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בית הוראה

Shaarei Ezra

שערי עזרא

Parshat Lech Lecha

Zmanim for New York:

Candle Lighting: 5:40pm

Shabbat ends: 6:40pm

R"T 7:10pm

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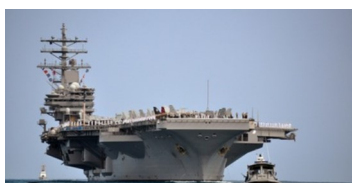
INTERPRETING RECENT EVENTS: THE PROPHETIC CONNECTION:

WRITTEN BY **RABBI SHAY TAHAN**

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There are a few passages in the Torah and other sources that deal with prophecies regarding the time of Mashiach's arrival. Never before in history have these prophecies appeared so relevant to current events. These sources are truly fascinating, and when you read them, it feels as if you are perusing today's news.

I would like to explore some of these prophecies to illustrate this point. The first prophecy of the Geulah (redemption) is mentioned in the words of the prophet Bilaam. Bilaam speaks in Hashem's name three times, and in his final prophecy, he describes what will happen before Mashiach arrives.



Bilaam Prophecy:

To understand Bilaam's divine words, we must identify the key players he mentions. Here are the nations mentioned in his prophecy: Kayin represents Ishmael- the Muslims (Rabenu Bechayey, Bamidbar 24, 23), Kitim refers to the descendants of the Roman Empire (Ramban 24,22), who represent the Christians, and Ever signifies the Jewish people. Now, let's delve into the meanings of these verses: Bilaam starts, "אראנו ולא עתה", which means "I see him, but not now", The Ramban and Rabenu Bechayey explain that this is a prophecy regarding the arrival of the Mashiach which will take place in the distance future.

The passage continues with the line "דרך כוכב" signifying the Mashiach, who will unify all Jewish people in the Land of Israel (according to Ramban). Additionally, "וקרקר כל בני שת" alludes to the Mashiach's dominion over the entire world, as interpreted by Unkelus.

Recognizing that this is a prophecy about the end of days, let's now delve into the events that are anticipated to unfold.

The following verse addresses Kayin, who represents Ishmael, with the phrase "איתן מושבך", signifying "strong is your dwelling." Rashi, Ramban, and Sforno elucidate that, during this period, Ishmael will coexist in the Land of Israel alongside the Jewish people.

It is in this context that Bilaam exclaims, "אוי מי יחיה משמו אל" -Bilaam wept when he foresaw how Ishmael would cause great destruction while burning things, possibly meaning burning people alive. He questioned who would be able to survive such harsh and cruel events. (Rabenu Bechayey)

Consistent with this interpretation, Chazal (סנהדרין צחג) expressed their longing for the arrival of the Mashiach while also acknowledging their hesitancy to live in that generation due to the extraordinary suffering it would bring.

The passage continues "וצים מיד כיתים", and Rashi explains that the word "צים" means a massive ship which come to the battle on the shore of the land of Israel.

This ship most probably is the Aircraft carriers which is the largest warship in the world, with a length of 333 meters, a width of 78 meters, and a height of 76 meters, of which 40 are submerged in the water.

The USS Gerald R. Ford Aircraft Carrier, is accompanied by a missile cruiser and four missile destroyers. This fleet, along with the aircraft carrier, represents the United States' immense naval power.

The carrier's impressive size enables it to accommodate a versatile aircraft fleet of up to 90 units, encompassing fifth-generation F-35s, F/A-18 Super Hornets, E-2D Advanced Hawkeyes, EA-18G Growler electronic attack aircraft, MH-60R/S helicopters, and a variety of UAVs. To effectively execute all operations on board the carrier, it requires a dedicated crew of over 4,500 personnel. Additionally, this carrier is powered by two nuclear reactors and features four shafts for propulsion.

Aircraft carriers continue to be the centerpiece of the forces necessary for operating forward. In times of crisis, the first question leaders ask is: "Where are the carriers?"

Thus often the presence of an aircraft carrier has deterred potential adversaries from striking against U.S. interests.

The verse states that the ship will come, "מיד

THE DYNAMICS OF DIVINE JUDGMENT: UNDERSTANDING REWARD, PUNISHMENT, AND ATONEMENT

כִּיתִים". As we've mentioned before, "Kitim" is associated with the Christian force, resembling the contemporary empire, which is reminiscent of America in our era. Targum Yonatan Ben Uziel proposes that this formidable ship will embark from Italy. But the question arises: why would an American ship set sail from Italy?

It's remarkably intriguing that the carrier made a scheduled port visit to Trieste, Italy just a month ago. It almost seems divinely orchestrated to fulfill Bilaam's prophecy.

Unveiling Gemara's Prophetic Insights: The Future of Rome, Edom, and Ishmael:

It is noteworthy that among all the nations in the world, the Gemara highlights two rival forces that will emerge as dominant empires in the end of days: America (which are Rome, as previously explained), and its allies, and Persia (Iran) and its allies.

Let's explore how the Gemara understands the events of the end of days. Within the Gemara (ימא, א), two differing opinions emerge regarding the ultimate fate of the Romans. Some suggest that in the end of days, the Romans will fall under the control of the Iranians (Persians), while others argue the opposite. The Gemara ultimately concludes that it will be the Iranians who will succumb to the Romans, leading to Roman dominion over the world for a period of 9 months.

Tosafot (עבודה זרה ג,א) provide further insight, explaining that the Persians will maintain their own empire until just before the appearance of the Mashiach. At that point, Rome will conquer them.

The Zohar Prophecy:

The following holy words from the Zohar (סוף פרשת וארא דף לב,א) vividly depict the events unfolding in our time: "And in the future, the descendants of Ishmael will incite great wars in the world. The descendants of Edom will gather against them, and they will wage three battles: one at sea, one on land, and one near Jerusalem. They will rule over each other, but the Holy Land will not be handed over to the descendants of Edom."

At that time, a great nation will arise from the ends of the world against Rome. They will engage in battle for three months, and many nations will gather with them. They will defeat them until all the descendants of Edom from all corners of the world are assembled against them. Then Hashem will rise against them, as it is written, 'For He has a sacrifice in Bozrah.' Afterward, He will seize the wings of the earth and eliminate the descendants of Ishmael from the land."

Gog U'Magog. The final war:

Finally, let's explore how Yechezkl's (פרק לז) famous prophecy of Gog and Magog unfolds.

The Malbim explains that Gog and Magog represent two global coalitions that will emerge in the end of days. One coalition comprises the descendants of Ishmael, while the other is the Rome coalition. Both will eventually find themselves in conflict on the shores of the Land of Israel.

According to the Malbim's interpretation, the verse (פסוק ה) suggests that the leader of one coalition would be Iran, guiding the Ishmael's coalition, with other nations joining them. The Malbim refers to them as the "מהול", circumcised like the Muslims, while the other coalition comprises those who are not "מהולים", uncircumcised, akin to the Christians.

The verses continue (פסוק ז' במלבים) to suggest that when the Muslims instigate a major terrorist attack, Edom (referring to America) will intervene to aid and subdue the Arabs. However, the situation will escalate as the Arabs turn against Edom in retaliation. Ultimately, Hashem's intervention will be provoked. This will result in a cataclysmic event, described as reaching far and affecting even the birds and the fish, possibly signifying an unconventional and highly destructive form of warfare.

A Beacon of Hope, Israel's Unshaken Destiny:

The Yalkut Shimoni (ישעיהו רמז תצט) reveals the fate of the nation of Israel during a time when all other empires are embroiled in a global conflict:

Rabbi Yitzhak said, "In the year when the King Messiah reveals himself, all the kings of the world are in conflict with one another. The king of Persia (Iran) provokes the king of Arabia, and the king of Arabia goes to Edom (Rome) for advice. The king of Persia returns and destroys the entire world. All the nations of the world are in turmoil and distress. Israel is in turmoil and distress and asks, 'Where shall we go? Where shall we go?' And He says to them, 'My children, do not fear. All that I have done, I have done only for your sake. Why are you afraid? The time for your redemption has come. And there is no need to fear. In that time, Hashem will reveal the light of the Messiah and the light of Israel, as it is said, 'Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of God has shone upon you' (Isaiah 60:1).

"And the rest of the world will be in darkness, and they will go to the light of the Messiah and Israel, as it is said, 'And nations will go by your light' (Isaiah 60:3). And they will fall on their faces before the Messiah and Israel, and they will say to them, 'We will be slaves to you. Each one of you will have two thousand eight hundred slaves,' as it is said, 'And it shall come to pass that when the Lord shall have mercy on you, He will say, 'Set up road markers for yourself' (Zechariah 8:23).

REVENGE - THE TORAH PERSPECTIVE.

When we witness a profoundly distressing event, such as the one we have just experienced in Israel, it is natural to have mixed emotions. On one hand, we feel deep pain and concern for our brothers and sisters in the holy land, but on the other hand, there can be feelings of anger and a desire for revenge. However, it's essential to consider whether these feelings of vengeance align with the teachings of the Torah.

The Torah Discourages Revenge:

The Torah commands us not to seek revenge, as it emphasizes the principle of "lo tikom" (לא תקום), which means "you shall not

take vengeance" (ויקרא יט,יח). This commandment underscores the idea that we should not retaliate or seek retribution against those who have wronged us.

Although the verse specifically speaks of avenging a Jew, as it is stated: ("וְלֹא־תִטֹּר אֶת־בְּנֵי עַמְּךָ" you shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the one of your people), the reason mentioned in the Sefer Hachinuch (מצוה רמא) seems to apply universally to all. He explains that the reasoning behind this prohibition is rooted in the Torah's broader perspective on divine providence. The Torah teaches that everything that occurs in the world is ultimately under the guidance and control of Hashem. Therefore, seeking

REVENGE - THE TORAH PERSPECTIVE.

revenge can be seen as a contradiction to this belief because it implies that we are taking matters into our own hands and not fully trusting in Hashem's ultimate plan.

The Torah endorses Revenge:

On the other hand, it is true that in various instances, the Torah does seem to endorse or acknowledge the concept of revenge, for instance, there are verses in the Book of Tehilim that express the sentiment of seeking retribution: (עט"ו)

לְמָה יֹאמְרוּ הַגּוֹיִם אִיהֶם אֱלֹהֵיהֶם יִדְעוּ בְּגוֹיִם לַעֲיִינוּ נִקְמָת דָּם ' "עבדיך השפוך" Why should the nations say, 'Where is their God?' Let it be known among the nations, before our eyes, the avenging of the spilled blood of Your servants." Or another verse (כ"ב, יא) ישמח צדיק כי (נח, יא) ישמח צדיק כי (נח, יא) which means that a righteous person rejoices when they witness retribution.

Before entering the Holy Land, Hashem commands Moshe to exact vengeance upon Midian: "נקום נקמת בני ישראל מאת המדינים". Our sages share a tradition (סוטה י"ג, א) that Chushim avenged the killing of Eisav, and upon hearing this, Yaakov Avinu smiled and felt a sense of satisfaction for this act of revenge.

Additionally, we find that before King David passed away, he instructed his son Shlomo to address the matter of Shimi ben Gera, who had cursed him while he was on the run. This raises the question of why David would advocate for revenge, considering that the Torah generally encourages forgiveness and forbearance.

These verses may indeed appear to advocate for revenge in certain contexts, especially when it comes to seeking justice and retribution for wrongful actions or violence committed against the innocent. However, it's important to understand the nuances and limitations of this concept within the framework of Torah teachings.

But we may ask again, what is the purpose of revenge? What does it truly achieve? Isn't it sufficient to take the necessary actions to secure oneself without indulging in the gratification of revenge?

Understanding the Essence of Revenge:

The revered Rosh Yeshiva, Harav Chaim Shmuelevits of Mir, offers a perspective on this matter (שיחות מוסר תשל"ג, שמות). He suggests that those who question the concept of revenge may not fully grasp its essence. He explains that the feelings of revenge emanate from a deeply elevated place, as Hashem Himself is described seeking revenge in many verses, such as "El Nakamot Hashem" (אל נקמות) (השם).

The purpose of revenge extends beyond mere punishment for the wicked; it also serves to uphold justice in the world. When justice prevails, it brings honor to Hashem and sanctifies His name. This is because people observe the world and evaluate Hashem and His Torah message based on its perceptions. When they witness that the wicked are not held accountable for their evil deeds, they may perceive this as a contradiction to the Torah's teachings of rewards and punishments. However, when the wicked are duly punished, it aligns with the principles outlined in the Torah, ultimately bringing

glory to Hashem.

For this reason, Pinchas took decisive action against those who openly violated the Torah and desecrated Hashem's name. As a result of his actions, Hashem rewarded him, affirming that he had exacted vengeance on Hashem's behalf. Pinchas effectively restored Hashem's honor and glory through his unwavering commitment to upholding divine principles.

The sense of justice is deeply ingrained in each and every one of us, often manifesting as a desire for personal revenge. When we witness revenge, it can help soothe the pain caused by the events we have experienced.

We observe that individuals who have been victimized often seek justice, either through legal channels or other means, as a way to alleviate their suffering. In the Torah, we find the concept of the "goel adam" (avenger of blood), who was permitted to seek

retribution for the killing of a relative. The Torah acknowledges the emotional intensity of such situations and does not impose punishment on the avenger for seeking revenge.

Yosef's Response to His Brothers:

With the above explanation we can understand a fundamental question regarding Yosef's conduct toward his brothers. Why did he act with such severity? Couldn't he have overcome his past experiences and treated them with brotherly love, both at that moment and for generations to come, without subjecting them to this ordeal? The Telz Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Yehudah Leib Bloch

(שיעורי דעת חלק ב', שיעור י"א, עמוד צ"ט) dismisses the suggestion that Yosef wanted to punish his brothers to atone for their sin. Punishing wrongdoers is not the righteous person's role, especially when the righteous person is the victim of that sin.

Rabbi Bloch argues that even though Yosef forgave his brothers for their grave sin, he could not completely erase the deep-seated feelings of resentment from his heart. He understood that the hatred he bore towards them was an inherent part of his nature. Despite his internal struggle and sincere efforts to overcome these negative emotions, Yosef knew that he could not entirely remove the stain of what they had done to him. To fully cleanse himself of these negative feelings and be able to treat his brothers as true siblings, both in his time and for generations to come, he had no choice but to undergo such a process, even though it pained him deeply. In the Torah and our tradition, there is no criticism of Yosef's behavior towards his brothers, implying that he acted appropriately.

Final words:

In the midst of our profound pain and grief, it's essential to acknowledge that our desire to witness complete and thorough revenge against those who committed these heinous acts is both justified and understandable. We should not brush aside these feelings, as they play a role in the process of healing, even though it's important to recognize that the pain can never fully be eradicated.

GAZA: A CONTESTED TERRITORY IN JEWISH HISTORY:

In our parasha (Lech Lecha) of Brit Ben Habetarim, Hashem promises Havraham Avinu the Land of Israel and delineates the northern and southern borders. The pasuk reads: "On that day, Hashem made a covenant with Avram, saying, 'To your offspring, I have given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates'".

These promises hold significant relevance to the first commentary by Rashi in the Torah. Rashi questions why Hashem commenced the Torah with the account of the creation of the world rather

than immediately introducing the laws of the Torah. Rashi provides an insightful response, explaining that this was to convey a crucial message: by narrating the act of creation, Hashem asserts His ownership of the land and His authority in determining which nation inherits it.

Hashem's declaration serves as a powerful reminder that if the nations of the world accuse the people of Israel of theft and occupation, they can firmly retort that the entire world is

GAZA: A CONTESTED TERRITORY IN JEWISH HISTORY:

Hashem's creation, and it is He who apportions the land. Indeed, a valid question arises here: the nations may not be aware of what Rashi has articulated, and even if we were to convey this message to them, they might not pay heed. So, what purpose does Rashi's message serve? Rashi's message primarily serves the Jewish nation, reinforcing our own understanding that the land rightfully belongs to us, and we are not engaged in theft or occupation.

Once we internalize this message and firmly believe in our rights to the land, we can then effectively communicate this conviction to others. As long as we harbor doubts about our entitlement to the land, we will struggle to persuade others of its validity. However, when our belief is unwavering, it becomes a powerful catalyst for convincing others, as our conviction will resonate and influence those around us.

Is Gaza Within the Promised Land's Borders?

Returning to the previously mentioned pasuk, the "River of Egypt" in the promise to Avraham Avinu refers to the river situated to the south of the city of Gaza, indicating clearly that Gaza is within the borders of Israel, granted to the Jewish people from Hashem.

The same concept is reiterated several times in the Torah, as we can observe in other passages. For instance, when the Torah, in Parashat Masaey, delineates the precise borders of Eretz Israel, it defines the southern border going around from Azmon to the stream of Egypt. This, once again, underscores that Gaza is indeed within the borders of Hashem's gift to us.

May We Give Away Hashem's Gift for Peace Treaty?

Now that we understand that Hashem granted us the land, including Gaza, let's delve into another question that was highly relevant about 20 years ago. The issue of whether we are permitted to give land for the sake of peace became a contentious topic as it divided the people of Israel. Some believed that ceding the land of Gaza to the Palestinians would lead to peace and progress, while others viewed it as a grave danger, which eventually proved to be

the case. This question also came before the poskim, who had to deliberate on whether we are allowed to relinquish Jewish land in pursuit of peace.



Chacham Ovadia wrote a responsa explaining that in a hypothetical situation where giving up land can save lives, it is permitted, as nothing is more vital than preserving life. However, he, along with many other rabbis, strongly believed that handing over Gaza to the Palestinians was a grave mistake that would result in extreme bloodshed. As history has shown, the rabbis' concerns were well-founded. Shortly after the Gaza area was transferred to the Palestinian authority, they initiated rocket attacks and various means of terrorizing their

Jewish neighbors, culminating in the disastrous recent attack, which underscored that those who doubted the wisdom of the separation were mistaken.

When Will the Promised Land Be Complete?

Let's revisit the verse mentioned above in Brit Ben Habetarim. The verse continues by promising Avraham Avinu the land of ten nations. However, Rashi points out that only seven of them were granted to the Jewish nation. Rashi explains that the lands of Edom, Moav, and Amon were promised to be given in the future in the end of days.

The Rambam explicitly states (הלכות רוצח פ"ח ה"ד) that these three lands will be given to us in the end of days. However, the exact locations of these lands are not precisely known, as the rabbis (ירושלמי שביעית תחילת פ"ז) have debated over their specific locations.

Ohr Hachayim explains that these three nations, which will be conquered at the end of days, symbolize the nations that will gather to fight on the shores of our land and will be defeated by the Messiah. This verse provides significant encouragement in the current times, emphasizing the notion that the end of days is drawing near, as we witness nations amassing on the shores of Israel for a world-altering conflict.

שאלות בקשר למלחמה:

הבן איש חי (סוף פרשת פנחס, שנה שניה) בשם האר"י ז"ל שלא יסתכל בהרוגים.

שלום לכם יהיה רצון שנראה ימים טובים יותר.

נכתוב כאן ב'ה מענה לכמה מהשאלות שהגיעו למערכת בקשר למלחמה.

האם מבחינת התורה מותר לשים עיר כמו עזה במצור מוחלט, והאם מותר למנוע מהם גישה לאוכל ולמים?

וביחוד שהצבא שלנו נחשב כהצבא המוסרי בעולם, ולכן יש להבין איך עלינו להרגיש בקשר לדבר זה.



תשובה: שאלה זו נידונה בפסוקי התורה בפרשת משפטים על הפסוקים (דברים כ"ג): "כי תקרב אל עיר להילחם עליה וקראת אליה לשלום...ואם לא תשלים עמך ועשתה עמך מלחמה, וצרת עליה". הנה רואים אנו שהתורה מצווה לעשות מצור על עיר שיש לנו עימה מלחמה. ולגבי הרעבתה כתב רש"י (שם מהספרי) שכוונת התורה היא שיש גם להרעיבה ולהצמיאה ולהמיתה מיתת תחלואים במצור. והסביר הבאר בשדה שבתחילה כשמתקרבים אל העיר וסובבים אותה במצור אין מונעים ממנה אוכל ומים, דשמה יתרצו להשלים, אבל אם ראינו שאין בדעתם להשלים יש למנוע מהעיר אוכל ומים. ופשוט שאין לחשוב שזה לא הומני או מוסרי שהרי אין דבר מוסרי יותר ממצוות התורה, וכבר אמרו רבותינו שהמרחם על האכזרים, סופו להתאכזר על הרחמנים.

האם כדאי לראות סרטונים של השמדת האיוב?

תשובה: יש להיזהר מלהסתכל בסרטונים שנראים בהם פניהם של מתים, שכן הביא

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האם הרגשת שמחה והנאה ממותם של המחבלים מותרת?
תשובה: אף שאכן כתוב 'בנפול אייכר אל תשמח' (משלי כד, ז), וכן הקב"ה מנע את המלאכים מלומר שירה על הים באומרו 'מעשה ידי טובעים בים, ואתם אומרים שירה?'. אלא שמצאנו גם ההיפך, שנאמר 'באבוד רשעים רינה' (משלי יא, י), וכן למדנו בגמרא (ברכות טב, ב) שדוד המלך לא אמר שירה עד שראה במפלתן של רשעים.
והנה בזוהר הקדוש (פרשת נח דף טא ע"ב) כתב שאין לשמוח במפלתן של רשעים כאלו שיש סיכוי שיחזרו בתשובה, אולם רשעים שמלאה סיאנת ויכר שאין סיכוי שישנו את דרכם הרעה אז יש שמחה במפלתן.
אין צורך להסביר שכך גם הם הדברים ברשעי החמס שיש לנו לשמוח, ויתירה מזו כתב הספר חסידים (תרנ"ד) שעתידים להיפרע ממי שמצטער על מפלת הרשעים.

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