

Shemos 2015

1.

### Paving the way

“And all the persons who emerged from Yaakov’s loins were seventy souls, and Yosef was in Egypt.” (1, 5)

"ויהי כל נפש יצאי ירך יעקב שבעים נפש ויוסף היה במצרים."

Ateres Tzvi (page 119):

Why does the pasuk inform us that Yosef was in Egypt; it is seemingly irrelevant and superfluous?

We learn a great concept from these words. We see that Yaakov and his children never thought about going to Egypt because of all its impurities. The sole reason why they went there was because Yosef was there and purified the way for them.

The lesson is that while we are in galus (exile), we have to make sure we go to places that have tzaddikim, Rebbeim, and good friends.

2.

### How to survive Galus

“And these are the names of the Children of Israel who were coming to Egypt; with Yaakov, each man and his household came.” (1, 1)

"ואלה שמות בני ישראל הבאים מצרימה את יעקב איש וביתו באו."

Why does the pasuk first use the present tense with “coming to Egypt” and then switch to past tense when it says “each man...came”? Ohel Aryeh (pages 4-6): **Even though the Jews were in Egypt for many years it was always as if they had just arrived. The Jews didn’t view themselves as permanent dwellers there, rather just as mere guests. The Torah is instructing us how to live in galus. We need to realize that our current physical location is not our permanent residence, rather, it is temporary.** Once we view ourselves as permanent dwellers in a foreign place, then we will, chas v’shalom, begin to follow in the ways of the goyim (gentiles). This is explanation of the pasuk; they always viewed themselves as just arriving.

An additional answer is; the pasuk is not only informing us how to survive in galus, but also how to be successful in galus. We will only be successful if we constantly think of Yaakov. We must think how would Yaakov react if he knew what I was doing right now? What would Yaakov want me to do in any given situation? What would he want us to have in our homes? That’s why the pasuk says “with Yaakov.” **The Jews who descended to Egypt lived this way, always acting based on Yaakov’s standards.**

How did Yaakov merit having children who would constantly think about him? Since Yaakov constantly thought about Yitzchak; therefore midah k'neged midah (measure for measure) his children constantly remembered him. How do we know that? The pasuk states (Bereishis (28, 10)) "Yaakov departed from Beer-sheva" "ויצא יעקב מבאר שבע וילך חרנה." The roshei teivos (acronym) of the word ויצא are וִירָא יַעֲקֹב צוֹרֵת אָבִיו, which means Yaakov saw the image of his father.

When we constantly think about how our father wants us to act we are fulfilling the mitzvah of kivud av v'eim. We shouldn't disregard our parents once we move out of our house and not take their feelings or wishes into account. We should always think of ways we can bring our parents pleasure.

**The Jews didn't change their names while they were in Egypt. They didn't go by any secular name**, if they even had one. They stuck with the names that Yaakov called them in order that they wouldn't intermingle with the goyim. This was part of the strategy of viewing themselves as temporary dwellers. As we discussed based on the pasuk from the previous piece that said "Yosef was in Egypt"; even though Yosef had an Egyptian name, he still went by Yosef.

The pasuk "And these are the names of the Children of Israel who were coming to Egypt" alludes to when a person enters any new stage in life, he should remain on the same former high level. Originally, when starting a new chapter in life or if one has to leave Israel and go back to chutz learetz (diaspora) a person will do everything with enthusiasm and passion. However, the nature of man is that as time goes by, our drive goes by and decreases as well. That is what the pasuk is trying to teach us. **We must constantly look at ourselves as if we have just 'arrived', from wherever it might be. If we are able to keep this mindset and keep the same enthusiasm as when we began, then we will have success.**

The pasuk (sefer Devarim 28, 45-46) states "all these curses will come upon you and pursue you and overtake you, until you are destroyed, because you will not have listened to the voice of Hashem, your God, to observe His commandments and decrees that He commanded you. They will be a sign and wonder, in you and your offspring, forever."

The Netziv (Ha'emek Davar) writes regarding this pasuk: when one performs mitzvos, galus becomes easier. If, however, one doesn't learn and perform mitzvos then the difficulties of galus will increase for him and his children. If we want to be successful in galus, we need to be consistent with our learning and mitzvah performance.

Similarly, the Gemara in Taanis (21b) quotes a statement of Rav Yosi who says 'the place of a person doesn't give him honor, rather a person brings honor to his place.'

The Stiepler says that the Yeshiva we attend and our chavrusa is irrelevant. Ultimately our success will be determined based on our own personal effort.

Similarly, Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz (Melitzeh Yoshor (page 165)) says the Kossel (western wall) is holy, but one who toils in Torah is holier because he is in the Kodesh Kodashim (holy of holies).

This coincides perfectly with the last Mishna of Mesechas Horeyos which states that a mamzer who is a talmid chacham is greater than a Kohen Gadol who is an am haaretz (ignoramus). Meaning, even though the Kohen Gadol enters into the Kodesh Kodashim, the talmid chacham is better.

It's stated explicitly in Rav Shach Speaks (pages 166-167) that no matter where a person is, if he is learning Torah it's as if he is in Eretz Yisroel!

The Gemara in Berachos (8a) relates that Rav Yochanan was told there was a very old person living in Bavel. Rav Yochanan was perplexed and bewildered because the pasuk says "In order to prolong your days and the days of your children." How could this man living in Bavel live so long? However, once they told him that he gets up in order to go to shul early and also stays late, Rav Yochanan then understood how this person lived so long; like Rav Yehoshua Ben Levi told his children: go early and stay late when going to Shul in order that you will have longevity.

The question arises, regardless of how early or late this man was in Shul, he still wasn't in Israel; so how did he get longevity? The Maharsha answers based on the Gemara in Megilah (29) that says in the future all Shuls and Yeshivos will be uplifted and brought to Israel. Therefore, since he spent so much time in Shul it was as if he spent most of his life in Israel and that pasuk of having longevity does apply to him as well. The Maharsha elaborates, on the Gemara in Megilah, based on the Shir Hashirim Rabbah (7, 11) that says; in the future the Beis Hamikdash will be as big as Yerushalayim is today. Furthermore, Yerushalayim will be as big as Israel is today. The reason is that when all of these Shuls and Yeshivos will go to Israel, more room will be needed and everything will need to be bigger. (As a side point, who will get the best location? The places that had the most kavana (intent) and were most serious about their davening and learning!)

To summarize, how could we survive in galus?

It helps if there is a tzaddik who is there who paved the way. We must internalize the fact that we are not permanent dwellers in galus. Keep our Jewish name and don't mix with the goyim and follow their customs. We need to think what would Yaakov Avinu say about our behavior.

Throughout our time in galus we need to maintain the same enthusiasm as when we arrived. We need to bring kavod to the places we are in. Remember that when someone is learning, it's as if he is in Israel and in the Kodesh Kodashim. Also, whenever we are in a Shul or a Beis Medrash it's as if we are in Israel!

Thank you Yair Moshe Ausabel for typing this up. Thank you Ari Zaslowsky for editing this.