

Shabbos Nachamu

# VaEschanan

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What does it mean, “patience is a virtue”? As opposed to what? Sure, patience is not the easiest to acquire and often seems lacking in the world, but that doesn’t mean people think it is anything less than a virtue. So why state the obvious?

Perhaps it has to do with the way that people tend to be patient when they really shouldn’t be, and have no patience when they should have it. Sometimes people put up with something evil for too long, and yet run out of patience when waiting for something good to happen, like justice for example.

There are a lot of people in the world doing much evil, *and getting away with it*. Yes, over time good does seem to triumph, but until it does a lot of evil is done and the perpetrators often live “great” lives until their dying day. And this is often at the expense of good people, who end up living miserable lives as a result. Even Dovid *HaMelech* did not live to see his name cleared and his enemies taken down.<sup>1</sup>

Then there is the issue of redemption. How long must this final exile continue? How many times must it go south on the Jewish people? How many times do we have to get to the brink of the Messianic Era and, then watch history back down and continue as it has? How much more insanity must reasonable people put up with before God finally says “Enough is enough!”

You’re not allowed to ever give up on redemption, but it is certainly understandable why many do. We’ve had to live through the destruction of two temples, countless pogroms everywhere we have gone, and two world wars that included a holocaust. We even have to go head-to-head with some of our own people who want to obliterate all things Jewish.

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<sup>1</sup> *Shabbos* 30a.

Ask any *geulah*-believing Jew if history should continue as is and they will give you a resounding no. Exile was great for decades, but it is souring now and people don't want to see it get any worse. They feel they have had all they can handle and want everything to get back on course for *Moshiach*.

God begs to differ. If He didn't, then He would do exactly that, bring the redemption and put out the evil. But then again, we're into comfort even at the cost of *tikun*, and He's into *tikun* even at the cost of comfort. History shows who always wins this argument.

Take Egypt, for example. After 116 years of multi-generational torturous Egyptian servitude, the Jewish people finally called on God to stop it. Lo and behold, Moshe *Rabbeinu* showed up with promises of redemption, and everyone got excited. But rather than let us go free, Pharaoh hardened the slavery, Moshe retreated to Midian for six months, and the Jewish people became despondent.

Similarly, 52 years into the 70-year Babylonian exile, Persia conquered Babylonia and Koresh permitted the Jewish people to return to *Eretz Yisroel* to begin construction on the Second Temple. It seemed Messianic, but when only 42,000 heeded the call and Koresh rescinded his offer, *geulah* seemed to get sidetracked.

When Haman quickly rose to power 18 years later and decided to exterminate the Jewish People, redemption seemed an impossibility. Only Mordechai seemed to stay with it and fought tirelessly to get the rest of the nation back on the same page. In the meantime, Haman just seemed to get more powerful...until he fell faster than he had risen and *geulah* happened.

The truth is, patience is much more than just a virtue. It is a survival tactic. That's why it is also one of the 13 Principles of Faith:

I believe with perfect faith in the coming of *Moshiach*, and though he may delay, **I await him every day.**

### **Shabbos Day**

THE HEBREW WORD for patience is *savlanut*. It comes from the *sovel*, which means to *carry a load*, to *endure* something, or to *suffer*. Hence:

*So they appointed over them tax collectors to afflict them with their burdens (b'sivlosam)... (Shemos 1:11)*

Because it is amazing what a person can put up with, even physically, if there is hope. That is what the enemy tries to destroy first and completely, hope. That is why Pharaoh increased the slavery after Moshe came and restored faith in redemption,

even though it meant work slowdowns and put him back.

That is what patience is, *hope*. The belief that the bad will end, the good will come, and that justice will be served, is what gives a person the strength to be *sovel* the opposite in the meantime. Destroy a person's sense of hope and they become despondent, zombie-like, *kotzer ruach* in Torah language,<sup>2</sup> as the Jewish people had become just before Moshe began to turn the tables on Pharaoh.

Don't make the mistake of thinking that this only means being broken and depressed. On the contrary, the current generation has been incredibly content for decades now. It's just that so many have lost hope in the coming of *Moshiach* and the final redemption, if they had any in the first place, that they have turned their focus elsewhere. They live without a *geulah* consciousness, as if they no longer need it.

But we do need *geulah*, always. It doesn't make a difference if we are being treated badly in exile or well, we always need *geulah*. Being able to learn Torah and perform *mitzvos* properly without interference is only one aspect of *geulah*. It is just a means to a higher end whether talking about national *geulah* or a personal one. When that is enough for a person, they are also considered to be spiritually despondent.

This is because the entire time the Jewish people are exiled from their land, the *Shechinah* is in pain. The entire time that some Jews remain indifferent to Torah and *mitzvos*, the *Shechinah* is in pain. The entire time the Temple has yet to return to its proper place on top of *Har Moriab* and the Jewish people cannot serve God there, the *Shechinah* is in pain. And feeling no pain while the *Shechinah* does only exacerbates the suffering of the *Shechinah*.

Building a wonderful *yeshivah* in *Chutz L'Aretz* does not alleviate that. Making *Shabbos* with all the trimmings in exile does not remedy that. Making a lot of money and giving lots of *tzedakah* does not make up for that. Living as if they do is not only a mistake, it is a *Chillul Hashem*:

*And they entered the nations where they came, and they profaned My holy Name, inasmuch as it was said of them, "These are the people of God, and they have come out of His land." But I had pity on My Holy Name, which the House of Israel had profaned among the nations to which they had come. Therefore, say to the House of Israel: God says: Not for your sake do I do this, House of Israel, but for My holy Name, which you have profaned among the nations to which they have come. And I will sanctify My great Name, which*

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<sup>2</sup> *Shemos* 6:9.

*was profaned among the nations, which you have profaned in their midst, and the nations will know that I am God. . . when I will be sanctified through you before their eyes. For I will take you from among the nations and gather you from all the countries, and I will bring you to your land. (Yéchezkel 36:20-24)*

### **Seudas Shlishis**

IT IS ALSO a sure-fire way to make sure that an exile does not end well. The exile will come to an end, because they always do for believers and disbelievers alike. The only questions are, when and how, and growing anti-Semitism is usually a good indicator of the direction in which the answer is going.

Somehow people think that God will just come and get us peacefully no matter what we're doing at the time. Some kind of Divine bell will go off in Heaven signaling the end of exile, and Jews will find themselves heading for *Eretz Yisroel* in one way or another without any losses or regrets. . . despite prophetic warnings of one last biblical War of Gog and Magog.

Is it just wishful thinking, or part of having given up on the final redemption, and therefore feeling no sense of urgency to do anything *geulah*-oriented in the meantime? Because there are some Jews who feel and act differently, preparing for and making *aliyah* while they still can on their own terms.

The *Malbim* foresaw this back in the 1800s:

*God says: Sing, Ya'akov, with gladness, exult on the peaks of the nations; announce, laud [God], and say, "God, save Your people, the remnant of Yisroel!" Behold, I will bring them from the land of the north and gather them from the ends of the earth. Among them will be the blind and the lame, the pregnant and birthing together; a great congregation will return here. With weeping they will come and through supplications I will bring them. I will guide them on streams of water, on a direct path in which they will not stumble, because I have been a father to Yisroel, and Ephraim is My firstborn. (Yirmiyahu 31:6-8)*

At the end of their exile, the oppression will be removed from them and they will be joyous because they will be on the peak of the nations. The gentiles will give them honor and they will be their leaders, instead of being disgraced and lowered among them as they were at first. "Ya'akov" will be the masses of the people, and the lesser among them. "Yisroel" are the great ones. The joyousness from being at the peak of the nations will be Ya'akov's only and not Yisroel's, because they (Yisroel) will want to return His Presence to *Tzion* . . .

because they will want the true salvation of the ingathering of the exiles and the return to *Tzion*. (*Malbim, Yirmiyahu 31:6-8*)

### ***Ain Od Milvado, Part 60***

WHAT ABOUT THE War of Gog and Magog? That has to do with holy sparks as well, as explained by the *Arizal*:<sup>3</sup>

As a result of the sin of Kayin and Hevel all the souls became mixed together with the *Klipos*. . .

The word *Klipos* means “peels,” but to make a very long and complicated *kabbalistic* discussion short and simple, the *Klipos* are the spiritual source of evil in Creation. Evil lives off the same holy sparks that good does, which is why it tries to “steal” as many as it can through people’s sins.

. . .and this is called the mixing of good with evil. Since then, the souls have been continuously separated out from within the *Klipos*, like the refinement of silver from the waste.

This process of separation is called *Birur* in *Kabbalah*, and it is the main way to rectify Creation. It happens continuously, but mostly as a result of Torah learning, *mitzvah* performance, and suffering, that is, through *mesiras Nefesh*:

This separation will continue until the completion of the separation of the souls. . .Once all the souls are separated out completely then. . .the [spiritual] waste will not need to be removed through [some kind of] action, but will collapse and be absorbed [to the point] of not being visible or present. Holiness, which is life [itself], will become separated from the spiritual waste which is called death. . .and will disappear like smoke.

In other words, cut off evil’s access to holy sparks and they starve to death. We accomplish this by doing good and avoiding evil, and when necessary, through suffering as well. Therefore, if there is going to be a War of Gog and Magog it will be to extricate the remaining sparks left over by mankind in the *Klipos* when the time for redemption has come. Only then can the verse from this week’s *parsha* be fulfilled: *ain od Milvado*.

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<sup>3</sup> *Sba’ar HaGilgulim*, Introduction 20.