caused death to the world. By thanking G-d profusely, a person comes to love and fear Him. If a person trains himself in this attribute, he can gain much in life and give to others the benefits of strengthening their faith in G-d. He gave us many unique opportunities to do good if one really wants to.

G-d wants our true good; therefore, there must be the concept of true bad. By way of creating the precept of free choice, a groove of good is created, enabling more noble thoughts. The verse: "there are many bad occurrences to a righteous person and G-d will save the person from all of them" (Psalms), tells us clearly that the bad that may befall a righteous person is not so easy to understand. The bad that may be inflicted could take the form of one being oppressed by other individuals of low worth. The righteous one knows that he cannot talk to those people because of their evil. Hence, only G-d can save the upright one from the wickedness of others (e.g. people thinking badly of him and spiritual embarrassment).

This is a world of confusion and doubt. People preach things that are false; these fallacious ideas seep into us without introspection. Consequently, it takes great effort to judge these erroneous thoughts using the proper intelligence and guide of Torah. One must see whether it is true or not, whether it is political jabber or not. However, it is of utmost importance that one not accept ideas until it is confirmed beyond a shadow of a

doubt that it is absolutely true. This is the area where the Evil Inclination envelops and ruins people.

Humans, by nature, have weak intellect. This is not in reference to one's IQ and their ability to grasp subject material but rather the spiritual ability to grasp statements which are subject to interpretation by various people in light of their motives, actions and what they will gain from it. Only G-d knows their motives and those who are right and those who are wrong. As a bystander, one must daven to G-d. One should avoid acting as a hot head by taking sides. Rather, they should unassumingly daven to G-d that the wrong should be corrected and that those involved should repent. This type of thinking is found only in someone who has fear of heaven. This is because G-d is the epitome of truth and knows everything.