

WORDS OF WISDOM FROM RABBI YITZI

לרפואה שלימה ליוסף יצחק בן ברכה

PARSHAT VA'EIRA

Action is the Main Thing

The Haftora for Parshas Vaeira has two prophecies from our prophet Yechezkel (Ezekiel), plus two verses from a previous prophecy.

The first prophecy is about the destruction of Egypt. Hashem says that He will lay waste to Egypt; it will be uninhabited for forty years, and then they will return, but Egypt will never be a superpower again.

Hashem gives a reason for the downfall of Egypt. Because Egypt didn't keep their word and come to Israel's aid when they needed it most. They were a "prop of reeds," meaning that when Israel needed to lean on Egypt, when they were being attacked by Sennacherib and later by Nebuchadnezzar, Egypt folded as a prop made of weak reeds and didn't come to Israel's aid.

But then, a few verses later, He gives what seems to be a totally different reason. Because of Pharaoh's arrogance and denial of Hashem's providence, as he said, "The river is mine, and I made it."

DOING WHAT G-D WANTS, EVEN WITH IMPERFECT INTENTIONS, EARNS REWARD. BECAUSE ACTION IS THE MAIN THING.

as he said, "Who is Hashem, that I should listen to his voice," and come to realize that Hashem is G-d. This attitude was common among all the Egyptians, as we see from the reason Hashem gave Moshe for bringing the plagues, "And Egypt will know that I Am Hashem."

What connection is there between denial of Hashem

because of arrogance and treating the Jewish people badly?

The question here itself is the answer. When a person is arrogant, his ego is so great that there is no room for G-d, let alone another person, so he treats others badly. (As we have seen just recently*, how so many leaders of countries turned their backs on Israel by means of a UN resolution, claiming that the Jewish people have no connection to their holy sites, in denial of G-d, His Torah, and historical facts.)

The second prophecy in the Haftora is about Nebuchadnezzar (another name for Nebuchadnezzar). Hashem says that as a reward for capturing the city of Tzor (Tyre), He will give Egypt into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, and his army will enjoy the spoils. They had put so much effort into the siege of Tzor, but aside from its capture, the soldiers came away with nothing. Therefore, now Hashem will give Nebuchadnezzar all of Egypt and its spoils. All this is because "The action which he carried out" was what Hashem wanted to be done.

The Haftora is meant to resemble the Parsha and bring out its theme. The first prophecy about the destruction of Egypt fits in nicely, as explained earlier. But how does the prophecy of Nebuchadnezzar's reward express the message of the parsha? True, his reward was the taking of Egypt, but that is merely a detail, and what's more, our Parsha doesn't mention anything about another empire conquering Egypt.

If we take a closer look at our Parsha, it becomes clear. The Parsha opens with Moshe's complaint to Hashem. Moshe did what Hashem asked him to do. He went to Pharaoh and asked him to allow the Jewish people to go and serve Hashem. And ever since then, the servitude only got worse. So he asked Hashem, "Why did You make things worse for this nation?"

Hashem answers, "I also heard the groaning of the Children of Israel, that the Egyptians are enslaving them.... Therefore tell the Children of Israel I am



Hashem, and I will take you out... I will save you... I will redeem you... I will take you... And I will bring you to the land..."

How does this answer the question? He had already heard their groaning before Pharaoh made things worse. Why didn't Hashem save them then?

We must conclude that the harsh servitude was somehow necessary and that it needed to get even worse before Hashem could save them. What could possibly be the reason for this?

The reason for our descent to Egypt was for us to receive the Torah. In order for the Torah to come down into the physical world, two things had to happen. First, we needed to become vessels to receive the Torah. The main idea of the Torah is to do Hashem's will and to do that, our will had to be completely nullified, and that was done through the servitude in Egypt. This last blow, making it even harder for them, completed the process. Now we were ready.

Second, just as it was necessary for the Jewish people to be prepared for receiving the Torah, so too, the world had to be prepared. Being that Egypt was the superpower that ruled the world, they needed to recognize Hashem. As mentioned above, the Egyptian attitude was one of arrogance and denial of Hashem. This attitude needed to be broken for the Torah to be given, because the Torah is about the nullification of our will to do Hashem's will. Therefore, Hashem sent the plagues to break Egypt, and it worked, as Pharaoh said at the end of the Parsha, "Hashem is the Righteous One, and me and my nation are the wicked ones."

So, the theme of the Parsha is getting ready to receive the Torah. And our main goal is that through our actions, doing the mitzvahs, we become connected to the One Who commanded us to do them, Hashem.

Now, we can understand how the second prophecy aligns with the message of the parsha. Nebuchadnezzar did just that; he did what Hashem wanted and was rewarded for that.

You may be wondering. Tzor was a port city on the Mediterranean, and it was also along the road to Egypt. Nebuchadnezzar wanted to capture Tzor for his own selfish reasons, because he wanted to rule the world, and Tzor was a strategic asset. Even the verse says that he was being given Egypt merely for "The action which he carried out." This implies that it just was something he did, not that he did it for Hashem. So why is he being rewarded?

This is a lesson to us here: The most important thing

is the action, to do what Hashem wants, and even when the intentions are not that perfect, the reward is deserved.

This is in line with the Baal Shem Tov's teaching that we should love every Jew, even those that are at the ends of the earth and who you have never seen. Because every Jewish person has done many good deeds, as our sages tell us, "They are full of mitzvahs like a pomegranate (is filled with seeds)." Every good deed has an effect on the whole world; as the Rambam says with regard to someone who does a mitzvah, "He tips himself and the whole world to the side of merit and causes for himself and for their redemption and salvation." So it turns out that we each receive redemption and salvation from every Jewish person, even those we never met.

Now that I am unable to do things, I see how special it is. I used to do so much, and from all the things I used to do, I miss helping people the most. There is nothing better than being there for others. At least I am able to lift others' spirits with my smile and my heart and through these Dvar Torahs. For these things, I am grateful.

May we merit to see the ultimate transformation of the world with the coming of Moshiach. When we will see how it was our actions, mitzvahs, and good deeds that brought salvation and redemption. May it happen soon.

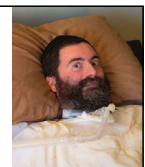
**This article was written in 2017*

"Dear Rabbi Yitzi, I saw your video titled 'I Matter.' I don't think I have ever seen a piece that evoked so many different emotions and touched me so deeply. He is a 'shining' example of what we are capable of achieving, even against the most dire situation. The song so uplifting and powerful! Amazing, incredible, fantastic!"

- Anonymous

RABBI YITZI WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU! SEND YOUR MESSAGE TO:
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Despite facing one of life's most difficult challenges, Rabbi Yitzi Hurwitz continues to spread joy and faith to thousands around the globe. Diagnosed in 2012 with ALS, Rabbi Yitzi is now 95% paralyzed and no longer able to speak or breath on his own. Thanks to the miracle of technology, Rabbi Yitzi continues to spread his wisdom through his eyes, focusing on each and every letter of these Torah articles. Rabbi Yitzi, his wife Dina and their seven children are the Rebbe's Shluchim to Temecula, California.



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