

Kvutsot overview

K0.5: Breaking the Ice

Aims:

1. To be a fat penguin
2. Familiarize ourselves with some basic elements of kvutsa.
3. What is Tanach?
4. Basics of Ha'Am Ba'Aretz

K1: Yehoshua

Aims:

1. To understand the history of Yehoshua (Joshua) and his wars
2. Discuss the prioritisation of hishtadlut as opposed to bitachon
3. Ethics of war (then and now)

K2: Shoftim (Judges)

Aims:

1. To discuss lessons we ourselves can learn from the Shoftim
2. To know the disastrous cycle of Sefer Shoftim
3. To discuss Devorah as the only female judge
4. To look at what lessons of leadership we can take and what leadership opportunities are there for our Chanichim?

K3: Jewish Governance and the Melachim

Aims:

1. To learn about the Foundation of the Monarchy
2. To discuss whether Monarchy l'chatchila [ideal] or b'di eved [non ideal situation]?
3. To see how that affects democracy in the State of Israel today
4. To learn about some of the stories and messages of Shaul and David.

K4: Shlomo & The Golden Years of Tanach

Aims:

1. Who was Shlomo and what did he achieve?
2. The Beit Hamikdash, it's necessity + its importance
3. Ohr Lagoyim through the Bet HaMikdash and the Golden Years
4. Is medinat yisrael an ohr la goyim?

K5: End of the kingdoms & exile

Aims:

1. To be aware of some of the different Kings in Jewish History
2. To understand the dangers of relying on other countries for help.
3. To discuss to what extent you can serve Hashem in your own way.

K6: prophets of social justice

Aims:

1. What is prophecy and why is it important
2. The prophets as prophets of social justice
3. The relevance of their messages for us today

K7: Galut as a concept - Ha'am not Ba'aratz

Aims:

1. Exile as a necessary step - what do we need to learn from it? Not just a pointless punishment
2. The story of Esther/Purim and it's context

3. The danger of Am Yisrael replacing Galut with Geula
4. What happens when we're not Am Echad

K8: Ezra and his modern connections

Aims:

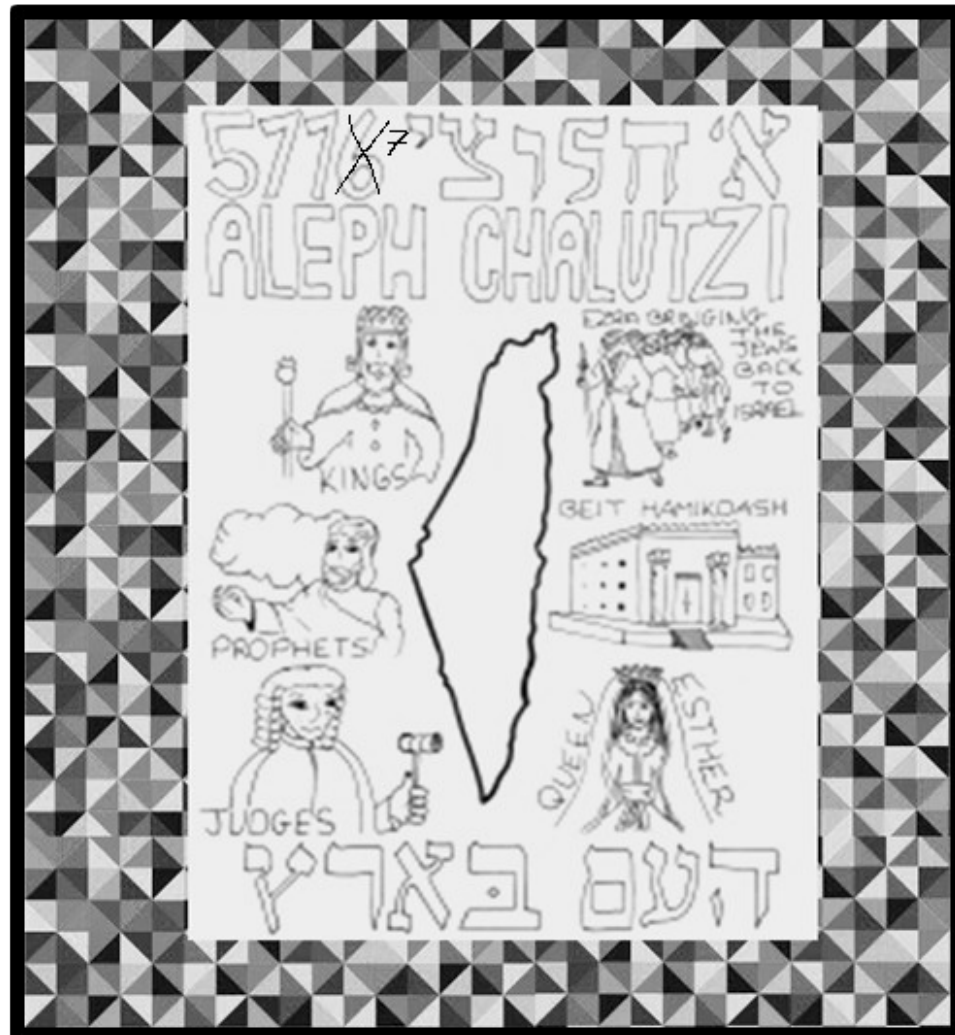
1. To learn about the background and story of Sefer Ezra
2. The parallels and relevance of Ezra to our lives today as individuals, as religious Jews, as a Jewish community and as the State of Israel
3. What we can learn from the mistakes and achievements of Am Yisrael in the time of Ezra and in recent times

K9: Sikkum

Aims:

1. To look back over the past 10 K's
2. To see the whole of machane as a journey
3. To really understand what B'Ikhot Avoteinu means for us as Bnei Akiva
4. Leave on a positive

K0.5 - Breaking the Ice



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Be a fat Penguin



This is going to be the very first time you meet your kvutza and you sit down with them together. It's incredibly important to get to know them as well as for them to become acquainted with you. Make sure to do a variety of games and exercises/chilled discussions to bond. This will set the tone for the rest of your kvutsot.

This is includes:

- Getting to know your chanichim
 - Your chanichim getting to know you
 - Your chanichim getting to know each other
- Creating a Kvutza identity.

Use ice breaker games to get the group to work together and make sure you know their names. Start checking out what games they enjoy as you have 10 different Kvutzot together.

Welcome them to Machane

Create a Kvutza identity. Maybe make a flag and emblem of your Kvutza, make them proud of your Kvutza name.

Think out of the box

Draw yourself a box. When you brainstorm (not P.C. - sorry) ideas for your K, if it falls in the box throw it in the bin, if it's outside - great! This isn't Shabbat afternoon at sviva anymore; you need to up your game to keep your chanichim interested and with you - if you lose them at this early stage you'll never get them back. Make sure they leave kvutza counting the seconds till the next one!



Tziud

Tziud is an extremely essential part of any kvutza. Tziud means instruments/ apparatus. These are all the physical objects used in a kvutza. The effort involved in making something is usually worth it as Chanichim respond better to physical objects and appreciate seeing the effort you have put in. Make it fun, interesting and relevant - but don't spend the whole of pre-camp making a board game that'll get used for ten minutes!

Remember their age



Our chanichim might be younger, but they are not babies. They can be stretched; don't say "they're 11 - let's play bang-bang for an hour!" You've got to keep them interested and try to aim your kvutsah at the correct level. **DON'T JUST PLAY GAMES FOR AN**

HOUR. It's extremely important that the chanchim learn at all times on machane and kvutsa is one of the core times for this. If you ask your chanichim what they learnt after a kvutsa they will hopefully reel off the chomer.

This will only happen if you teach it to them.

Running Shtick

Some madrichim might want to introduce some sort of five-minute shtick for the end of each kvutsa. This is a useful tool for both revising what has been covered already and for showing the chanichim an overarching structure. The chomer is not a selection of interesting individual session based on the avot; it has a theme with specific goals.



A couple of examples:

1. Draw a giant outline of a person on a piece of poster paper. Give the person a name. At the end of each kvutsa add one or two different character traits to the person based on what has been learnt during the kvutsa.
2. Have each chanich create a real-life facebook wall. Put whatever information on it that you want using post-it notes, details of "friends" (other members of the kvutsa), etc. You can have each person "post" on another member's wall each day. One person writes a "status update" which is a summary of the kvutsa and "shares" it with everyone else etc.
3. Draw a "kvutsa tapestry": take a roll of poster paper and draw what happened in that kvutsa in the form of a progressive 2D tapestry. Include what was learnt, what jokes were made, games were played etc.
4. Some choose to focus a bit less on the chinuch stuff for their shtick. You could try a different type of bang-bang every day, do a word of the day, phrase of the day whatever.



What is Tanach?

The Tenach is an acronym made up of the three books, which collated together make the Hebrew Bible. 1. Torah, 2. Neviim (prophets), 3. Ketuvim (writings).

According to the Talmud (Bava Basra 14b-15a, Rashi to Megillah 3a, 14a), much of the contents of the Tanach were compiled by the Men of the Great Assembly ("Anshei K'nesset HaGedolah") a task completed in 450 BCE, and have remained unchanged since that date

The TORAH is made up the five books of Moshe: 1. (בְּרֵאשִׁית / Bereshît) - Genesis, 2. (שְׁמוֹת / Shemot) - Exodus, 3. (וַיִּקְרָא / Vayikra) - Leviticus, 4. (בַּמִּדְבָּר / Bamidbar) - Numbers, 5. (דְּבָרִים / Devārîm) - Deuteronomy.

We have the books of Nevi'im - the prophets. We read bits and pieces throughout the year in our Haftarot.

- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| 1. Yehoshua - יהושע – Joshua | i. Hoshea - הושע – Hosea |
| 2. Shoftim - שופטים - Judges | ii. Yoel - יואל - Joel |
| 3. Shmuel (I & II) - שמואל – Samuel | iii. Amos - עמוס - Amos |
| 4. Melachim (I & II) - מלכים - Kings | iv. Ovadiah - עובדיה - Obadiah |
| 5. Yeshaya - ישעיה - Isaiah | v. Yonah - יונה - Jonah |
| 6. Yirmiya - ירמיה - Jeremiah | vi. Micha - מיכה - Micah |
| 7. Yechezkel - יחזקאל – Ezekiel | vii. Nachum - נחום - Nahum |
| 8. Trei Asar - תרי עשר – Twelve Minor Prophets | viii. Chavakuk - חבקוק - Habakkuk |
| | ix. Tzephaniah - צפניה - Zephaniah |
| | x. Chaggai - חגי - Haggai |
| | xi. Zechariah - זכריה - Zechariah |
| | xii. Malachi - מלאכי – Malachi |

Our chomer is primarily based on the extremely interesting Neviim and covers the entrance into the Land of Israel until the Babylonian captivity of Yehuda. Over the next few days all will be revealed.

We have the 3rd section of Tanach the Ketuvim, or “writings” . We use the books of Ketuvim lots, especially Tehillim which we read from every single day! We also have the Five Megillot in Ketuvim which we read throughout the year.

1. Tehillim - תהלים - Psalms
2. Mishlei - משלי - Proverbs
3. Iyob - איוב - Job
4. Shir HaShirim - שיר השירים – Song of Songs
5. Rut - רות - Ruth
6. Eicha - איכה - Lamentations
7. Kohelet - קהלת - Ecclesiastes
8. Esther - אסתר - Esther
9. Daniel - דניאל - Daniel
10. Ezra-Nechemiah - ונחמיה עזרא – Ezra-Nechemiah
11. Divrei HaYamim (I & II) - דברי הימים – Chronicles

Timeline of Tanach

2488	1272 BCE	Death of Moses/ Yehoshua (Joshua) leads Jews into Israel
Judges Rule Israel		
Jewish Year	Civil Year	Historic Event
2516	1244 BCE	Death of Yehoshua (Joshua)/ Zekainim (Elders) lead the nation of Israel
2533	1227 BCE	Othniel, first Judge leads Israel
2573	1187 BCE	Ehud judges Israel
2654	1106 BCE	Dvorah (Deborah) judges Israel
2694	1066 BCE	Gideon judges Israel
2734	1026 BCE	Avimelech (Abimelech) judges Israel
2779	981 BCE	Yiftach (Jephthah) judges Israel
2810	950 BCE	Shimshon (Samson) judges Israel
2830	930 BCE	Eli the High Priest judges Israel
2871	889 BCE	Shmuel (Shamuel) the Prophet judges Israel
Saul, David & Solomon		
Jewish Year	Civil Year	Historic Event
2881	879 BCE	Saul anointed king over Israel
2883	877 BCE	David anointed king over Israel
2892	868 BCE	King David establishes rule over all of Israel
2924	836 BCE	King Solomon (Shlomo) begins his rule
First Temple Period		
Jewish Year	Civil Year	Historic Event
2928	832 BCE	First Temple construction begins
2935	825 BCE	First Temple completed
2964	796 BCE	Split of the kingdom. Kings Rechavam (Judah) and Yeravam (Israel) begin their rule
3320	510 BCE	Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon conquers Judea. He removes part of the Temple's holy vessels and children of the royal family take them to Babylon (Daniel 1)
3327	503 BCE	Yehoyachim (Yechonia) ben Yehoyakim becomes king and reigns for only three months. Nebuchadnezzar exiles him to Babylon together with 10,000 people and the Torah Sages (II Kings 24:16). Zedekiah ben Yehoyakim becomes the last King of Judea (24:18)
3338	492 BCE	The First Temple is destroyed. It had stood for 410 years.
Purim Events		
Jewish Year	Civil Year	Historic Event

K.5: Breaking the Ice

3392	438 BCE	Achashverosh becomes king of Persia
3405	425 BCE	(13 Adar) - Haman's ten sons executed (14 Adar) - Purim celebration (15 Adar) - Purim celebration in Shushan
3406	424 BCE	The Megillah recorded

Ha'am Ba'aretz

This theme looks at Nach and focuses on the Jewish people living as a nation in the Land of Israel from their entry to the Land until Second Temple times. Nach is essentially a crash course in Bnei Akiva ideology. It is the book of Am Yisrael b'Eretz Yisrael al pi Torat Yisrael – the story of the Jewish people living in the Land of Israel. However, as we will see, Am Yisrael did not always keep the Torat Yisrael as they should, neither did we always value Eretz Yisrael or Am Yisrael as a collective unit the whole time.

We will look at how when the above principles are kept, things go well, and they when they don't, things don't go so well. Along with a host of other important messages we will also look out how Nach is relevant to our lives today.

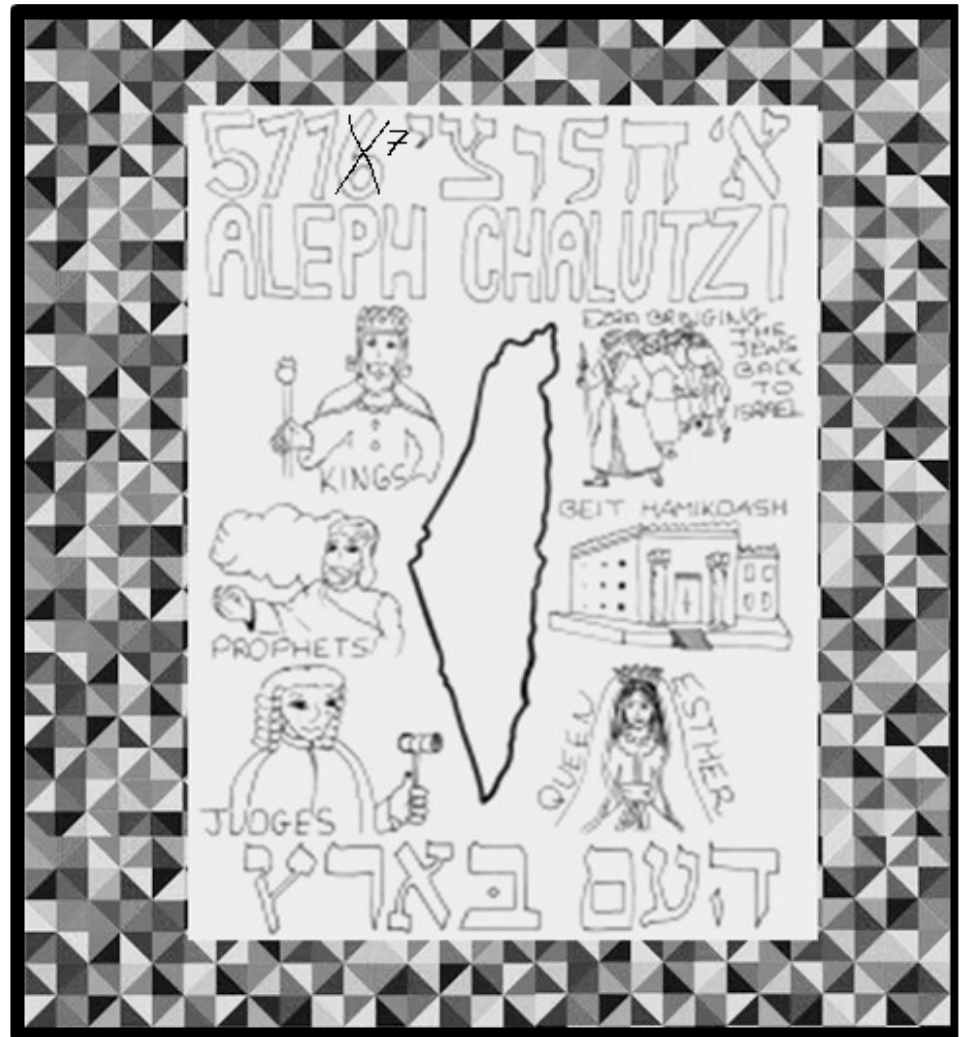
Like we do right here on machane, the Tanach doesn't educate us by giving us a long list of rules, but rather teaches us through role models to be role models! Yes, we have all the mitzvot that appear in commandment form in the Torah, but first and foremost comes the stories of our ancestors and their deeds, from the good qualities to their not so good qualities, through walking in their footsteps and following the example they led for us we see how we should live our lives as Jews.

K0.5. is your opportunity to get over some basics of this principle, the importance of Am, Eretz and Torah and how Tanach is a guidebook to learn these messages from and how we will see these messages are all relevant and have parallels for us today.

Get creative. This is your chance to teach and inspire.

K1: Yehoshua

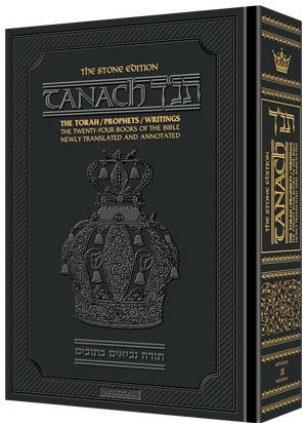
Aleph Chalutz Machane 5776



Aims:

1. To understand the history of Yehoshua (Joshua) and his wars
2. Discuss the prioritisation of hishtadlut as opposed to bitachon
3. Ethics of war (then and now)

Intro



Sefer Yehoshua (the book of Joshua) depicts the triumphant emergence of Bnei Yisrael into Eretz Yisrael. After years in limbo wandering the desert, the Bnei Yisrael are finally ready to experience HaShem's fulfilment of His earlier promise to deliver them into their own land; with Eretz Yisrael comes the final, solidifying part of the Jewish national identity. At first, you might think Sefer Yehoshua is nothing more than a long and technical catalogue of battles, which has limited relevance to our lives today. It's true that war is a central theme of Sefer Yehoshua,

and its portrayal provides both the history of Eretz Yisrael and a treatise on the ethics of war.

Military strategy

Hishtadlut is defined as the effort which we are required to exert in order to make things happen in our lives. **Bitachon** is putting our faith in HaShem to help us out.

Just trusting in HaShem and expecting him to do all the legwork isn't enough. Sefer Yehoshua demonstrates this necessity for Hishtadlut within a military context (though this could apply to anything); throughout the Sefer we see Yehoshua implementing effective military strategies, discussing battle tactics with the people and being instructed in warfare by HaShem. In other words, Yehoshua put the effort in to know the business of war, he didn't expect God to do it all for him.

Then, like in Israel today, it was not enough simply to pray for military success and expect HaShem to perform miracles but rather Bnei Yisrael had to put in the Hishtadlut.

Yehoshua starts off his military mission even before the Bnei Yisrael cross the Jordan to enter Israel by sending Calev and Pinchas as spies to scout out Yericho. He sets a precedent of Hishtadlut for all future military action; even though at the opening of the Sefer, HaShem repeatedly reassures Yehoshua: (1:9) **כי עִמָּךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ, בְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר תֵּלֵךְ** - Because HaShem your G-d is with you wherever you go.

Yehoshua still does not stroll casually across the border, but instead cautiously appraises the situation in Yericho through tactical espionage. The in-depth strategic planning that Yehoshua engages in can be particularly seen regarding the ambush at Ai (One example of a victory see Perek 8).

From the beginning of Sefer Yehoshua, Bnei Yisrael could no longer rely solely upon HaShem for their food and water but would now have to also work for it as straight after entering the land and offering up the Korban Pesach the Manna stopped falling. Each of these transitions happened

Hadracha Hot Tip
Get your chanichim to write down as many facts as they can about Yehoshua. Let them struggle for a bit! Use this as a trigger to talk about his importance and role



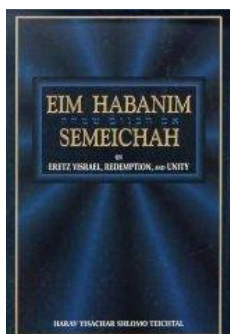
K1: Yehoshua

one battle at a time slowly the Bnei Yisrael became more active instead of solely relying on HaShem. Thus, **Hishtadlut** is a theme of Sefer Yehoshua - not just in the context of wars, but in all areas of life, Bnei Yisrael were made to transition to a world in which they had to provide for themselves.

Despite emphasising the importance of Hishtadlut, the message of Sefer Yehoshua is not that we only get something when we put the effort in. Actually, we only get what we want when we put the effort in **and** HaShem allows us to succeed.

The idea of faith in HaShem as a key component of success is expressed as **Bitachon** (יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּטַח בַּה' עֲזָרָם וּמִגָּן הוּא). Thus in one of the most important books of Religious Zionist thought, Eim HaBanim Semeichah, Rav Yissachar Shlomo Teichtal says:

“HaShem commanded two things to Yehoshua. First, to be strong and courageous in war...Second...G-d introduces the concept of strength and courage in Torah; to keep and perform all that Moshe commanded in the holy Torah... the Mabit... writes that in reality Yehoshua was supposed to conquer the Land through war in the natural fashion. Therefore, he attacked with troops and force. However, the Holy One Blessed be He explained to him that his success in conquering the Land was mainly dependent on maintaining Torah study and the performance of mitzvoth, rather than mere military force....although it is necessary for you to be strong and courageous in battle, the main emphasis must be upon strengthening Torah observance....If we follow the ways of the Torah, as our forefathers did, we will succeed. Yet, if we stray from their path and cease to keep the Torah and its mitzvoth, G-d forbid, we have absolutely no portion in our forefather's inheritance. We would be unsuccessful in conquering the Land, for it



לא-יִמוּשׁ סֵפֶר הַתּוֹרָה הַזֶּה מִפִּיךָ, וְהִגִּיתְבוּ יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה

‘This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth,
but you shall meditate therein day and night’

would not be rightfully ours.”

Sefer Yehoshua also emphasises the importance of learning Torah whenever possible:

The enduring message of Sefer Yehoshua is that Bnei Yisrael's military endeavours will only succeed if that is in accordance with the Divine Will, and HaShem wills that we keep the Torah.



1:7. Just be strong and very courageous to observe and do in accordance with all of the Torah that Moses My servant has commanded you. Do not stray there from right or left, in order that you succeed wherever you go.

Which is easier: Hishtadlut or Bitachon?

Are there situations where we might need to focus on one more than another?

Applications of Hishtadlut and Bitachon

One way of interpreting Hishtadlut and Bitachon in the military sphere of Sefer Yehoshua is the combination of study of Torah with fighting in the army. This issue is seen today within the Hesder Yeshiva programme. Hesder literally means arrangement; it signifies an arrangement between Yeshivot and the government that religious boys will over 5 years spend approximately 1.4 years army - 3.6 years yeshiva.



The case for hesder rests, then, upon several simple assumptions.

First, during the formative years, a ben Torah should be firmly rooted in a pre-eminently Torah climate, this being crucially important both for his personal spiritual development and for the future of a nation in critical need of broadly based spiritual commitment and moral leadership. Second, the defence of Israel is an ethical and halachic imperative - be it because, as we believe, the birth of the state was a momentous historical event and its preservation of great spiritual significance or because, even failing that, the physical survival of its three million plus (figure from 1981) Jewish inhabitants is at stake. Third, in light of the country's current military needs - and these should admittedly be reassessed periodically - yeshiva students should participate in its defence, both by undergoing basic and specialized training, thus becoming part of the reserves against the possibility, God forbid, of war, and by performing some actual service even during some period of uneasy peace...

Although stateless centuries have tended to obscure this fact - hesder has been the traditional Jewish way...what were the milieu of Moshe Rabbenu, of Yehoshua, of David, of Rabbi Akiva, as Hazal conceived and described them, but yeshivothesder?...The halachic rationale for hesder rather rests upon a) the simple need for physical survival and b) the fact that military service is often the fullest manifestation of a far broader value: g'miluthasadim, the empathetic concern for others and action on their behalf...When, as in contemporary Israel, the greatest single hesedone can perform is helping to defend his fellows' very lives, the implications for yeshiva education should be obvious...



Rav Aharon Lichtenstein א"צ, **Rosh Yeshiva, Yeshivat Har Etzion**

Meanwhile, Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky claimed during Operation Pillar of Defence in 2012 that no rockets would hit Bnei Brak because the people of that city study the Torah.

K1: Yehoshua

Secular Jews outnumber religious in Israel; shouldn't religious boys be devoting their time to learning Torah and helping the army that way? On the other hand, is it right that Hesder soldiers serve only half the time that everyone else does?



Q. Do you think that Hesder is the best way of integrating Torah observance with military service?

Q. Who has the best integration of Hishtadlut and Bitachon – Rav Lichtenstein or Rav Kanievsky?

Can we think of situations in our own lives where Hishtadlut is important?
#Tanachisrelevanttoourlives

1. What about revising for a test? Is it better to Daven and trust in Hashem #Bitachon or to revise yourself #Hishtadlut.
2. What about with health and safety? Do you Walk out your house and cross the road and hope for best or do you look both ways?
3. The auv who was drownina storv

Ethics of war

The peaceful reign of Shlomo Hamelech with its stable diplomatic relations is generally regarded as a high point in Jewish history, and we look forward the coming of moshiach who will bring world peace. So why does Sefer Yehoshua document so many wars?

We recognise that there are certain occasions where it is necessary and justified for the Bnei Yisrael to go to war.

On a halachic level, permissible wars are classified into two categories: '**milchemet mitzvah**' – obligatory war – and '**milchemet reshut**' – optional war.

The Rambam defines the categories:

Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Melachim u'Milchamot 5:1

A king should not initiate war unless it is milchemet mitzvah (an Obligatory War). And what is an Obligatory War? This is a war against the seven nations (see Deut. 7:1), war against Amalek, or to assist Israel from trouble that has come upon them (see Num. 10:9). Secondly, one can fight milchemet rishut (a Permitted War), which is a war fought against any other people in order to expand the borders of Israel or to increase [the king's] greatness and reputation

In the first Perek of Sefer Yehoshua, HaShem tells Yehoshua to take the Jewish people and lead them in conquering Eretz Yisrael by vanquishing its inhabitants:

As Jews, we do not glorify war for its own sake, Yehoshua's wars were considered 'milchemet mitzva' because HaShem

K1: Yehoshua

commanded them and because were against the seven nations spoken of by the Rambam.

Equally, a war fought in self-defence is a milchemet mitzva as it is an obligation to defend one's self. The ability to wage effective and devastating warfare in Yehoshua's time was necessary not just to conquer the land but as a deterrent to prevent other nations from attacking the Bnei Yisrael.

Q: Are all of the wars fought by the modern State of Israel considered Milchamot Mitzva? If so, do we all have an obligation to serve in the IDF?

We see from this that a fearsome military reputation was the best defence against enemies. Rachav betrays her Canaanite nation to help Pinchas & Calev because she, like the rest of the world, heard of the Jews' exodus from Egypt & their victory over the Amorites; she tells the spies how scared her people are of their reputation.

Sefer Yehoshua also indicates the need for ethics in war. We repeatedly see Bnei Yisrael acting in an ethical manner towards their enemies. Yehoshua fights with a purpose, attacking only the cities that HaShem instructs him to & he follows HaShem's battle plans to the last detail. He does not take the spoils of war when indicated not to by HaShem. We also see that he does not fight just for the sake of fighting but would rather make peace when he can (as long as the allies accept upon themselves the 7 Noachide laws).

In fact at the battle of Jericho G-d warned that anyone taking spoils from Jericho would "make the camp of Israel liable to destruction and bring trouble on it" (Joshua 6:18-19). Achan disobeyed & stole a beautiful robe, some gold and silver and hid these things in his tent. G-D commanded that Achan and his entire family and all his possessions be destroyed.

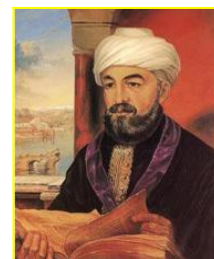
K1: Yehoshua

For example, he made a peace treaty with the Givonim (Gibeonites) whom he thought were from a faraway land. It turns out, however, that they were not from a far away land but tricked Yehoshua into making a treaty with them. Although conceivably Yehoshua could have annulled this treaty, seeing that it was made under false pretences, he decides to honour it, because the Israelite's honourable reputation was a Kiddush HaShem, and by perpetuating it a further Kiddush HaShem would be achieved. In fact he even goes to fight in defence of the Givonim when the other nations attack them for making a treaty with Bnei Yisrael.

Rachav too, is shown ethical conduct as she makes the spies swear an oath not to harm her family when they conquer Jericho, which they honour.

Instead of bursting into the cities and attacking without warning, the Bnei Yisrael were given specific instructions to engage in diplomatic negotiations first, and offer the foreign nations three choices:

1. Accept the absolute sovereignty of Israel and whatever designation and position Israel would grant them.
2. Leave the land and settle elsewhere.
3. Refuse to be subject to Israel, refuse to leave, and be destroyed.



As Rambam says in Hilchot Melachim U'Milchamot:

Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Melachim u'Milchamot 6:1

One should not make war against anyone until first calling out to them for peace, whether in the case of a Permitted War or in an Obligatory War, as it says: When you come upon a city to make war upon it, you shall call out to it for peace (Deut. 20:10).

While other nations in Yehoshua's time (and today) wage war for greed or power, taking pleasure in violently pillaging cities and abusing inhabitants, the Jewish people were expected to understand that conquering Eretz Yisrael was about serving HaShem and ridding the land of Avodah Zara so that they could settle in it, and not about personal glory or wealth.

HaShem's commandment that the spoils of Yericho should be not touched by Bnei Yisrael but rather consecrated for Avodas HaShem is a perfect symbol of this and Achan's transgression of the command reveals a fundamental misunderstanding of why



A leader who doesn't hesitate before sending their nation into battle is not fit to be a leader.



Bnei Yisrael were waging war.

K1: Yehoshua

Q: Can war ever be justified halachically?

"Saving a life overrides the commandments of the entire Torah ... Desecrate one Sabbath on his account so that he may keep many Sabbaths" (Yoma 85b).

The IDF today

The ethics of war that we learn from Yehoshua are no less relevant now than they were in the times of Yehoshua.

What did the IDF do in Gaza to meet their obligation to operate within the laws of war?



“During the whole operation Israel was very careful under all the limitations of international law. Even if there were exceptions, there were very few and in cases when there was no possibility, and there was no intention to hurt civilians.” According to Kemp, Israel had legitimization, under international law, to strike hospitals, schools and places of religious worship that were being used to store weapons or launch missiles. The legality of hitting such a site, risking civilian lives, is “a difficult question for anyone to answer,” Kemp said, one that a commander on the ground or ordering an air strike would have to answer in the moment.

“The guiding principles within the laws of armed conflict relate to necessity and proportionality. If it’s a hospital that has civilians, but it’s also being used, let’s say, as a command centre” he said, making a reference to Gaza City’s Shifa Hospital, “then the person making the decision will have to say ‘I reckon I will kill 30-40 civilians but I will remove a significant command centre, which will bring the collapse of the enemy.’” In other words, he explained the commander has to “justify that the military value of the attack is worth the death of civilians” and that Britain and America make decisions in the same way.

As for legal advisers’ omnipresence in the IDF, Kemp said the situation is the same for the UK and the US, quipping that “the law is everywhere.”

He said that, in any case, commanders should have enough knowledge of the law to make their own decisions, and lawyers often don’t give a clear-cut answer as to the legality of an action.

“It’s dangerous and a great concern. I think Britain is waking up to it now,” he said.

Kemp pointed out that, during the operation, there was approximately one civilian casualty for every terrorist killed by the IDF, whereas the average in the world is four civilians for every combatant, and that, when taking into consideration Hamas’s use of human shields, this shows how careful the IDF is.

“No army in the world acts with as much discretion and great care as the IDF in order to minimize damage. The US and the UK are careful, but not as much as Israel,” he told.

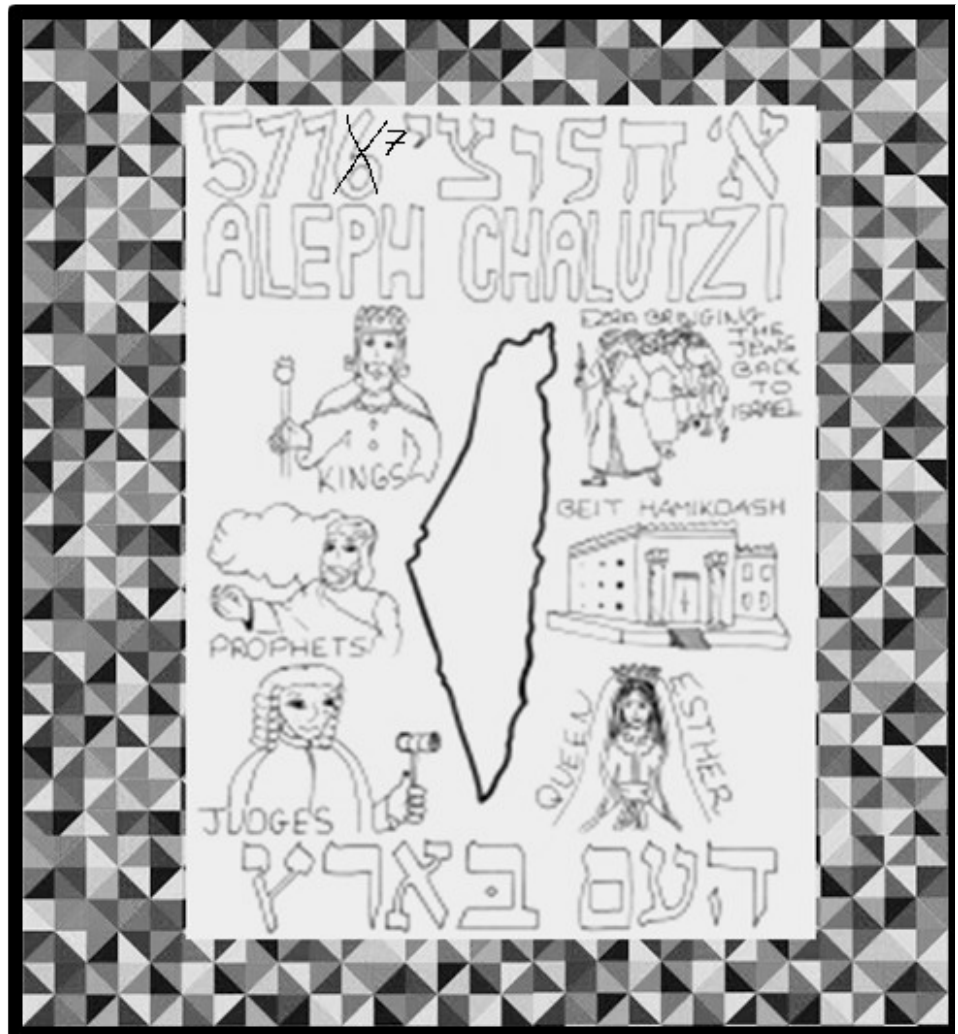
“Ultimately our strength is not solely our military power. That’s part of our strength. The strength of the Jewish people in the State of Israel and the Land of Israel is first and foremost our profound moral strength. Everything stems from that. If we were to lower our standards, not to find a solution that meets the highest ethical standards, that would be a mistake with far more immense significance for us as a nation, a state, and a people, than the operational error.” Eliezer Shkedi

Q: What are the ethical standards we learn from Yehoshua? To what extent should they dictate the attitude of the modern State of Israel towards warfare?

Q: War. Huh. Yeah. What is it good for?



K2: Shoftim (Judges)



Aims:

1. To discuss lessons we ourselves can learn from the Shoftim
2. To know the disastrous cycle of Sefer Shoftim
3. To discuss Devorah as the only female judge
4. To look at what lessons of leadership we can take and what leadership opportunities are there for our Chanichim?

Introduction

Before we look at the Sefer itself we should note the following. The word Shofet means judge or ruler yet it seems that the key role of a Shofet was to lead Bnei Yisrael into battle to save them from the hands of their enemies and then to keep peace. The only Shofet we are told of that seems to actually judge the people was Devorah HaNevia. Perhaps it would be more accurate to call the Shofet an Aluf (General).



Sefer Yehoshua tells us of Am Yisrael's conquering of Eretz Yisrael and Shoftim picks up where it left off, starting with Yehoshua's passing. However, while the narrative of *Sefer Yehoshua* focuses on Yehoshua (as its name would suggest), *Sefer Shoftim* covers a period of almost four hundred years; from the preliminary attempts by the tribes to secure their allotted lands until the eve of the monarchy centuries later. It strings together many different episodes concerning different Shoftim, some of whom are afforded only a few passukim, while others - such as Devorah, Shimshon and Gidon - are paid more attention to. Sefer Shoftim was written by Shmuel HaNavi who lived after the time period of the Shoftim he writes about. Furthermore, Sefer Shoftim is not written chronologically but rather aims to convey a specific prophetic message to both the people in the time of Shmuel AND all of its future readers. This is done via a cyclical structure that can be summarised in the following steps:

1. Bnei Yisrael live comfortably in peace.
2. They become arrogant and complacent, forgetting their strength comes from G- d.
3. They go off the derech - sexual immorality, Avodah zara (reliance on powers other than G-d) - you name it, they did it.
4. HaShem punishes the people by allowing their oppressors to attack them.
5. They cry out to HaShem through prayer.
6. HaShem has mercy and sends a prophet to save them.
7. Am Yisrael recognise that HaShem has saved them and subsequently do teshuva.
8. HaShem rewards them and they live comfortably and materially wealthy in peace...and the cycle starts again....



The period of the *Shoftim* was perhaps the most turbulent in all of Biblical history, as the people of Israel struggled mightily to lay the foundations of their state in the shadow of very powerful and corrosive cultural and moral threats.

Now, Sefer Yehoshua appears to imply that the entire country was conquered:

Yehoshua 11:23: **'So Joshua took the whole land**, according to all that the L-RD spoke unto Moses; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto

K2: Shoftim (Judges)

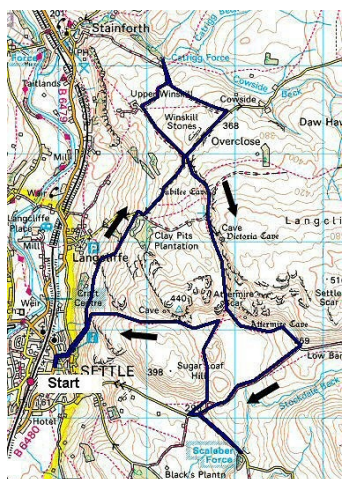
Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. And the land had rest from war.'

Yehoshua 21:41 So the L-RD gave unto Israel **all the land** which He swore to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein.

K2: Shoftim (Judges)

However, this wasn't quite the case. Even though Am Yisrael conquered and occupied E"Y on a large scale, there were still idolatrous nations living among them. Additionally, Bnei Yisrael didn't actually complete the conquest of the land during the time of Yehoshua [Yehoshua 13:1-5, 18:3, 23:3-13.] After a generation or two, these populations intermingled with Am Yisrael. Cultural exchanges began, sometimes even leading to intermarriage. Bnei Yisrael began to learn and follow the local customs. When farmers needed rain, they were told about a Baal god who could 'deliver the goods' (does anyone have a problem with that??)

"It was only a matter of time, but instead of conquering the land, the 'land' (and its culture) had conquered them." Rav Leibtag



Even though they **conquered** much land under Yehoshua (with HaShem's help!) by the time of the Shoftim they still had to **settle** the land; each Tribe had the responsibility of reinforcing its grip on its own nachala (inheritance/ property) and ridding the land of Avodah Zara (idolatry). For example, in 1967 Israel conquered the whole of Sinai, West Bank, Gaza, Jerusalem, Golan Heights etc. But all that meant was that our soldiers ran through it and conquered it. It still wasn't settled. As we learned in the last kvutsa, HaShem's miracles enabled the Bnei Yisrael to conquer the land initially, but the people now had to take their own initiative and put in Hishtadlut (loosely translated as effort) in order to fight and rid their land of the other nations' corrupting influences.

Unfortunately, as Sefer Shoftim makes clear, either way, Bnei Yisrael were unsuccessful in completing the conquering of the land; the phrase 'these Tribes were not able to kick out the other nations' recurs disapprovingly throughout the Sefer. We have already looked at the ethics of Jewish warfare in K1 and seen how the Jewish people first offered the other nations the option to live in peace in E"Y rather than fighting them - but this was on condition that the nation in question agreed to live by the 7 Noachide laws.

The nations in Sefer Shoftim that Am Yisrael failed to drive out continued to practice Avodah Zara - which back then included such terrible things as child sacrifices and immoral, sexual rituals in the service of *ba'al peor*, *molech* etc. The continued presence of such Avodah Zara was a real danger to the spiritual health of the Jewish people, always threatening to influence them, just as idolatrous nations had so detrimentally influenced the Bnei Yisrael in the past.

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A crisis of leadership

תלמוד בבלי בבא בתרא טו ע"ב איזה דור שכולו הבל? הוי אומר: זה דורו של שפוט שופטים

Bava Batra 15b: "Which is the generation of foolishness? The generation of the Shoftim."

The scathing attitude of Chazal towards this period in our history is a reflection of the lack of leadership. Comparing Sefer Yehoshua and Sefer Shoftim. Both Sefarim open with the death of the previous leader and the necessity for a new one. In Sefer Yehoshua, Yehoshua clearly succeeds Moshe as HaShem promises him to be with him as He was with Moshe. But in Sefer Shoftim, there is no clear successor and therein lay a problem, there was no one to unify the tribes on a national level and direct them as to how best to conquer the rest of Eretz Yisrael. The Shofet would enter once Bnei Yisrael had hit trouble.

If HaShem only sent Shoftim when Bnei Yisrael cry out under subjugation, was having a Shofet ruling an ideal situation or a non-ideal situation i.e. had Bnei Yisrael rid Eretz Yisrael of Avoda Zara properly would they have needed a Shofet?

In Shmuel, the people beg for a king in order to renew national unity and provide strong leadership like the other nations had, but Shmuel the Navi was very reluctant to anoint one for them.

G-D's plan was for Bnei Yisrael to conquer the Land of Israel in order to establish a "Goy Kadosh" - a 'holy nation' that would keep His laws, and by doing so, serve as His 'model' nation that would represent Him before all mankind. [See Devarim 4:5-8.]

Even though Bnei Yisrael had successfully conquered major areas of Eretz Cana'an (see Sefer Yehoshua), they were far less successful in establishing this ideal nation. In Sefer Shoftim we find how the spiritual character of the nation during this time period falls short of God's original expectations.



To appreciate any sefer, it's important to understand when, by whom, and for what purpose it was written. Chazal tell us that Sefer Shoftim was written by Shmuel. Implying the sefer was written AFTER its events had happened. Even though this is a very simple point, it is important to note we usually understand "nevuah" as foreseeing 'future' events, rather than recording events that had already transpired.

But this is the point of Sefer Shoftim: Shmuel reviews (and analyses) the events that had taken place since the time of Yehoshua, not to predict what will happen, but in order that all future generations of Jews (**including us**) will learn a lesson from what did happen. He emphasises the vacuum left by Yehoshua and anticipates Bnei Yisrael's desire to anoint a king and remedy



K2: Shoftim (Judges)

the anarchy that resulted from no strong leadership. However, the way in which they ask for this Kingship needs to be rectified and some suggest that Sefer shoftim was written to show Shmuel's generation that reliance and trust in G-d was above all else.

"In those days there was no king in Israel, so each man did as he saw fit..." (Shoftim 21:25)

A brief look at some of them

Let's take a quick look at 4 of the Shoftim. (See Extra Chomer for more info):

The 'good' shoftim	The 'not so good' shoftim
<p style="text-align: center;">Gidon</p> <p>From Shevet Menashe, successful military leader and what 'spiritual' leader. Rules over all of and Bnei Yisrael for 40 years</p> <p>He is very humble, nervous and has low self-esteem as a leader. He needs signs and encouragement at every step of the way. He cares about the nation and HaShem will help him realize his potential to be a great leader. Gidon transforms into a strong leader by actualising the potential that was in him with some help from HaShem. In fact he is such a great leader Bnei Yisrael ask him to be their King. But Gidon's modesty and love for HaShem prevents him from accepting</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Avimelech</p> <p>Avimelech is the only self-appointed Shofet!! He is NOT appointed by HaShem! And his Melucha is self-appointed too over a non Jewish city - Shechem, not the entire nation. This is the opposite of what is supposed to happen. He Kills his 70 brothers to take power.</p> <p>We see Avimelech as the opposite of Gidon. Avimelech's story is horrible and is the beginning of the downfall of Am Yisrael depicted in Sefer Shoftim (it only gets worse from here).</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Devorah (& Barak)</p> <p>From Shevet Ephraim, successful military conquest led by Barak with Devorah, a Nevia who also Judged the people. Did not rule over all of Bnei Yisrael just 6 Shvatim for 40 years.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Shimshon</p> <p>Shimshon ruled Israel for 20 years. His rule was full of ill judgment and; pursuit of female pleasure. He appears arrogant playing tricks on people and inciting hatred against him. He doesn't seem to care about Am Yisrael and he does not even come to their defence rather they have to come to him. On the other hand he seems dedicated to his parents and HaShem seems to be with him in numerous situations.</p>

The terrible state that Am Yisrael is in by the end of Sefer Shoftim becomes clear as the last three stories of Sefer Shoftim unfold. In each story the following phrase repeats itself...it appears 4 times: "In those days there was no King in Israel (and each man did what was right in his eyes)." (**Shoftim 17:6, 18:1, 19:1, 21:25**). Shmuel HaNavi, in the way he writes Sefer Shoftim, is indicating the need for a King in Israel which then leads thematically into Sefer Shmuel and the introduction of Malchut - Kingship, in Israel. More of that in K3 though.

Devorah

Remember our Cycle, Well Devorah first appears in perek 4. Bnei Yisrael have sinned ... AGAIN and are being attacked by King Yabin of Canaan from the city of Hazor – a new enemy. Before Bnei Yisrael were fighting external enemies, e.g Moav, Now they were fighting **Canaan**. They were an internal nation, which the Bnei Yisrael were supposed to conquer. Hazor was their main city, there are a lot of archeological digs there. Canaan was the local superpower in the Middle East, much more technologically advanced than Am Israel, e.g they had iron chariots. As a result of not finishing the Kibush (conquest) properly, the Bnei Yisrael were under attack by the Canaanites, lead by general Sisera and it was up to Devorah to bring the people to victory.



So who is Devorah?

Devorah is the only Shofet(et) to be called a Neviah and to actually engage in judging the people. The text also calls her “eshet lapidot” – literally wife of torches, upon which the Mefarshim comment:

- **Rashi** : Lapid means wicks – Devorah made wicks for the mikdash
- **Ralbag**: A. Lapid means lightening, which refers to Barak i.e. simply she was Barak’s wife. B. Devorah was an Eshet Chayil, a gibor, and had high level of neviah which appeared like lightening – lapid.
- **Metzudat David**: Devorah was an Eshet Chayil, strong like lightening (lapid).



Devorah is thus presented as a very strong leader and it is her, not her husband Barak, who is the main focus. She is also a ‘fiery’ speaker, which clearly shown when she tries to persuade Barak to go and fight, and also later on in the next perek, in her Shirah, with her “charif” criticism of the shevatim who do not come and fight.

It is important to note that this episode in Sefer Shoftim displays leadership that arrives from **unlikely sources**.

Devorah was a female judge directing the people in war during a time period where it was uncommon for women to be leaders – particularly military leaders. Devorah had to step up and take control because there were no male candidates able to assume leadership. The manner of Devorah’s leadership was also unusual as she did not want to follow the typical formula of a Shofet and only act as a military leader; instead Devorah tries to convince Barak to be the military saviour in this story and do the fighting alone (ultimately, he refuses to do it without her) while she preferred to lead and guide from the sidelines.



"Yes, we teach it here, but I doubt if 'Women's Studies' is what you think it is."

K2: Shoftim (Judges)

Why would Devorah have preferred this role? Perhaps she felt it pragmatically advantageous to keep military guidance – Barak – separate from spiritual guidance – herself – or perhaps because a background role was more ‘tzanua’, more in keeping with the traditional role associated with the Jewish woman...We see that Devorah judged the people under a palm tree out in the open. The fact that the people travelled to her rather than vice versa displays the degree of respect they held for her, while the outdoor setting ensured that she would avoid any potential difficulties presented by having to meet men one-on-one indoors.

Devorah did not struggle with the potential clash between her vocation as a Shofet and her gender but rather used her feminine nature in order to empower herself and be successful in the responsibilities HaShem gave her. During her shira, Devorah sings: **‘I arose a mother in Israel’**. Of course she was far more than just a mother: she was a judge; a warrior; a prophetess and a role model for our own generation, for all women looking to define themselves and fulfill their own potential. But Devorah’s choice of ‘mother’ to symbolise herself reflects her maternal attitude towards Bnei Yisrael and her selfless and brave conduct as she commits to leading them to victory against the fearsome Canaanites. At a time when Bnei Yisroel had a distinct lack of men able to lead the people, it is the female Devorah, motivated by considering herself ‘the mother of Israel’, who steps up to save the day. As it says in Pirkei Avos, **‘Bemakom she’eino ish - tishtadel lehiyot ish’** [or, in this case, lihiyot Isha!].



The theme of valiant females continues down the perek as General Sisera flees the battle to the apparent comfort of Yael’s tent, where she lures him into a deep sleep before using a tent peg to drive a tent peg through his head. Again we see unlikely characters using unlikely methods: Yael doesn’t fight with



conventional weapons but uses a tent peg and milk to kill Sisera, not a sword.

It is of course to their credit that these women were able to overcome the challenges before them and use their own unconventional talents to do so, but it still reinforces the reality that Bnei Yisroel lacked a proper leader to guide them in the conventional manner of Moshe or Yehoshua. Nevertheless, under Devorah’s leadership they conquered Emek Yizrael, a very important territory and dwelled in peace for 40 years.

Q. What does the story of Devorah teach us about women’s role in Judaism? Do we have female leaders like Devorah today? Should we?

Q. Think back to the cycle of the Shoftim: Jews bad - get attacked - HaShem saves. Can we see a resemblance in the



trajectory of Medinat Yisrael's history? What lessons can we relate from then to now?

Lessons we can learn

From our Shoftim we can learn a variety of leadership lessons, have faith in HaShem, act for the people not for yourself. A leader leads the people to where they want to go, not use the people to lead him/her to where they want to go. A leader is appointed by HaShem. A leader (or anyone for that matter) shouldn't extort power. There are ways to gain power, killing your brothers isn't one of them!

Q. What Leadership opportunities can we/our Chanichim can aspire to?

It's all about being as proactive as possible. Be the person who volunteers, whether it be in a chesed project at school, youth service/school Gabbai. Enacting on their own initiatives, becoming Hadracha/Technical Madrichim at Sviva/Machane, being Roshim/Sganim, and taking whatever responsibility is needed. Beyond that anything is possible, there are many Bnei Akiva Bogrim who are Mayors, Project Managers, top Business people, Top Bankers Estate agents, Big Political players and Ambassadors. It all starts with being leader from as young as possible.

Q. Think back to the cycle of the Shoftim: Jews bad - get attacked - HaShem saves. Can we see a resemblance in the trajectory of Medinat Yisrael's history? What lessons can we relate from then to now?

Extra chomer and info about some of the personalities found in Sefer Shoftim

The 'good' shoftim

ShimsHon ben Manoach:

Shimshon seems to be destined to be a leader even before his birth. The Sefer describes how Shimshon's mother was barren but then a Malach appeared to her and told her she will have a son. Also already from the womb her son will be dedicated to HaShem as a Nazir.

However, although Shimshon seems to have very lofty origins his actions in adulthood are a bit puzzling and somewhat inappropriate for a leader of Israel and a Nazir.

We see numerous times that HaShem gave him supernatural strength that he is able to kill lions and 1000 men with the jaw bone of an ass. However, he seems to only use this supernatural strength to serve his own needs i.e. when he is in a life threatening situation. He does not use this strength to gather Bnei Yisrael in an army and save them from the subjugation of the Plishtim (who have been ruling them for over 40 years).

Hadracha Hot Tip

Perhaps explore how today's society relate to its leaders? Who do our Chanichim see as leaders? What do people want most from their leaders?

K2: Shoftim (Judges)

On the other hand he is very caring towards his parents although maybe a little over protective. For example he doesn't tell him that he beat the lions or where the honey he gave them came from (the carcass of the lion he killed).

Although he has physical strength he seems very naïve about women. First he falls in love with a non-Jewish woman whom he wishes to marry. Her family, however, do not accept him and they force his wife to betray him. Later he goes to a harlot which again gets him into trouble with the Plishtim. Then he falls in love with Delila which is eventually his downfall. Shimshon did not learn from his mistakes. She uses her power over him to force him to divulge the source of his strength which she then betrays to her brethren the Plishtim and they capture him, finally.

We also see that Shimshon was a bit arrogant. During the post-wedding feast to his (first) wife he bets her family that they can't guess a certain hard riddle. When they cannot get it, they all get angry and a whole series of events unfold which in the end get his wife murdered.

Again we see that Shimshon does not recognise the consequences of his actions. When he goes to visit this harlot after his wife's death the Plishtim use this as an excuse to chase after him. He escapes them and goes to hide in the mountains. So instead the Plishtim threaten to attack Shevet Yehuda. Shimshon does not come to their aid, he does not seem to care that he put Am Yisrael in danger. It is Shevet Yehuda who comes and convinces him to do the right thing, take responsibility and give himself up to save them, especially as he has super strength and is able to save himself from the hands of the Plishtim.

Yet he never seems to take his super strength for granted and he never deliberately puts himself in dangerous situations (from what he can see) and then rely on HaShem giving him super strength to get himself out of them. In addition, HaShem obviously gave him super strength for a reason.

When he was finally captured and blinded by the Plishtim he prays to HaShem to give him strength one last time and then sacrifices his own life to kill many Plishtim:

ים, וְאַנְקָמָה נִקְמ־אָחַת מִשְׁתִּי עֵינַי, אֲדַבְּרֶנּוּ הַ יְזַכְּרֶנּוּ נָא וְיִזְכְּרֶנּוּ נָא אֶךְ הַפְּעַם הַזֶּה, הָאֵל מִפְּלִשְׁתִּים “Please remember me and give me strength just this once, HaShem, so I will be able to take revenge on the Plishtim, if only for one of my eyes.”

(Shoftim 16:28)

Shimshon ruled Israel for 20 years. His rule was full of ill judgment; one could say even selfish pursuit of female pleasure; he appears arrogant playing tricks on people and inciting hatred against him. He seems trusting to a fault or just naïve. He doesn't seem to care about Am Yisrael as his actions lead directly to the attack of his people and he does not even come to their defence rather they have to come to him to and drag him to give himself up. On the other hand he seems dedicated to his parents and HaShem seems to be with him giving him strength in

K2: Shoftim (Judges)

numerous situations even at the end when it seems HaShem has left him HaShem seems to help Shimshon with his last request.

The failure of Shimshon as leader is reflective of the failure of the Am Yisrael. If this is how the leader behaves, one that seems to have been chosen by HaShem, how much worse must the people be?

Gidon ben Yoash

We see that Gidon is very humble. When the Malach first comes to Gidon to charge him with a mission he doesn't think he can do it - who am I? A kid in the smallest Shevet - I am a nobody! He says (Shoftim 6:15). To make sure HaShem is really talking to him Gidon asks for two signs to happen - one from the Malach - proving that this whole thing is true - with the fire going on the Mizbeach. When HaShem asks him to destroy his father's idol Gidon is afraid to take charge without this sign. In fact even after the sign he still won't break the idol alone and gets 10 men to help him, and even with back up" they are scared to do it during the day and go at night (Shoftim 6:27). However, he did still do what HaShem asked of him despite his fear. In the morning, Gidon gets in trouble but instead of standing up for himself, for what he did or for HaShem his father bails him out. Gidon appears weak and passive here. In Pasuk 12 the Malach greeted Gidon by calling him a Gibor Chayil, but really he's only a Gibor in the eyes of HaShem, not in the eyes of himself, or the people, or his father. His potential needs to be actualized.

Then Gidon gets Nevuah again- "ve ruach HaShem livsha et Gidon". HaShem tells him to fight the enemy so Gidon starts to gather an army. However, he only gets some of the tribes to come and join him (again showing disunity amongst Bnei Yisrael). Gidon's insecurities return and he asks for new sign from HaShem. Now that he has troops to look after he has added responsibility - is he getting stage fright again. He asks for one sign and HaShem gives it to him. However, he doubts it because what he asked for could also occur naturally in nature. So he asks for a second sign and now he wants something totally against nature to happen. This may be to see if HaShem will help him win also in a miraculous way. HaShem grants him the sign showing He will help him.

Gidon is very nervous and has low self-esteem as a leader. He needs signs and encouragement at every step of the way. But the potential is there, as we saw in his passionate reply to the Malach. He cares about the nation and HaShem will help him realize his potential to be a great leader. We see this in the way HaShem tells Gidon to fight. Via a series of bizarre tests, HaShem cuts Gidon's already small army (definitely compared to their enemy) to 300 men. Then HaShem gives him a set of militarily genius battle plans. All this may be to a) give confidence to Gidon that he can successfully lead Am Yisrael (with HaShem's help) and b) to remind Bnei Yisrael that wars are won by Emunah in HaShem and not by military might alone. With HaShem's instructions, Gidon finds the confidence in himself to lead Bnei Yisrael to victory.

With his newfound confidence, he starts handing out some harsh Mussar to the cities of Succot and Pnuel, who did not give him and his soldiers

K2: Shoftim (Judges)

any bread on their journey, so he kills them. Gidon transforms into a strong leader by actualising the potential that was in him with some help from HaShem. In fact he is such a great leader Bnei Yisrael ask him to be their King. However, Gidon's modesty and love for HaShem prevents him from accepting answering- "lo emshol ani bacherm ve lo yimshol beni bachem, HaShem yimshol bachem". (Was this the right choice?)

Recap: Actually a great Mashal is Spiderman 2 (don't laugh) where the main character – Spiderman – wants to give up being a superhero and have a normal life. But at the end he realizes that he can't deny the powers that he has, and has to use them to be a leader and help others.

The Not so Good Shoftim:

Avimelech ben Gidon:

Avimelech wants power, so he recruits the relatives of his Pilgish mother in Shechem to fund a take over and make him king.

Gidon's other 70 sons were going to divide the leadership after Gidon's death but Avimelech was the odd man out as the son of a Pilegish. (**Metzudat David**).

Avimelech convinces the people of Shechem to make him ruler over them rather than they have 70 rulers paying them all tax. He even gets them to give him the money they would have given them which he uses to hire people to kill his brothers.

We see Avimelech as the opposite of Gidon.

- Gidon is humble and does not want to be king, Avimelech wants to be king and chases after it – has tremendous ga'avah (even in death).
- Gidon's army sends away people who are not of good character (scared, bowed down to drink), Avimelech recruits evil men (9:4: "anashim reikim vepochazim").
- Gidon cares about the people and makes decisions based on this, Avimelech does everything based on what's good for him and his power.
- Avimelech kills the brothers on a rock, while Gidon sacrifices a korban on a rock.

What makes Avimelech different then all the other Shoftim? Avimelech is the only self-appointed Shofet!! He is NOT appointed by HaShem! And his Melucha is self appointed too over a non Jewish city – Shechem, not the entire nation. This is the opposite of what is supposed to happen.

Avimelech's story is horrible and is the beginning of the downfall of Am Yisrael depicted in Sefer Shoftim (it only gets worse from here).

Mashal Yotam:

Themes:

1. Avimelech is a horrible leader
2. If Gidon had been a king or if good leaders had stepped up this wouldn't have happened.

Yotam, Gidon's only other surviving son, runs to Har Grizim, which was the mountain where the brachot were said (**Devarim 27, 12-13**: "Eleh yaamdu levarech at har grizim, ve'eleh ya'amdu al hakelalal bhar eval"), and gives his Mashal, which is a curse. This shows how backwards everything is, giving a curse on a Bracha mountain, i.e. so too everything is backwards with Avimelech as leader.

The Mashal: Trees are looking for a king but whoever they ask doesn't want to be king. These trees would be suitable leaders if they agreed. But they say no! So it goes to the thorn bush, an unsuitable leader who only causes destruction.

Radak 9:14: The thorn doesn't protect, it causes destruction.

Yalkut Shimoni: Just as thorn has no fruit, Avimelech has no good deeds or leadership traits.

The Nimshal: could be that Avimelech is an evil king (and Gidon losing his sons) is a consequence of Gidon not taking the kingship. (Or his sons not being clear on who would step up and lead).

Abarbanel 9:9: Trees didn't want to give up their jobs to serve the nation. To be a leader you have to give up your personal interests and put the nation first.

Even Yotam doesn't step up to the plate and try to overturn Avimelech, he walks away instead. Gidon could have been king and this wouldn't have happened!! Now they have a terrible king.

Then HaShem causes people of Shechem to reject Avimelech and follow a guy called Ga'al..

Zevul, the leader of Shechem, doesn't like Ga'al so he secretly sends message to Avimelech to come attack the city and get rid of Ga'al. Avimelech comes and to help him win Zevul convinces Ga'al that Avimelech's approaching army are mountains. Then when Ga'al finally catches on Zevul convinces him to fight Avimelech, sending him to his death.

Now you think that would be the end, but Avimelech goes back and despite the fact that Zevul helped him, he wipes out the city of Shechem, then chases down the survivors in Migdal Shechem and kills them all. Then he sows the land with salt so nothing will ever grow there again (what Romans did to Bet Hamikdash and Yerushalayim). Then burns a whole tower of men and women and kills 1000 people!!

Why is he doing this? He wants bitter revenge over all the people who turned on him, even if they returned to his side after. What leadership

K2: Shoftim (Judges)

traits does this show?? We see that Avimelech is all about his personal Kavod. He is going to war for Kavod and revenge, not HaShem or the people. He's the anti-Shofet and anti-Melech!!!

We see Avimelech's Ga'avah and obsession with Kavod (both antithesis to Gidon) in his death. A woman throws a millstone "pelach rechev" on his head and mortally wounding him. He's embarrassed to die in a weird way, not in battle and by a woman so he asks a Na'ar to kill him instead.

Recap: Avimelech is a terrible leader - obsessed with power and honor. He is the total opposite of Gidon.

Yiftach HaGiladi

Yiftach is the son of Gilad and a Zona and therefore is ousted by his brothers. But then when Gilad are threatened by Amon they call on Yiftach, a Gibor Chayil, to help them out. He uses this as an opportunity to get ahead and get power i.e. he only agrees to lead them in battle if they promise to make him ruler over them if he wins. The people of Gilad are desperate and Yiftach plays on their vulnerability to get revenge and to assume power.

Once he has that position he tries to negotiate with Amon instead of fighting and incurring loss of life. We can see this as a commendable trait that he tries to make peace without shedding any blood. Also Gilad are obviously outnumbered it would be better to avoid war all together. Or we could interpret this as laziness. Either way Amon are not interested in making peace.

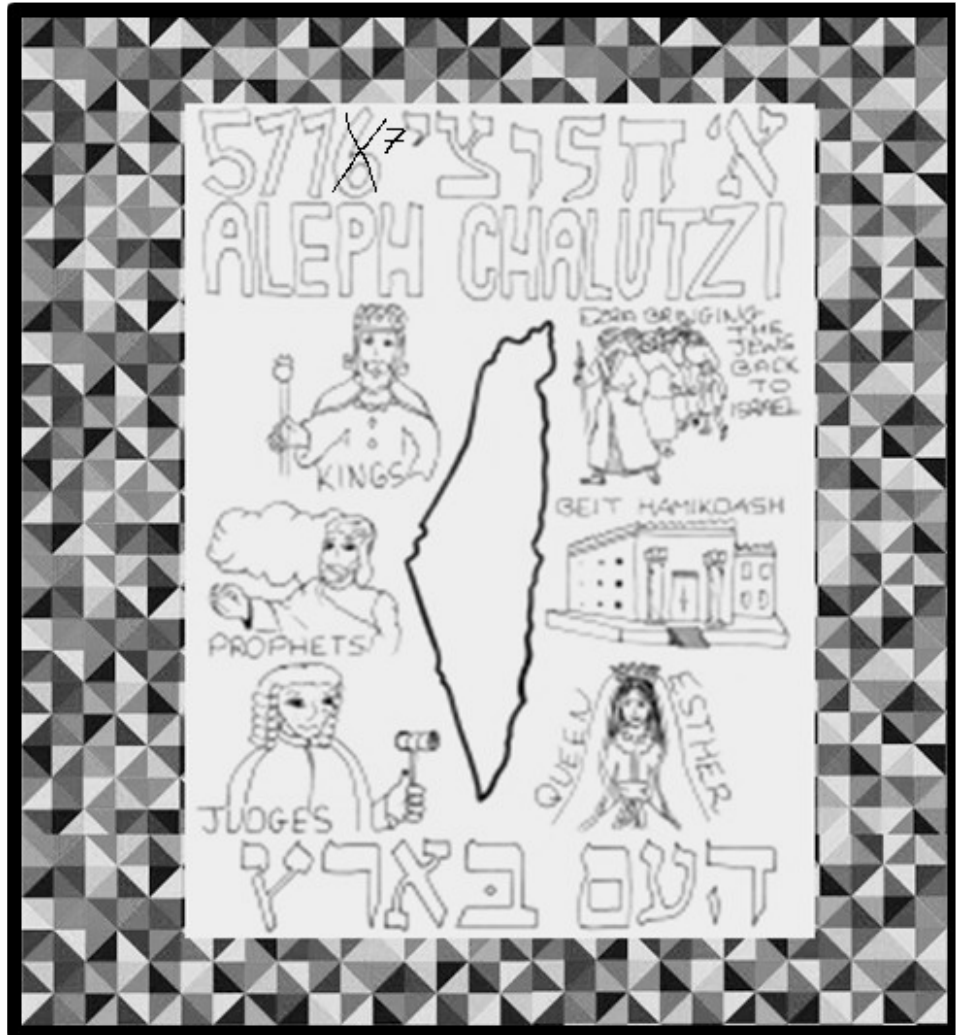
Like Avimelech, Yiftach only rules over his family, Anshey Gilad, and not the whole of Bnei Yisrael. Also he makes no effort to unify with the other Shvatim or the rest of his own Shevet. For example, his Shevet, Shevet Ephraim get very insulted that Yiftach did not ask them to help him fight against Amon so much so that this argument leads to a civil war. Here we see that Yiftach only taking a position of leadership for selfish reasons i.e. power meant he did not even try to unify Bnei Yisrael or lead them appropriately. It also shows his arrogance that he feels he does not need Ephraim's help. Therefore, it is no surprise that civil war breaks out (especially in this vacuum of power).

In preparation for war, we see that Yiftach does ask for HaShem's help which shows he does have Emunah in HaShem. However, he makes his worship of HaShem i.e. sacrificing a Korban, conditional on winning. This is not the ideal way in which to serve HaShem. Also the Neder he makes is totally inappropriate and potentially insulting (putting aside the fact that making a Neder in itself is problematic). Yiftach's Neder states that if he wins he will sacrifice to HaShem the first thing that comes to greet him on his return safely home. We see that Yiftach seems to be making a deal with HaShem, almost testing Him, which is not the best way of showing Emunah. Also his Neder is very non-descript. Anything could come to greet him and not everything is appropriate to sacrifice to HaShem e.g. a non-kosher or blemished animal would not be appropriate/allowed. This

K2: Shoftim (Judges)

also shows a misunderstanding of what HaShem really wants from us and that this gesture reflects false piety. As it turns out Yiftach does win and it is his only daughter who is first to greet him as he approaches home...
dun, dun, dun!!!

K3: Jewish Governance and the Melachim



Aim:

1. To learn about the Foundation of the Monarchy
2. To discuss whether Monarchy is l'chatchila [ideal] or B'di eved [non-ideal situation]?
3. To see how that affects democracy in the State of Israel today
4. To learn about some of the stories and messages of Shaul and David.

Introduction

This Kvutza is split into 2 sections. In the first part, we will examine the concepts of Monarchy and Democracy in Judaism. Having done so, the second part will look at Shaul and David, the first 2 Kings of Israel.

Give us a King!

A lot of Nach describes the rule of Kings over Am Yisrael, but where we left off it was Shoftim in charge. What changed? Let's have a look in Sefer Shmuel (שמואל א:ח):

1. And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel.
2. And the name of his firstborn was Joel; and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beersheba.
3. And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after unjust gain, and took bribes, and perverted judgement.
4. Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel to Ramah,
5. And said to him, "Behold, you are old, and your sons walk not in your ways; now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.
6. But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed to the Lord.
7. And the Lord said to Samuel, Listen to the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.



This was a seismic shift for Jewish Society in Israel. After all, Kings were not just about wearing fancy clothes and sitting on thrones! To ask for a king was to ask for immense political authority and power to be given into the hands of a single mortal human being. In effect, it would change society from a tribal society to a united, nationalistic one. The King would bring the people together under his laws, and he would lead them in battle and in foreign relations. Sounds good, doesn't it? Or does it...?

According to what we have seen here, does it seem that having a king over Am Yisrael is the ideal situation or not?

Let us contrast Shmuel with pessukim from Parshat Shoftim:

יד כִּי-תִבָּא אֶל-הָאָרֶץ, אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ נָתַן לָךְ, וַיִּרְשָׁתָהּ, וַיִּשְׁכַּתָּהּ בָּהּ; וְאָמַרְתָּ, אֲשִׁימָה עָלַי מֶלֶךְ, כְּכָל-הַגּוֹיִם, אֲשֶׁר סְבִיבֹתַי. **טו** שׁוֹם תְּשִׂים עָלֶיךָ מֶלֶךְ, אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ בּוֹ: מִקְּרֹב אַחִיב, תְּשִׂים עָלֶיךָ מֶלֶךְ--לֹא תֹכַל לִתֵּת עָלֶיךָ אִישׁ נְכָרִי, אֲשֶׁר לֹא-אַחִיב הוּא.

14. When you come to the land which the Lord your G-D gives you, you will possess it, and will live in it, and will say, I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me;

15. You shall set him king over you, whom the Lord your G-D shall choose; from amongst your brothers you will set a king over you; you may permit over you a stranger, who is not your brother.



In what way/s is what we are seeing here in Devarim painting us a different picture to what is implied in Shmuel?

So, is a monarchy the 'lechatchila' [ideal] form of government for Am Yisrael? Or is it just 'b'di eved' [a non ideal situation]?

תלמוד בבלי מסכת סנהדרין דף כ עמוד ב

וכן היה רבי יהודה אומר: שלש מצות נצטוו ישראל בכניסתן לארץ: להעמיד להם מלך, ולהכרית זרעו של עמלק, ולבנות להם בית הבחירה.

רבי נהוראי אומר: לא נאמרה פרשה זו אלא כנגד תרעומתן, שנאמר +דברים י"ז+ ואמרת אשימה עלי' מלך וגו'.

And thus R. Yehuda said: Three commandments were given to Israel when they entered the land: [i] to appoint a king, [ii] to cut off the seed of Amalek, and [iii] to build themselves The Chosen House. While R. Nehorai said: This section was spoken only in anticipation of their future murmurings, as it is written, "And shalt say, I will set a king over me etc". (i.e. The Torah is telling us what the people of Israel will do, not what they should do!)

But why might there be a Mitzva to appoint a king???

In the *Sefer HaChinuch* [which may have been] written by the 13th century Spanish Rabbi, Rav Aharon HaLevi, it says:

The root of the commandment: Because it is impossible to achieve a settled society without appointing one person to be in charge of others, to follow his instructions and to follow his decrees. Because the opinions of men are different from one another and they will never agree to one opinion and this disagreement will lead to wastefulness. Therefore it is necessary to accept upon themselves a sole opinion for good or for bad, so that they will be successful and be able to fruitfully engage in the world. [Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzva 71]

Anyway, if, according to Rabbi Yehuda, having a monarchy is ideal, what did the people do wrong in asking for one? The Tosefta (bits left out of the Mishnah at the back of the Gemara - in Sanhedrin) explains: **A)** They asked too soon (possibly insulting Shmuel's authority) or; **B)** They said 'in order to be like the other nations'. Furthermore, Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon (the Rambam) expands on this 2nd answer:

Since appointing a king is a mitzva why did G-d not desire it when the people requested a king from Shmuel? Because they asked in order to stir up trouble and they did not ask in order to fulfil a mitzvah ... [Hilchot Melachim Perek Alef]



Q: Is it ever fair to assume the motives of other people?

At this point, it is also worth considering Moses Mendelsohn's understanding of Jewish Monarchy. He explained that under the Shoftim, G-d alone ruled and occasionally appointed a Shofet to bolster his rule. However, with a human King, there was the possibility of a conflict between what G-D wanted and what the King wanted. As long as this did not happen, it was all right (just about) to have a King.

This means that when G-D was directly in charge, he would never make unreasonable or self-interested demands of the people, because G-D does not have any needs. With the appointment of a human king, Shaul, this became a real risk to consider.

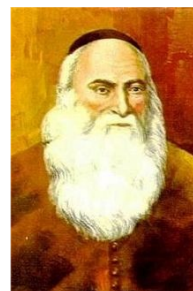
But what about democracy??

K3: Jewish Governance and the Melachim

All of these ideas about Jewish Monarchy are very nice, but is monarchy really a timeless ideal?! Does this really fit with modern ideals? Or is this a case of ignoring modern values because they seem to go against the Torah?

Speaking historically, the Netziv wrote that when there was no King, the major organ of state was made up of representatives of the people of Israel, sort of like a parliament, although it wouldn't have been elected. (Rav Aharon Lichtenstein thought this referred to the Sanhedrin.)

However, a far more substantial hap-tip to democracy is found in the writings of Don Yitzchak Abravanel (1437-1508, influential Portuguese Jewish Statesman who ends up in Venice after the expulsions). In his commentary to Parshat Shoftim. He suggests that there are 3 reasons for having a king: 1) Unity and a lack of dispute. 2) Continuity and a lack of substitution. 3) Absolute authority.



However, under certain historical circumstances, these ideals can be achieved through more local (and possibly even democratic) leaders.

In Halachic terms, this would mean that appointing a king is a *Mitzvat Reshut* – an optional Mitzvah. (This is also the view of the Ibn Ezra.)

Considering the fact that modern democratically elected leaders can achieve the aims outlined above by Abravanel, it would seem that Judaism would support the notion of Democracy in the 21st century. **But how does this play out in Jewish State of Israel?**

Israel is one of the most democratic countries in the world. It follows the proportional representation system for electing members of the Knesset, its House of Parliament. (This means that the number of seats a political party holds in the Knesset corresponds to the proportion of votes they have won across the country in a general election, with the exception of parties that win less than 3.25% of the total vote).



To put it simply, Israel has a highly democratic Knesset that is prone to instability. Indeed, in the last 10 years there have been 4 general elections, compared to just 2 in the UK. (Thanks Theresa May for ruining this statistic with your snap election)

Q: Does Israel democracy achieve the aims of Jewish Monarchy, outlined by Abravanel? If not, should the system change? And to what system?

Q: Is Democracy a means or an end?

Another view...? Rav Eliezer Waldenberg (1915-2006, Posek for Sha'arei Tzedek Hospital)]

_Therefore also in our days the President, the government and the Knesset (despite their religious shortcomings and despite the fact that their decisions in relation to religion have no power) who are chosen according to the wishes of the majority of Israel who live in their land. and they are also more than 600.000. they stand in the place of a kind in

Q: What does this mean? Does this stand in contrast to Abravanel's position?



How BIG should our Government be?

Well, this is a big question! For this we will go to a great mind, that of Chief Rabbi Emeritus Lord Sacks. Writing in his book 'Future Tense', he says the following:



'The form of politics closest in spirit to Judaism at this time is liberal democracy. Liberal democracy is not Athenian democracy. In Ancient Greece, the people existed to serve the state. In Judaism, and liberal democracy, the state exists to serve the people. Liberal democracy respects one of Judaism's most fundamental values: the priority of the personal over the political. It is limited government, of a kind that Judaism favours. The liberal democratic state does not aspire to be a vehicle of redemption; it is there to keep the peace, establish the rule of law, and ensure non-violent transitions of power. Although Judaism does not recognise the concept of separation of church and state [neither for that matter does England, a liberal democracy with an established church], it recognizes a no less fundamental idea, namely the separation of powers between king, priest and prophet, the 'three crowns' spoken of by the sages. The Hasmonean kings were criticized by the sages because they combined kingship and priesthood: in effect, they breached the separation between political and religious leadership. Any attempt to see the state as the highest value is, as the late Yeshayahu Leibowitz never tired of saying, a form of idolatry. Judaism exists to etch social relationships with the charisma of grace. That is not the task of politics.'

Whether we like it or not, it looks like democracy is here to stay. For Israel, that means that the only way the institutions of the State will continue to be built, and the only way political decisions will be made is through the will of the people (albeit indirectly). If we really want to make a difference to Am Yisrael b'Eretz Yisrael al pi Torat Yisrael, we have to not just make Aliyah but also take an active role in the political process.



Part 2: Ideals and Realities

With all this in mind, we can now start to look back at the first 2 Jewish Kings - Shaul and David. We will examine some of their qualities and consider whether or not they lived up to the ideal of creating a unified society under their authority.



Shaul: Lessons in Humility?

The first Jewish king was Shaul [Saul]. Shaul was a very strange King, as Kings go. At first, he really didn't think he should be King. He was from the least prestigious family in the "youngest" tribe, Benjamin. When he was selected to be King, he hid. The political pundits of the day were very sceptical about his credentials, and after first being appointed, Shaul just went back home to become a shepherd.

However, very soon the people were attacked and, Shaul immediately takes up his duty as king, he leads the people into battle, restores



PLOT TWIST

Waldo finds himself

K3: Jewish Governance and the Melachim

peace, saves the Kingdom, thanks G-d and refused to take revenge on those who opposed his appointment. -Basically, Shaul made a pretty fantastic start to being king.

PLOT TWIST: Unfortunately, Shaul's Kingship then goes downhill. First of all, he gives a sacrifice wrong, and Shmuel says that as a result his reign will be temporary. But his biggest mistake can be seen through the story of the War with Amalek...

HaShem tells Shmuel to instruct Shaul to attack and completely destroy Amalek. However, despite waging a successful war against them, Shaul decides to take mercy on Agag, their king. He also decides to keep all their animals for Korbanot. When Shmuel hears about this, he gets angry with Shaul. Shaul tries to defend himself but when Shmuel tells him that HaShem has rejected him as king, he shows some serious remorse. Unfortunately, it's too late. Shmuel tells him the kingdom will soon be taken from him... (At this point, Shmuel also takes matters into his own hands and goes to kill Agag.)

This is a key story to know to understand Shaul's personality because Shmuel accuses him of having too much humility; Shmuel thinks he didn't think of himself as a strong enough, or worthy enough, leader to finish the job HaShem had given to him. Someone who cannot step up and do what is required of him cannot be our strong, unifying king. Who knows how long it would have been before he loses all sense of control over Am Yisrael?!

This issue was even apparent when he was appointed king in the first place: he tried to hide amongst the pots and jugs in order to avoid being appointed as king.

Somewhat ironically, however, in his argument with Shmuel after the war with Amalek he starts to display stubbornness or even arrogance, arguing that he was right even when a messenger of G-D says that he was wrong.

Q: When and how much humility is appropriate in a leader - or anyone - and to whom should this humility be addressed?

Q: What do Shaul's actions here teach us about him and his skills as a leader of Am Yisrael?

Despite these apparent character flaws, the Gemara in Moed Katan [16b] tells us that Shaul stood out from everyone else so starkly because of his good deeds.

We are told in Sefer Shmuel that he stood out *'From his shoulders and upward he was better than any of the people'*.

This is understood to mean that he was both literally head and shoulders above [taller] than everyone and that he was also figuratively better than everyone else in greatness.

Clearly, HaShem would not have overlooked Shaul's intense humility, a key aspect of his personality, when appointing him as king, yet he still thought he was the best man for the job. This teaches us some important lessons:



K3: Jewish Governance and the Melachim

Firstly, humility is ultimately an important leadership quality; one who cannot admit that they're wrong will never take advice from those who know better, and so will make bad judgements. Yet the Jewish conception of true humility does not mean constantly putting yourself down; it means appreciating your own capabilities and knowing when to ask for help! Shaul got this wrong, but his basic nature could have led him to be a great, appropriately humble leader. This segues us nicely on to the next point...

Shaul was not perfect to start with, but he had the capability to work on himself and improve. Leaders are NOT perfect. They're not even perfect human beings! A true leader is someone with potential who works on himself to bring out that potential.

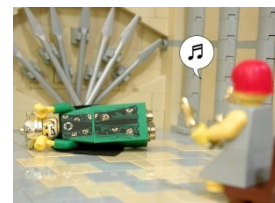
Q: So was Shaul an effective Monarch?

Introducing... King David!



David, like Shaul is an unlikely king by birth. (He's the 7th and youngest son of Yishay, and one of his ancestors -Ruth, was a Moabite). After Shaul had been told that the kingship will be removed from him, not only is Shaul obviously greatly upset, but so is Shmuel, whom we are told was in 'mourning' over Shaul. G-d tells Shmuel to go to Bet Lechem [Bethlehem] and appoint a new king.

David, like Shaul, (and Moshe, and all the Avot, and others besides) was a shepherd, and also a talented musician, and Tanach even records that he was good looking, but did not otherwise show any particular traits to qualify him to be King.



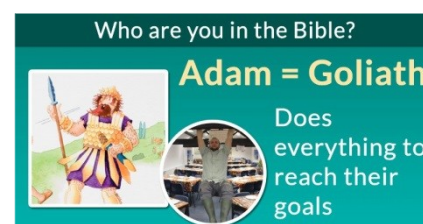
K3: Jewish Governance and the Melachim



After being (secretly) anointed by Shmuel, David is appointed as a musician to Shaul, who is being pestered by spirits sent by G-D. David's music soothes the King, and his connection to Shaul's family grows through him marrying Shaul's daughter and becoming besties with Shaul's son Yehonatan.

David ends up killing Goliath (pretty famous story) and everyone thinks he's a hero, which makes Shaul pretty jealous. Shaul develops a sort of paranoia towards David and a series of events occurs in which Shaul repeatedly tries to kill David. David runs away and forms a band of merry men (who are outcasts, criminals, or in debt- much like Robin Hood's band). David has an opportunity to kill Shaul twice, and each time doesn't take it, though he takes the opportunity to point out that he could have done it.

Shaul is a pretty disastrous King from here on, and starts losing wars. 3 of Shaul's brothers are killed in a battle with the Plishtim. Shaul, seeing that the battle is turning against him and not wanting the Plishtim to capture the King of Am Yisrael, kills himself.



David's story



David becomes the new king, at first only for the tribe of Judah. He was pious and righteous, succeeding in uniting all the Israelites under his rule. The Gemara in Bava Batra [17a] tells of how David also conquered his *yetzer hara* so that it had no power over him (despite what we shall see later).

He had in many ways an extremely successful reign defeating foreign enemies and defending Am Yisrael and Eretz Yisrael. He puts down the foundations of the Bet HaMikdash and desires to build it though he is told by HaShem that he is not allowed to.

But David also does some very problematic things, notably the episode with Batsheva. Nonetheless, the royalty is not taken away from him and his family.

When David dies, his young son Shlomo [Solomon] takes over (the first time we see hereditary rule in Tanach). We will see more about Shlomo in the next kvutza, but in short it can be described as possibly, 'the best years of Am Yisrael' living in unity with a Bet HaMikdash, religious observance and a safe and secure Am Yisrael led by a just king.



David also seems to have done a very bad thing [with Batsheva], but doesn't get nearly as severely punished. Not only that, but the Davidic reign carries on in his family for many years, and even now we ask three times a day for it to be resumed in the Messianic era. But why did Shaul lose the

kingship and David didn't?

Hadracha Hot Tip!
Once you've discussed the story in a little detail, ask the chanichim to draw a quick sketch of the part of the story which they think is most important and ask them why they chose that particular

K3: Jewish Governance and the Melachim

Shaul's main shortcoming, for which it is finalised that the kingship will be taken over him, was his failure to fully exterminate Amalek, and the way he reacted to his reprimand as we saw above.

Let's compare this to David. David's sin is that of him sleeping with Batsheva. The story can be understood in a number of different ways and from many different points of view. (In short, Batsheva was married to another guy, which didn't stop David... who then tried to cover it up, and then had her husband killed).

But according to all the commentators it's not that clear cut (The Gemara in Shabbat says that 'Whoever says David sinned [with BatSheva] is mistaken'.)

All in all, after this whole incident, G-d isn't pleased and in Samuel 2:12, G-d sends the prophet Natan to reprimand David. Here's what happened:

1 And the Lord sent Nathan to David. He came to him and said to him, "There were two men in a certain city, the one rich & the other poor. **2** The rich man had very many flocks and herds, **3** but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. And he brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children. It used to eat of his morsel and drink from his cup and lie in his arms,[a] and it was like a daughter to him. **4** Now there came a traveller to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the guest who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him." **5** Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the Lord lives, the man who has done this deserves to die, **6** and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity." **7** Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the Lord, the G-D of Israel, 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul. **8** And I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your arms and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah. And if this were too little, I would add to you as much more. **9** Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. **10** Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.' **11** Thus says the Lord, 'Behold, I will raise up evil against you out of your own house. And I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. **12** For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel and before the sun.' **13** David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." And Nathan said to David, "The Lord also has put away your sin; you shall not die."

Q: How does David's reaction/s differ from that of Shaul?

Q: What important lessons can be learnt from the way David responded in contrast to the way Shaul responded?

Q: What do we learn here about which qualities are important to be a leader of Am Yisrael?

Unlike Shaul who is insistent on his innocence and only admits his mistake once he has already been told that the kingship is being taken away from him, David when challenged immediately responds 'חטאתי' - I Sinned. Shaul refuses to accept and admit that he has done wrong but David

K3: Jewish Governance and the Melachim

realises the importance of accepting that he has erred & is eager to correct his mistakes. Basics - David gets right exactly what Shaul got wrong.

It is interesting to note that David is the descendant of Yehuda and Tamar. Yehuda, after his relationship with Tamar immediately owns up and admits his sin rather than hiding it.

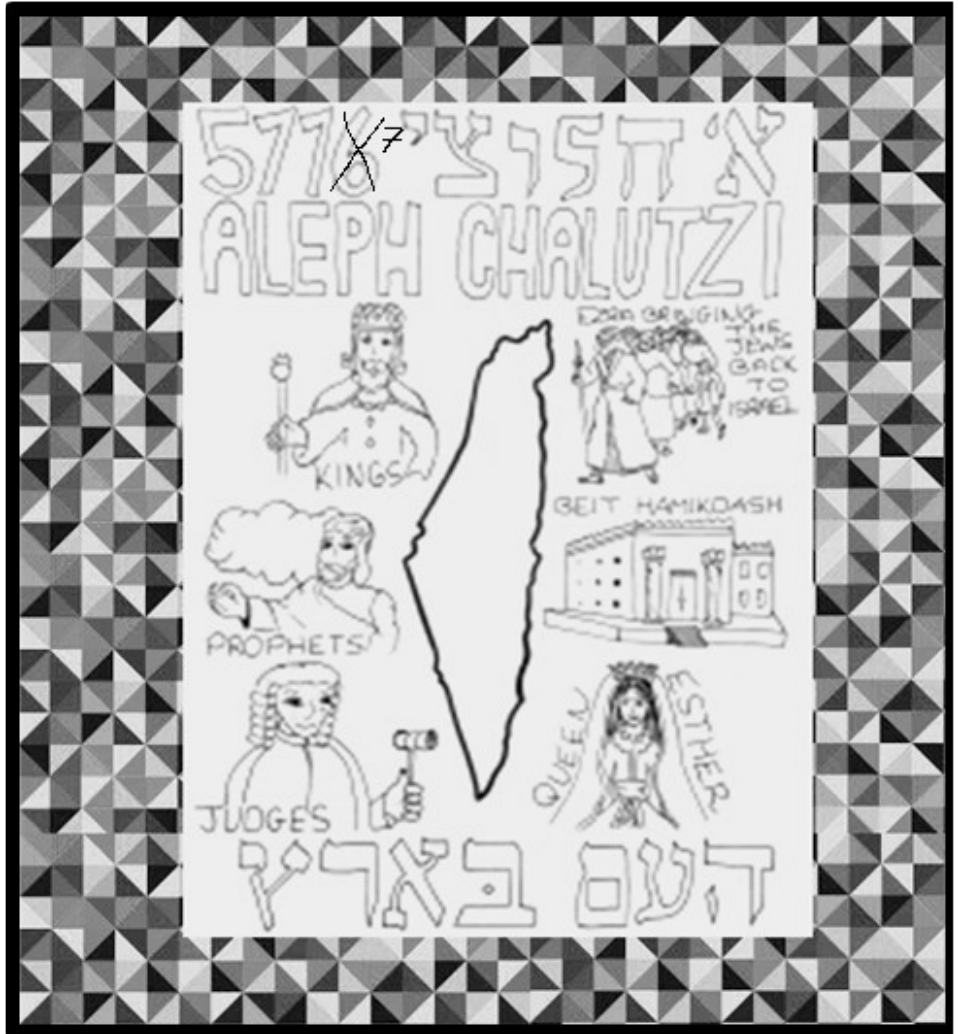
Q: How do you think this whole message relevant to us today, whether as an individual, as a Jewish community or as the State of Israel?

The answers to these above vital, crucial and extremely important questions, will now become the basis for the second part of your kvutza, showing us what kind of leadership we want over ourselves, and what kind of leaders we want to be - almost like Tanach is relevant to our lives!



K5

K4: Shlomo & The Golden Years of Tanach



Aims:

1. Who was Shlomo and what did he achieve?
2. The Beit Hamikdash, it's necessity + its importance
3. Ohr Lagoyim through the Bet HaMikdash and the Golden Years
4. Is medinat yisrael an ohr la goyim?

Introduction

Once King David had consolidated the Israelite empire, under the guidance of HaShem he chose his son Shlomo to be his successor. The reign of this young man became truly legendary. Under Shlomo's rule this was probably the best time for Jewish nation throughout all of history. They were living with peace, prosperity, independence, unity and wealth in a Jewish state. They were an example to the rest of the world, and they had a wise and honest leader. Tragically, the glory of Shlomo's kingdom barely outlasted his own lifetime.



Who was Shlomo?

Let's take a look at the first mention on Shlomo:

כד) ...ותלד בן ויקרא ותקרא את שמו שלמה וידוד אהבו:

She gave birth to a boy and called him Solomon, HaShem loved him (Shmuel 2, 12:24)

Shlomo lived for 52 years; became king at the age of 12, reigned for 40 years, was married to Pharaoh's daughter for 36 years. He was a mighty leader ruling over all 252 provinces in the world. Shortly after he was anointed, G-d invites him to make a request for himself.

What would you choose as you enter kingship????

Shlomo prayed for wisdom, but not just for his own sake, for the sake of the entire nation. Therefore, because of the fact he asked for it in such a selfless manner, HaShem granted him a vast amount of wisdom. HaShem Himself said that he would be the wisest man in the world, then and in the future.

מלכים א פרק ג פסוק יב

הנה עשיתי כדברך הנה נתתי לך לב חכם ונבון אשר כמוך לא היה לפניך ואחרוך לא יקום כמוך:

"Behold, I have acted in accordance with your words; behold I have given you a wise and understanding heart, such that there has never been anyone like you before, nor will anyone arise like you" (Melachim 1:3:12)

Not only this but HaShem was so impressed with the fact that he asked for wisdom and understanding that He promised to also give him all that which he didn't ask for e.g. riches, honour and a long life.

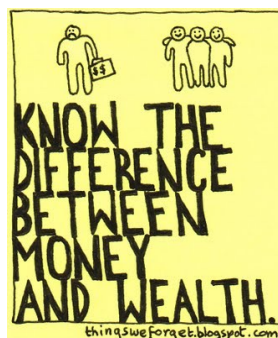
Immediately after comes a very famous story, (Perek 3:16) in brief: 2 women who are fighting over a live and a dead baby come to Shlomo to resolve which belongs to whom. Shlomo, in his wisdom, answers that they should cut the baby in half and share the live baby. This helped determine who the real mother was based on who was merciless enough to agree to this solution. The real mother, not only pleaded for the baby to stay whole, she was willing to give him up for the sake of his own life, the mother of the dead baby however had her own selfish pursuits in mind

K4: Shlomo & The Golden Years of Tanach

and was content with cutting the baby in half if it meant she would benefit in some way.

Unfortunately though, "In his old age, his wives turned away Solomon's heart after other gods". (1 Kings 11:4-5).

The golden years



It says in the Tanach that this was a period of national joy and prosperity. It was a period of absolute regional peace throughout the entirety of Shlomo's kingdom and success for the Jewish people. The taxes they paid were not a burden for them (Malbim).

When Shlomo wanted to build the B"H he contacted Chiram the King of Tzur, a friend of David's. He reminds Chiram of his friendship with David, and that David could not build the Mikdash



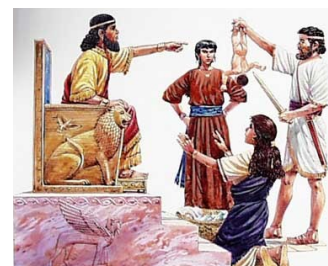
because of the wars he fought. Chiram is overjoyed to help Shlomo build the Mikdash.

These 40 years were the realisations of our goals, the completion of our projects & the fruition of all our efforts. These years were built on the foundations of Moshe and David. Moshe succeeded in bringing the infant Jewish nation freedom from slavery and Matan Torah, the divinely ordained legal & moral system to govern ourselves for all time. He also prepared us to take possession of our land.

David succeeded in solidifying our national entity. He conquered our enemies, established the capital city Jerusalem as well as preparing it to receive the Mikdash. He raised a son worthy to build it when he could not do it himself for prophetically revealed but technical reasons (his hands were too bloody from wars). But it was Shlomo, the wisest man who ever lived, who saw the opportunity and didn't hesitate.

It had taken 480 years since leaving of Egypt to acquire this status, years of painstaking progress, slow, difficult, always two steps forward & one back, our chronicles filled with countless failures and victories. But at last we achieved our goal. And as a result of our newly acquired position we were able to flourish in all areas of life; economic, artistic, intellectual, medical (the cure for all illnesses was known to Shlomo), and spiritual.

Thus Shlomo was able to fulfil the long awaited goal of the nation of Israel, the construction of the Bet Hamikdash - a permanent resting place for the Aron and the shechina as well as a single central place of unity for the Jews. Admirably he didn't hesitate for political or economic reasons.



What characterised this time period?

Peaceful times

וישב יהודה וישראל לבטח איש תחת גפנו ותחת תאנתו מדין ועד באר שבע כל ימי שלמה" (מלכים א' פרק ה' ב'-ה').

K4: Shlomo & The Golden Years of Tanach

And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig-tree, from Dan even to Beer-sheba, all the days of Solomon. (Kings 1, 5)

Economic prosperity

“And Solomon's provision for one day was thirty measures of fine flour, and threescore measures of meal; (??) ten fat oxen...” (Melachim 1, 4:22)



Security

“And Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen” (Melachim 1, 4:26)

הנה עשיתי כדברך הנה נתתי לך לב חכם ונבון אשר כמוך לא היה

לפניך ואחרריך לא יקום כמוך:

“Behold, I have acted in accordance with your words; behold I have given you a wise and understanding heart, such that there has never been anyone like you before, nor will anyone arise like you” (Melachim 1:3:12)

The Bet Hamikdash

During ‘Mikdash times’, Judaism was very much focused on the Beit HaMikdash. It was a football-stadium sized, multi-level structure standing on Jerusalem’s Mt.Moriah. Much more is known about the architecture of the Second Bet HaMikdash than the First.

The centrality of the Bet HaMikdash to Jewish existence is reflected in the fact that many of the Mitzvot in the Torah are related to it: daily and weekly sacrifices, holidays and holiday sacrifices, personal, voluntary and obligatory sacrifices, agricultural tithes, qualifying criteria for the Kohanim and Levi'im, Mikdash rituals and the do's and dont's for all of the above – this is about 180 mitzvot of the 613. Today, all of our daily Tefillot are based around the times and sentiments of the sacrifices; extras are added on Shabbat and holidays to reflect the extra sacrifices in the Mikdash.

What are the motivations for having the Bet Hamidash?

Approach 1:

David’s initial motivation for building it was because he felt ‘how can I live in such a palace and not provide a beautiful place of dwelling for the Aron Kodesh’.

Q) Today, how many families spend large sums of money on home improvement? If this is the case, surely even more so we should be donating to Shuls and places of Torah study out of respect for HaShem? (A Shul is used in place of the BH - a place of worship).

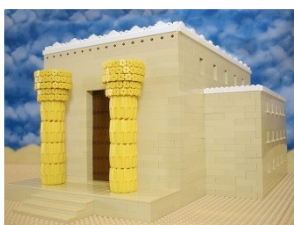
Now cast your minds as far back as the period of Yakov Avinu, when he was running away from Esav. On the way he has a dream following which he feels the immense G-Dliness of the place. To mark the spot he anoints a stone and makes a vow saying “if G-d remains with me, if He protects me on this journey ... if I return safely to my father’s house, HaShem will be my G-d and this stone will be a house for G-d” (Bereshit 28:20-22). This place was named Beit Lechem.

Think: The Hebrew word for a sacrifice is Korban –

קרבן

What then is the purpose of a korban?

Think: what kind of statement is having a beit hamikdash in Jerusalem making???



K4: Shlomo & The Golden Years of Tanach

A place can be seen as a physical representation of our covenant with G-d. The Mikdash can also be seen as a permanent establishment of Jewish sovereignty in Eretz Yisrael.

Approach 2: _____

Ramban: The revelation at Har Sinai had a huge spiritual impact on the Jewish people; how can the Jewish nation cope with just a one off experience of spiritual closeness and awareness? They need a place where they can connect to HaShem and feel His presence. Yes there are times when this is possible, e.g. Shabbat and Chagim but a physical place is seen as vital to unite Jews & be a Makom Kavua (a fixed place of concentration).



The Beit HaMikdash provided the most spiritual connection between man and HaShem. It was seen as His “home”.

Not only this but it was also used by non-Jews as a way of worshipping G-d, they even gave sacrifices! This represents the actuality of this Tefilla (said in selichot) and song we often sing!

וְהֵבִיאוּתִּים אֶל-הַר קְדֹשִׁי, וְשִׁמְחֹתִים בְּבַיִת תְּפִלָּתִי--עוֹלוֹתֵיהֶם וְזִבְחֵיהֶם
לְרִצּוֹן, עַל-מִזְבְּחִי: כִּי בֵּיתִי, בַּיִת-תְּפִלָּה יִקְרָא לְכָל-הָעַמִּים

Even them will I bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer; their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be acceptable upon Mine altar; for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples. (Yishayahu 56)

Ohr Lagoyim through the Bet Hamikdash and the golden years

The nations of the world saw the power of the Jewish people at this time, even to the extent that the Queen of Sheba decided to come and visit. She was overwhelmed with the food and the servants and was truly astounded by the B”H. She was so impressed with the passageway from Shlomo’s palace to the B”H because it represented such humility. He was a king and had his own palace yet he still wanted it to be connected to the B”H because he really understood G-d is the King of all Kings and is above him, an example to the world about serving and having a relationship with HaShem.

Worldwide spiritual influence

יבאו מכל העמים לשמוע את חכמת שלמה מאת כל מלכי הארץ אשר
שמעו את חכמתו" (מלכים פרק ה' - יד')

“People of all different nations would come to hear Shlomo’s wisdom, from all kingdoms of the world who had heard of his wisdom.”

There were musicians, inventors, scientists and nobles who came from all over the world to view the nation. Unlike others where 1/100 had acquired wealth at the expense of



K4: Shlomo & The Golden Years of Tanach

the rest, each household flourished, the clothing of a common child was made of fine embroidered linen.

And while, as always, there were those who were envious, this time they didn't dare attack, as David had entrenched fear in them. However, in this instance, fear gave way to admiration. They learned that there was a better way and they began to imitate. Israel was at the crossroads geographically between Asia, Africa, and Europe. They came to trade, to tour, to learn and they arrived home having acquired life lessons. There was an explosion of creativity in the world that would last until the end of the classical era.

They gazed at our B"H & learned that a building can be sublime. They gazed at our King & learned that a ruler can be benevolent. They gazed at our nation & learned that a people can be loving. They gazed at our laws & learned that there may actually be only one G-d.

Israel was the source of all the great accomplishments that were to soon follow in Europe, Asia and even faraway continents and islands. For who had not heard of Shlomo's fame?

Ohr Lagoyim

A common phrase that is thrown around many Machanot Chomer is the phrase "Ohr Lagoyim"- in loosely translated English "being a light to the nations".



When Ohr lagoyim is said many people will think of Kiddush HaShem. This is certainly one of the main aspects and including in it is publicising Judaism. Remember according to current statistics only 0.227% of the world's population are Jews. To put it in simpler terms if we had 440 people in a room in the world 1 would be Jewish. But nevertheless our home country Israel is one of the most talked about things in the World!

So have we adopted this name of "Ohr Lagoyim" because we think we're cool or is there actually a source for this?

The first source is (Yeshayahu 42:6):

אֲנִי הוּא קִרְאתִיךָ בְּצִדְקָה, וְאַחֲזֶק בְּיָדְךָ; וְאַצְרְכֶּה, וְאַתֵּנֶנְךָ לְבְרִית עָם--לְאֹרֶת גּוֹיִם.

"I, the Lord, have called you in the righteousness, and I will hold your hand, I formed you and I will establish you as a covenant of the people for a light unto the nations"

The second source is (Yeshayahu 60:2-3):

כִּי-הִנֵּה הַחֹשֶׁךְ יִכְסֶה-אֶרֶץ, וְעֶרְפָּל לְאֻמִּים; וְעַלְיֶךָ יִזְרַח ה', וְכְבוֹדוֹ עָלֶיךָ.
יִבְרָא. גוֹיִם יֵלְכוּ בְּאוֹרֵךָ, וּמְלָכִים לְנֵגַת זִרְחֶךָ.

"For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and a thick darkness the nations. But G-d will shine upon you and his honour will be seen over you. Nations shall go by your light and kings by your radiant illumination"

- The Malbim in both these sources explains that the "light" refers to the **light of the Torah** and the



K4: Shlomo & The Golden Years of Tanach

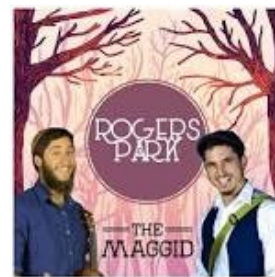
“brilliance of your shine” refers to the radiance of G-d. It is G-d and the Torah that are great, not man. The goal is to have the “Goyim” thirsting to cling to G-d and his Torah and be jealous of the privilege and duty that we have acquired for ourselves.

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, in the twelfth chapter of his masterpiece, Orot HaTorah, teaches us that the Torah is bound to the collective soul of the Jewish People. When we as individuals study Torah we are contributing to Israel's collective responsibility to be an Ohr LaGoyim, to bring the awareness of G-d's Divine light, to this world that often can seem so dark and bleak.

Opinion: The real question is how do we achieve this status? On the one hand we could take the chareidi view of providing a lighthouse of Torah study that will continue in the world no matter what situation, or taking many candles into the dark corners- Or perhaps we could take Chabad (i.e. reaching out to all the disconnected Jews around the world) or Modern Orthodox (i.e. contributing to the wider development of society) approaches?

Opinion: Can it be enough to just show ourselves positively and be on show for non-Jews to take an example from us or should we actively seek to show non-Jews that Judaism is a great religion? Is there a benefit to being an Ohr Lagoyim or just unnecessary attention?

Is it to be achieved on an individual level or a national level?



- Yishayahu was actually talking on a National level

As regards to the community element of Ohr Lagoyim, our homeland could be an example. David Ben Gurion took the term “A light to the nations” and applied it to the State of Israel. His hope was that Israel would be a moral state that would serve as a beacon to all other nations. Practically, in Britain a small possible example is the way the Jewish communities act. How appropriate is our internal behaviour and how do we display it? Does the regular non-Jew perceive the Jewish community to be living within a moral and legal world for example?

Although this is the reality, it is not the ideal...

Is the current State of Israel an example of Ohr Lagoyim???

Personally I think this question asked in 2 different ways will yield a different answer.

If you were to ask how is Israel **perceived** by the rest of the world unfortunately the answer is in a very negative light (see most news articles reporting Israel), even though most the articles are factually incorrect the answer is still no. However, if it is a question of whether or not Israel doing good for the world the answer is a clear yes; just look at



K4: Shlomo & The Golden Years of Tanach

any of Israel's technological/medical achievement, the fact it treats all its citizens equally, and the fact that it is the only Middle East Democracy.

It seems that Israel is doing all it can to come across in a positive light, and the world needs to realize this. In a recent speech our good friend Richard Kemp said "The world owes Israel a great deal" before listing some of Israel's contributions, including preventing Iraq and Syria acquiring Nuclear weapons, and assisting him (the British armed forces) in developing their policy and strategy on how to deal with Suicide bombers in Afghanistan saving countless numbers of British Soldiers Lives. The policy has since been adopted by Nato.

In time, we hope that Medinat Yisrael will not only be acting as an Ohr LaGoyim but also perceived by everyone to be one.

What can we do to make this happen??

Like most things it's a process. It takes time. There are ups and downs in the process and while we are getting some things correct we have not yet reached perfection. We strive to arrive at the time when we will be an Ohr Lagoyim because that is the ideal situation and:



P.T.O

אחד והיה ה' מלך על כל הארץ ביום ההוא יהיה ה' אחד ושמו

Then will HaShem be King over the entire world, on that day shall HaShem be one and his name be one.

Q. What can we do to help Medinat Yisrael be in Ohr Lagoyim?

In this Kvutza we have looked at the Golden Ages of Tanach through the Bet Hamikdash and the personality/actions of Shlomo. The actions ensured the Jewish people were respected throughout the world. We need to internalise the messages from Shlomo to build a world where Jewish identity is thriving, where people are proud to be Jewish and Judaism isn't something we hide.

Opinion: are we too defensive over our Judaism today rather than being actively proud?

Extra chomer:

ISRAEL'S GENERAL ACHIEVEMENTS

Israel is the 100th smallest country in the world, with less than 1/100th of the world population, can make the following claims:

- 1) Israel has the highest ratio of university degrees to the population in the world.
- 2) Israel is ranked #2 in the world for venture capital funds right behind the US. Outside the United States and Canada, Israel has the largest number of NASDAQ listed companies.
- 3) Israel has the highest average living standards in the Middle East.
- 4) Israel is the only liberal democracy in the Middle East.
- 5) In 1984 and 1991, Israel airlifted a total of 22, 000 Ethiopian Jews at risk in Ethiopia to safety in Israel.
- 6) With an aerial arsenal of over 250 F-16s, Israel has the largest fleet of aircraft outside of the United States.
- 7) When Golda Meir was elected Prime Minister of Israel in 1969, she became the world's second elected female leader in modern time
- 8) Relative to its population, Israel is the largest immigrant-absorbing nation on earth. Immigrants come in search of democracy, religious freedom, and economic opportunity.
- 9) According to industry officials, Israel designed the airline industry's most impenetrable flight security. U.S. officials now look to Israel for advice on how to handle airborne security threats.
- 10) Israel's Maccabi basketball team won the European championships in 2001.
- 11) 'Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers' was produced by Haim Saban, an Israeli whose family fled persecution in Egypt.
- 12) Israel has the world's second highest per capita of new books.
- 13) Israel is the only country in the world that entered the 21st century with a net gain in its number of trees.
- 14) Israel has more museums per capita than any other country.

K4: Shlomo & The Golden Years of Tanach

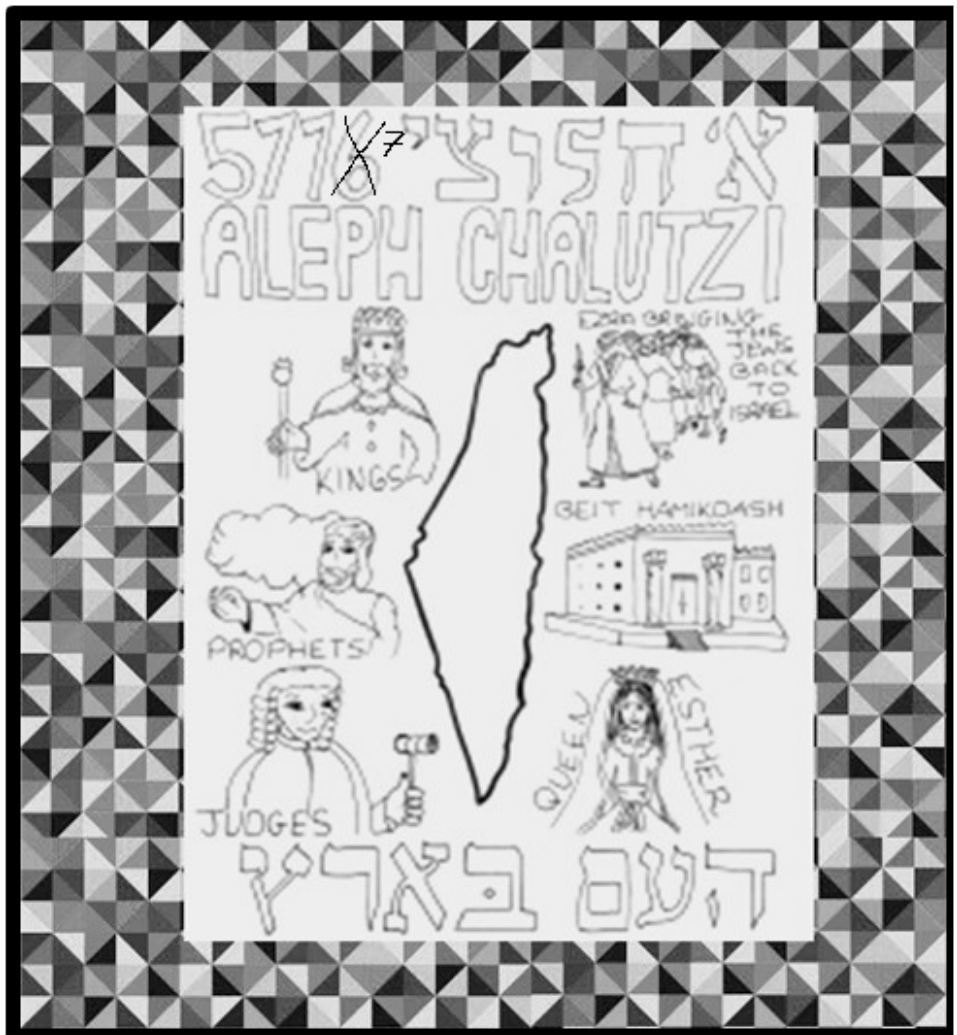
Israeli Achievements in the Field of Medicine

- 1) Israeli scientists developed the first fully computerized, non-radiation, diagnostic instrumentation for breast cancer.
- 2) An Israeli company developed a computerized system for ensuring proper administration of medications, thus removing human error from medical treatment. Every year in U.S. hospitals 7, 000 patients die from treatment mistakes.
- 3) Israel's Givun imaging developed the first ingestible video camera, so small it fits inside a pill. Used to view the small intestine from the inside, the camera helps doctors diagnose cancer and digestive disorders.
- 4) Researchers in Israel developed a new device that directly helps the heart pump blood, an innovation with the potential to save lives among those with congestive heart failure. The new device is synchronized with the heart's mechanical operations through a sophisticated system of sensors.

Israeli Achievements in the Field of Technology

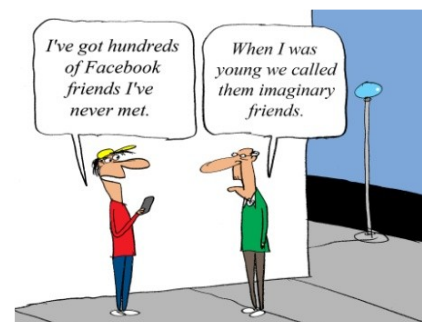
- 1) In response to serious water shortages, Israeli engineers and agriculturalists developed a revolutionary drip irrigation system to minimize the amount of water used to grow crops.
- 2) Israel has the highest percentage in the world of home computers per capita.
- 3) Israel leads the world in the number of scientists and technicians in the workforce, with 145 per 10, 000, as opposed to 85 in the U.S., over 70 in Japan, and less than 60 in Germany, with over 25% of its work force employed in technical professions. Israel places first in this category as well.
- 4) The cell phone was developed in Israel by Motorola, which has its largest development centre in Israel.
- 5) The Pentium MMX Chip technology was designed in Israel at Intel. Voice mail technology was developed in Israel.
- 6) The technology for AOL Instant Messenger was developed in 1996 by four young Israelis.

K5: End of the kingdoms & exile



Aim:

1. To be aware of some of the different Kings in Jewish History
2. To understand the dangers of relying on other countries for help.
3. To discuss to what extent you can serve HaShem in your own way.



Introduction

This Kvutza explores several other Kings and lessons we can learn from them.

From the beginning of David's reign (2884 - 876 BCE) until the destruction of the first Temple and death of the last king of Yehuda (3338 - 422 BCE), there were twenty one kings in Jerusalem. As a punishment for Shlomo's sins later in his life, the kingship was torn away from his descendants (the lineage of David). However because of David's loyalty to G-d, G-d left one region to be ruled by his lineage. Therefore the Kingship was torn from Shlomo's son Rechavam and this created the Northern Kingdom of Israel (Malchut Yisrael, the 10 tribes) and the kingdom of Yehuda (Malchut Yehuda).

All the northern kings were idol worshippers & a good majority of the 10 northern tribes followed their example. Nearly half of the kings in Jerusalem were also idol worshippers (Achaz, Menashe, Amon etc.), some in a most disgusting and insane of ways.

But Jewish history is not just a story of kings and their families. The king was responsible for the religious life of his people. When a king was bad, most of the people went with him. When he was good, his people could soar to majestic heights. A Jewish king was a leader in every sense of the word - therein lies the danger of the monarchy. If everything rests on the shoulders of one man, it stands or falls with him. Under the Shoftim (Judges) there was much more room for individual movement. The judge did not enjoy the all-powerful influence over the kingdom's daily life that the kings would later inherit, so even if a judge went bad, the nation wasn't centralized enough to be drawn down with him.

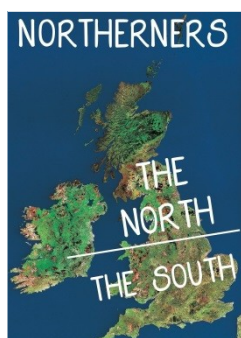


Due to the fact that many of the kings were making sacrifices to idols it's not surprising that they were also relying on idols and false gods rather than the True Source of All, HaShem, to win their battles!

We cannot go through every king and their stories in this chomer but it's an easy read in Melachim if you ever want to get an insight into a huge period of our Jewish Biblical History. We will read a select few cases towards the end of the Melachim period as we approach exile of both the Northern and then later on, the Southern Kingdom of Israel.

Israel and Yehuda: The Great North/South Divide

Evil kings were the norm for Malchut Yisrael, but were the exception for Malchut Yehuda... Sadly, Achaz (Melachim 2, Perek 16) was one of those exceptions. He was extremely idolatrous, going so far as to passing his



K5: End of the kingdoms & exile

son through fire as a form of worship to the idol Molech. Aram and Israel teamed up to make war on Yehuda, but they did not defeat Achaz in battle. Aram did recapture one city, Eilat, and they evicted the Jews who were living there.



K5: End of the kingdoms & exile

To fend off Aram and Israel, Achaz sent messengers to Tiglas Pileser, the king of Assyria and said **“I am your servant and your son; come and deliver me from the hands of the King of Aram and from the hands of the king of Israel who are attacking me”**. He sent as much gold and silver as was in the Temple and the palace for Assyria to drive away the invading forces of Aram and Israel. Tiglas Pileser drove away the invading armies and killed the king of Aram.

So, to recap:

Team 1	Team 2
Israel & Aram	Yehuda & Assyria (AKA Ashur)
The Winners: Team 2	
The REAL Winners: Ashur! [Achaz bribed the King of Ashur with silver and gold to get them involved in the war, and they won it!]	
The Losers: Team 1	
The REAL Losers: Israel! [Not only did they not beat Yehuda, they also lost Eilat to Aram!]	

Achaz's Idol Worship

When Achaz visited Tiglas Pileser, he saw the altar of the Assyrian idol and had a replica built in the Temple courtyard. He instructed that this was to be the main altar from now on, and Uriah the Kohen Gadol complied.

Not only did this altar not belong in the Temple, Achaz went even further to undermine the Temple service. He insisted on bringing the sacrifices himself at the altar, even though he was not a Kohen (priest) - the true altar became secondary. Achaz had the stands under the wash lavers and the "sea" removed and he disposed of the awning that the Kohanim would use for shelter on Shabbos when they changed shifts. He also made a personal shortcut to the palace. (One may not make a shortcut through a synagogue and certainly not through the Temple!)



What just what was he thinking?!?!?!?!?

The reign of Achaz was sixteen years. When he died, he was replaced by his son Chizkiyahu (Hezekiah), one of the greatest of all Jewish kings. Chizkiyahu actually got rid of the idols, kept the Torah and acknowledged G-d.

Working Together?

We learn from this story that a lack of unity amongst the Jewish People leads to severe consequences. Not only had Israel and Yehuda split by this point, they felt so detached from one another that it was deemed acceptable to go to war against each other!

Nowadays, despite the existence of the State of Israel, the Jewish People are spread all over the world & often struggle



K5: End of the kingdoms & exile

to see any connection between each other. Additionally even Israel society can be fragmented. Clashes between different groups (e.g. Chareidim and Secular Jews, Ashkenazi and Mizrachai Jews, etc.) are not uncommon.

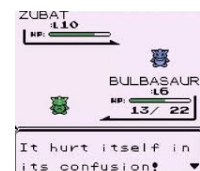
It is vital that we learn to respect differences if we are ever to come together as a united people! Without unity, we run the risk of other powers threatening our future, as we saw in the above story; had we not have gone to war with each other, we never would have lost Eilat to Aram and we never would have shown Ashur how vulnerable we were. After this war, Ashur begins to realise it could conquer both Israel AND Yehuda if they wanted to! And so it began...

The Exile of Malchut Yisrael

Hoshea, the last king of Malchut Yisrael (the Northern Kingdom of the Ten Tribes) reigned for nine years (Chizkiyahu became king in Yehuda in Hoshea's 3rd year). He was conquered by Assyria and became a vassal state.

Here **we have uncovered another key lesson**: we cannot afford to rely on other people. Ashur did not redeem Eilat for us, but they set their sights on conquering both Malchut Yisrael and soon Malchut Yehuda, the very people who had been their allies at first!

This point was emphasised [before Ashur's conquest of Israel] by Hoshea the prophet, who prophesies at the time of Hoshea the King. (I know, it's confusing, but go with it...)



Whilst shouting at Malchut Yisrael to do Teshuva in order to stop HaShem punishing them, he warns them not to rely on any help from Ashur: **“Ashur shall not save us!”** (Hoshea 14:4)

At this point, they were under threat from the Assyrians (again), and it seems there were opinion makers - political leaders and advisors, popular movements - who believed and propagated one of two views:

1. The only way to deal with Assyria was to create an alliance, a protectorate with them. (The Liberal Left.)
2. That a resistance be mounted, a coalition of forces to fight and distance Ashur. (The Hawkish Right Wing.)

So what did they do??? - A bit of both really -

Israel paid Assyria a yearly tribute. One year, Hoshea (the King) did not pay his tribute, and instead **tried to get Egypt to help him fight off the Assyrians**. Shalmaneser, then king of Assyria, found out and he didn't care much for Hoshea's insubordination. Assyria started a three-year siege of Israel.

Assyria finally captured Shomron (Samaria), the capital of Malchut Yisrael. The people were exiled and resettled in other lands.

That was it for the Ten Tribes. They would not be swayed from their idolatrous ways, even though God had corrected them many times. He sent many prophets (such as Hoshea), but the people persisted. So, G-d *permitted* them to be exiled and only the kingdom of Yehuda (including Benjamin and Levi) remained. Yehuda wasn't perfect, but the kingdom of

Israel had pushed away from G-d with both hands. (The Navi describes this in some detail, but that's the gist of it.)

So, the Jews of Israel were exiled and the other conquered nations were moved into the Shomron. But, as we said before, our troubles with Ashur were not yet over...

Ashur turn their attention to Yehuda

In the fourteenth year of Chizkiyahu's reign, Assyria turned their attention to Yehuda and captured many cities. Chizkiyahu sent a message to Sancheriv king of Assyria, offering to pay whatever he asked if they would just leave. Chizkiyahu would not serve Ashur, he was loyal to G-d. (בה אלוקי-ישראל בטח). Sancheriv imposed a heavy tribute; Chizkiyahu was forced to strip the gold from the Temple doors to meet the payment. (This is looked down upon by Chazal.) The Assyrians took the money, but waited for a pretext to resume their conquest.

Sancheriv sent messengers to King Chizkiyahu. They boldly stood outside and called for him. Several of the king's senior officers went out to meet with the Assyrian delegation.

The Assyrian messenger Ravshakeh (who was JEWISH!!!!!!!) said: "Give Chizkiyahu this message: What are you going to do, rely on Egypt like the Kingdom of Israel did? They'll do you more harm than good! You trust in your G-d? The One Whose altars Chizkiyahu removed? Tell you what, you give us a security deposit to ensure your faithfulness and we'll give you 2,000 horses - as if you have 2,000

The earliest source of sarcasm perhaps? - and who said the British

horsemen left to use them! Is it against your G-d that we're acting? We're fulfilling the orders of your G-d!"

Since all this was going on outside, in public, the Jewish delegation asked the Assyrians to speak in Aramaic so the average person walking by wouldn't overhear, but Ravshakeh refused (he was Jewish so he knew Hebrew):

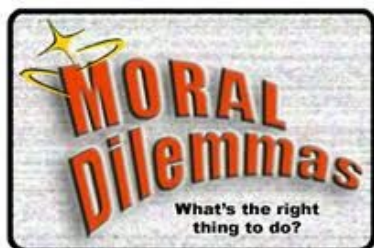
"Did my king send this message only to your king? It's for all these people! When we conquer you, they'll eat their own waste along with you! Don't let Chizkiyahu fool you! He can't save you. If you give in, the king of Assyria will relocate you all to other lands just as nice as this one, where you can live in peace. **Your G-d won't save you - none of the gods of the other nations we conquered saved them!**"

In this case Chizkiyahu tells them to keep and not reply - so they do. Chizkiyahu was a great king and according to the Gemara (Masechet Sanhedrin 94b) he managed to persuade Jews all over Israel to learn Torah.



silent
pretty

'He



placed a sword on the gate of the house of learning as a sign that he who will not occupy himself with the Torah shall be slain by the sword.'

So what happened next?

Because Chizkiyahu prayed to **HaShem** (and also on account of his good deeds) a great miracle occurred: without fighting, 185000 Assyrians soldiers drop dead. Later on he shows all the treasures to the Babylonians (chap 20), and Yishayahu tells him exile is on the cards. However, because he prayed to HaShem to prevent exile, HaShem says he won't experience it in his life time.

Later, Chizkiyahu falls ill and is about to die but again he prays to HaShem, HaShem grants him another 15 years of life.

Notice a reoccurring theme in Chizkiyah u's

Q: Is praying always the answer? Think back to K1...



Although he was great, he could have been even greater!!!! Chazal tell us that he was worthy of being Mashiach!! The reason he was not was because he didn't say a shira/vote of thanks to HaShem after He performed one of the greatest miracles of all times for him (the soldiers who had surrounded Jerusalem in a siege all died suddenly).

THINK: How could someone worthy of being Moshiach forget to thank HaShem for such a great miracle?! Do we always appreciate the

miracles we merit?

What is the modern day equivalent of this scenario or of these sins???

What is the modern day equivalent of this scenario or of these sins???

Eventually he dies and 'Sometimes, the Apple is Thrown REALLY FAR from the Tree' because his son Menashe, one of the most awful kings, takes over! He did terrible things to make HaShem really angry. It is said that "he caused them to do greater evil than the nations that the Lord had destroyed before the Israelites"!

At several places in Tanach, HaShem says that Bnei Yisrael will live in Israel in peace 'IF' they faithfully observe His commandments. In the time of King Menashe, He says that Bnei Yisrael is not obeying His Word; they have broken their side of the promise and so will He. Although this fact was made known to Bnei Yisrael over and over again, they don't seem to listen. King Menashe built altars, consulted ghosts, practiced soothsaying as well as sculpturing images of gods. But HaShem has had enough and promises to exile them...

Do not forget about HaShem when you serve HaShem!

King Uzziya (Azariya) is an example of a good king who turned bad. Because he was loyal to G-d, He helped him and he became successful.



K5: End of the kingdoms & exile

Sadly, he developed a large amount of pride and arrogance due to 'his' success. He then began to act corruptly and do what he wanted, he started bringing forbidden incense when he felt like it at the Temple (remember how Nadav and Avihu died because they brought foreign sacrifices on their own accord). Uzziya displays a certain mode of behaviour: **putting oneself above God's rules**, seeking personal grandeur, the desire to follow one's desire despite the convention and authority that restricts a person.

Q: Is there every room to serve HaShem in your own way? Or does Avodat HaShem just mean doing EXACTLY what the Torah and the Rabbis say to do?

Teshuva:

Clearly, things were not going well for Malchut Yehuda and, as we know, it was all going to end with the Babylonian exile. (More on that later!) However, there was a mini-revival of Judaism in the era of King Yoshiyahu. During his reign a hidden Sefer Torah was discovered.



Some commentators say that Yoshiyahu started off bad but after discovering the Sefer he did Teshuva and starts to get rid of ALL the idols! Furthermore, Yirmiyahu [Jeremiah] the prophet does Hakhel [reading Torah out loud for all the people] with this Sefer Torah, to try and get them to do teshuva. Yet none of this is good enough to prevent exile. Evil is too ingrained from the era of Menashe.

God advised Yirmiyahu to announce throughout Judah & Jerusalem to observe the Mitzvot of HaShem. **Their ancestors were warned daily since leaving Egypt to listen to G-d, but they still refused, preferring to do as they pleased!** G-d punished them for non-compliance, as He said He would (Deut. 28), but they didn't correct their behaviour.

Yoshiyahu is "rewarded" for his efforts in bringing the people back to Judaism by dying before the exile (like Chizkiyahu), but for everyone else there is no hope. According to the Talmud (Yoma 4b), Malchut Yehuda was so full of idol-worship, sexual immorality, and bloodshed that HaShem decided enough was enough.

In the last few chapters of Sefer Melachim, Malchut Yehuda are finally exiled by the Babylonians and they mostly end up living in Babylon...



Extra Chomer: see THE TANACH

We have to explain Menashe's addiction to idolatry, because nowadays we just don't get it. In the Talmud (Sanhedrin 102b), Rav Ashi made a disparaging remark about Menashe. That night, Menashe appeared to Rav Ashi in a dream and asked him an obscure question of Torah knowledge. Rav Ashi did not know the halacha, but Menashe did. Rav Ashi was flabbergasted. "But - if you're such a Torah scholar, how

K5: End of the kingdoms & exile

could you worship idols?" "You don't know the temptation we had for idolatry," Menashe replied. "If you had lived in my day, you'd have picked up you clothing to run towards the idols!" After that, Rav Ashi referred to Menashe, Ahab and company more respectfully.

The most important criterion driving this evaluation seems to be the extent to which the king inculcated sole loyalty to the God of Israel. Did he tolerate the worship of other gods, in place of or together with the worship of the God of Israel? Did he extirpate sacrifice outside of Jerusalem? This evaluation in the book of Kings corresponds to the priorities of the Book of Devarim in the Torah. (Devarim emphasizes sole loyalty to God and the importance of sacrificing only in Jerusalem [that is, in the central location].)

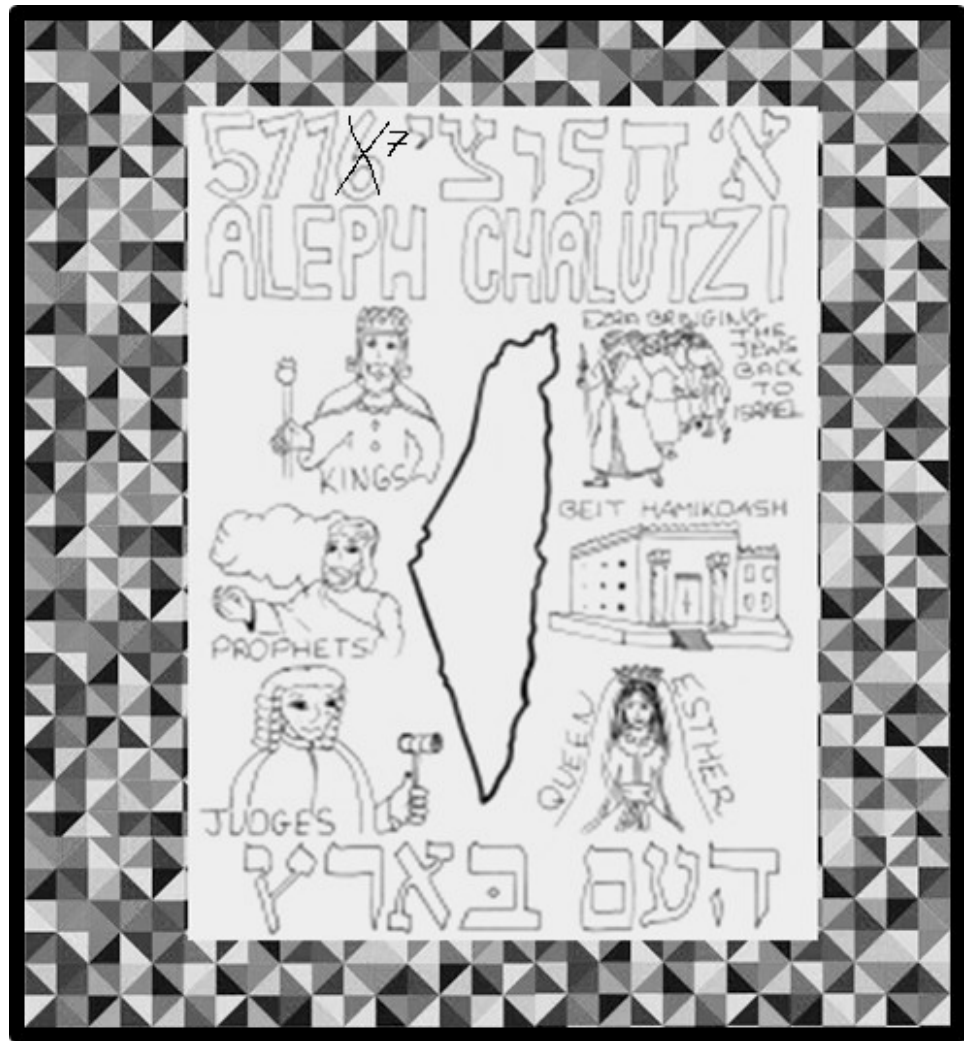
Tzidkiyahu was one of the bad kings and he reigned for 11 years. Perhaps unwisely, he rebelled against the powerful Nebudchadnezzar, who had appointed him.

Bit of an abrupt end here? Explain in a roundup that our establishment and success in the land depends on our fidelity to HaShem, and this is largely directed by the king.

יב וְאִם-לֹא תִשְׁמָעוּ, לִי; וְלֹא תַעֲשׂוּ, אֶת כָּל-הַמִּצְוֹת הָאֵלֶּה.
טו וְאִם-בְּחִקְתִּי תִמְאַסוּ, וְאִם אֶת-מִשְׁפָּטֵי תִגְעַל בְּפִשְׁכֶם, לְבִלְתִּי עֲשׂוֹת
אֶת-כָּל-מִצְוֹתַי, לְהַפְרֹכֶם אֶת-בְּרִיתִי. לֹג וְאֶתְכֶם אֲזַרֶּה בַגּוֹיִם, וְהִרִיקְתִּי
אֶחְרִיכֶם חָרָב; וְהִיְתָה אֶרְצְכֶם שְׂמָמָה, וְעַרְיֶכֶם יִהְיוּ חָרָבָה.

14 But if ye will not hearken unto Me, and will not do all these commandments;
15 and if ye shall reject My statutes, and if your soul abhor Mine ordinances, so that ye will not do all My commandments, but break My covenant; **33** And you will I scatter among the nations, and I will draw out the sword after you; and your land shall be a desolation, and your cities shall be a waste.

K6: prophets of social justice



Aims:

1. What is prophecy and why is it important
2. The prophets as prophets of social justice
3. The relevance of their messages for us today

Introduction to prophecy

A prophet is someone who receives prophetic messages from G-d and is instructed to act either on these messages or prophecy these messages to other people. The Hebrew word for a prophet is a 'navi'. In Devarim, in

ט כִּי אַתָּה בָּא אֶל-הָאָרֶץ, אֲשֶׁר-הִיא אֶלְקִיךָ נָתַן לְךָ--לֹא-תִלְמַד לַעֲשׂוֹת, כְּתוֹעֵבֹת הַגּוֹיִם הָהֵם... יח
נְבִיא אֲלֵהֶם מִקֶּרֶב אַחֵיהֶם, כְּמוֹךָ; וְנָתַתִּי דְבָרִי, בְּפִיו, וְדִבַּר אֲלֵיהֶם, אֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר אֶצְוֶה. יט
וְהָיָה, הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יִשְׁמַע אֶל-דְּבָרִי, אֲשֶׁר יְדַבֵּר, בְּשִׁמִּי--אֲנֹכִי, אֲדַרְשׁ מֵעַמוֹ. כ אַךְ הַנְּבִיא
אֲשֶׁר יִזְד לְדַבֵּר דְּבַר בְּשִׁמִּי, אֶת אֲשֶׁר לֹא-צִוִּיתִי לְדַבֵּר, וְאֲשֶׁר יְדַבֵּר, בְּשֵׁם אֲלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים--וּמַת,
הַנְּבִיא הַהוּא.

9. When you come to the Land that the L-rd your G-d gives you, you shall not learn to act according to the abominations of those nations... 18. I will establish a prophet for them from among their brethren, like you, and I will place my words in his mouth, He shall speak to them everything that I will command him. 19. And it shall be that the man who will not hearken to My words, that he shall speak in My name, I will exact from him. 20.

We see that the role of the 'Navi' is to be the mouth of G-d. It is interesting that the root of the word are the letters N-B-A which comes from the root, N-B, meaning openness and hollowness. A true navi is someone who has made himself open and hollow in order to be able to receive, accept and correctly transmit the flow of prophecy from G-d.



There were thousands of Jewish prophets from the time of our ancestor Avraham until the end of the prophetic era in the time of Zecharya, Chagai [who may have also been Zrubavel] and Malachi [who may or may have also been Ezra], yet if you did a quick flick-through of Tanach, or had a look in Gemara Megilla [14a], we only actually know of 55 of them [48 blokes and 7 ladies]. The Gemara challenges proving that in the generation of Elkana alone there were at least 200 prophets.

Other evidence of the existence of many other prophets may include:

1. In Melachim [2:2:3], Elisha comes to Bet-El and is greeted by the 'bney haNvi'im' - 'the disciples of the prophets'. The Judaica Press Tanach explains partially quoting the Radak that these disciples were prophets who lived in large towns e.g Bet-El guiding & admonishing the people.
2. A brayta cited in Gemara Megilla [14a] tells that Am Yisrael through the course of its history had double the amount of prophets than men who left Egypt. [A staggering 1,200,000 prophesying prophets!]

So all in all, lots of bands of prophets riding through the glen, they were [often but unfortunately not always] feared by the bad and loved by the good. To cheating and corruption they would never yield, but as we shall soon see, they were far cooler than even Robin Hood.

K6: Prophets of social justice

Furthermore, there are lots of prophecies that are not recorded, even of the prophets we know well. For one of the great prophetesses, Chulda we only have a few lines of recorded prophecy from her. Ovadya's recorded prophecy takes up less than one page in the Stone edition green Artscroll Tanach! And for, Yehoshua, whose narrative takes a large section of Tanach, very little of his prophecy is recorded.

The following points to ponder arise.

Why we are only informed of the existence of a **small proportion** of the prophets who existed during the history of Am Yisrael?



And maybe, and perhaps more importantly. **Why** is it that of the prophets we know of, some of & at times the vast majority of **their prophecies are not recorded down in Tanach?**

What vital, crucial, fundamental, critical, point, **does this tell us about** the relatively small proportion of **prophetic messages which have been passed down to us** through our Holy Scriptures?

Fortunately, for us, the same gemara in Megilla we saw earlier, gives us an answer

'אלא נבואה שהוצרכה לדורות נכתבה ושלא הוצרכה לא נכתבה'

Only a prophecy that is needed for [future] generations was written down, and what was not needed [for future generations] was not written down.'

This means that **every** single pasuk and individual word in the recorded prophecies is **directly relevant to us** as individuals and as Am Yisrael as a whole, nowadays, just as it was when it was first prophesied.

There are a variety of important and fundamental themes which are consistently covered throughout the prophets. These include:

1. Calling to teshuva
2. Prophecies of terrible destruction and exile
3. Prophecies of hope
4. Prophecies of the return of Am Yisrael **to** and the rebuilding of Eretz Yisrael
5. Admonishments to Am Yisrael for idol worship and forsaking G-d
6. Admonishments to Am Yisrael for their insincere religious practice and for instead relying on the tokenism of the Bet HaMikdash.

We've decided to focus however on the prophecies admonishing Am Yisrael for their lack of ben adam lechavero and their poor treatment of each other within their society.

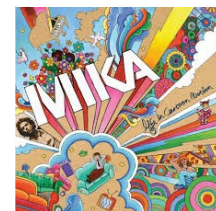
The prophets called again and again for **social justice** and just as it importantly the **relevance** this has to **our lives** and to **Am Yisrael** and **Eretz Yisrael today**.

admonish (transitive verb)

- Variants: admonishment (noun)
- Definition: To caution, criticize, or counsel gently against
- Synonym: chastise, reproach, rebuke
- Antonym: approve, commend, praise
- The anti-tobacco lobbyist admonished the President for his inability to quit smoking.

Yeshaya (or Isaiah for those of who are so inclined)

Yeshaya lived a very long life [before he was unfortunately murdered by his own grandson's soldiers] and prophesied for at least 86 years. Secular academics thought that there were three different people called Isaiah. The discovery of one intact Book of Isaiah when the Dead Sea scrolls were discovered at Qumran proved them wrong! He prophesied mainly to the Kingdom of Yehuda [Judah] and during the reign of Kings Uziyahu [who was also called Azarya], Yotam, Achaz and [Ye]CHizkiya[hu].



The Gemara in Psachim tells us that Yeshaya prophesied during the same time period as Hoshea, Amos and Micha.

For much of Yeshaya's time period, idolatry was widespread and popular across the kingdom. Yeshaya also decried insincere sacrifices and religious worship, people's over-reliance on the Bet HaMikdash and immorality.

On the 'ben adam lechavero' front, there were also no shortage of problems of bribery, corruption, oppression of the weak and vulnerable and dishonesty in business throughout all the levels of society.

Yet despite the fact that, at first glance, Sefer Yeshaya appears to be a book of "doom and gloom", the number of hopeful/messianic prophecies outweigh the number of admonishing ones. Indeed, it is even known as a Sefer Nechama, a book of comfort. Furthermore, unlike many others, much of Yeshaya's prophecies are both for Am Yisrael and for the nations of the world, or for those of you who did/are doing R.S. A-level, 'Isaiah focuses on both a national and universal vision of Messianism'.



Let's take a quick look at one of his early prophecies from Chapter 1 of Sefer Yeshaya, also the Haftora of Parshat Devarim, Yeshaya prophesies the word of G-d and declares:

Which kind of people is this prophecy aimed at?

י שָׁמְעוּ דְבַר-ה', קְצִינֵי סֹדִים; הֶאֱזִינוּ תוֹרַת אֱלֹקֵינוּ, עִם עַמְכָּה.
יֵא לָמָּה-לִּי רַב-זְבָחֵיכֶם יֵאמֶר ה', שְׁבַעַתִּי עֲלוֹת אֵילִים וְחֶלֶב מְרִיאִים;
וְדָם פְּרִים וְכִבְשִׁים וְעֵתוּדִים, לֹא חִפְצָתִי. יב כִּי תִבְאוּ, לִרְאוֹת פְּנֵי--
מִי-בִקַּשׁ זֹאת מִיְדְּכֶם, הֲמַס חֲצָבִי. יג לֹא תוֹסִיפוּ, הִבִּיא מִנְחַת-שְׂוֹא--
קִטְחֹת תוֹעֵבָה הִיא, לִי; חֲדָשׁ וְשֶׁבֶת קִרְא מִקִּרְא, לֹא-אוֹכֵל אֲנִי
וְעֲצָבָה. יד חֲדָשִׁיכֶם וּמוֹעֲדֵיכֶם שְׁנָאָה נִפְשִׁי, הָיוּ עָלַי לְטֶרֶחַ; נִלְאִיתִי,
נִשְׂאָ. טו וּבְפִרְשֵׁיכֶם כְּפִיכֶם, אֲעֲלִים עֵינֵי מַכְם--גַּם כִּי-תִרְבוּ תִפְלָה,
אִינְנִי שֹׁמֵעַ: יֵדִיכֶם, דָּמִים מְלֵאוּ. טז כַּחצוֹ, הִזְכּוּ--הִסִּירוּ רַע

מַעֲלֵלֵיכֶם, מִנְגִד עֵינָי: חֲדָלוּ, הָרַע. יִזְ לַמְדוּ הַיֵּטִב דְרָשׁוּ מִשְׁפָּט,
אֲשֶׁרוֹ חֲמוּץ; שְׁפָטוּ יְתוּם, רִיבוֹ אֶלְמֶנָה. {ס}

10 Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. 11 To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? says the LORD; I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. 12 When ye come to appear before Me, who hath required this at your hand, to trample My courts? 13 Bring no more vain oblations; it is an offering of abomination unto Me; new moon and sabbath, the holding of convocations--I cannot endure iniquity along with the solemn assembly. 14 Your new moons and your appointed seasons My soul hateth; they are a burden unto Me; I am weary to bear them. 15 And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide Mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear; your hands are full of blood. 16 Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes, cease to do evil; 17 Learn to do well; seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. {S}

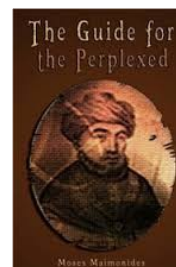
Q. What kind of people today do you think this prophecy could be directed at?

Q. What do you think we and our chanichim as individuals can learn from this prophecy? Q. How is such a prophecy relevant for society today in the State of Israel?

Amos was a contemporary of Yeshaya and also had some pretty harsh words to say to the Jewish people. Here's one of his prophecies:

ד שְׁמַעוּ-זֹאת, הַשְׂאֲפִים אֲבִיוֹן; וְלִשְׁבִית, עֲנוּי- (עֲנִי-) אֶרֶץ. ה לֵאמֹר,
מִתִּי יַעֲבֹר הַחֹדֶשׁ וְנִשְׁבִּיבָה שָׁבֶר, וְהַשְׁבֵּת, וְנִפְתָּחַה-בָּר--לְהַקְטִין אִיפָה
וְלְהַגְדִּיל שֶׁקֶל, וְלַעֲוֹת מֵאֲזֵנֵי מִרְמָה. ו לַקְּנוֹת בְּכֶסֶף דָּלִים, וְאֲבִיוֹן
בְּעֵבוֹר נְעֻלִים; וּמִפֶּל בֶּר, נִשְׁבִּיר. ז נִשְׁבַּע ה, בְּגֹאוֹן יַעֲקֹב; אִם-אֲשַׁכַּח
לְנֹצַח, כָּל-מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם. ח הֵעַל זֹאת לֹא-תִרְגַּז הָאֶרֶץ, וְאַבֵּל כָּל-יֹשֵׁב
בָּהּ; וְעֲלֵתָה כָּאֵר כְּלָה, וְנִגְרַשָּׁה וְנִשְׁקָה (וְנִשְׁקָעָה) כִּיאוֹר מְצָרִים.
{פ} ט וְהָיָה בַיּוֹם הַהוּא, נָאֵם אֲד-נִי ה, וְהִבֵּאתִי הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ, בְּצַהֲרָיִם;
וְהִסְחַתִּי לְאֶרֶץ, בְּיוֹם אוֹר. י וְהִפְכֹתִי חֲגִיכֶם לְאַבֵּל, וְכָל-שִׁירֵיכֶם
לְקִינָה, וְהִעֲלִיתִי עַל-כָּל-מִתְנַיִם שֶׁק, וְעַל-כָּל-רֹאשׁ קִרְחָה; וְשִׁמְתִּיהָ
כְּאַבֵּל יָחִיד, וְאַחֲרִיתָהּ כְּיוֹם מָר. {פ}

4 Hear this, O ye that would swallow the needy, and destroy the poor of the land, 5 Saying: 'When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell grain? and the sabbath, that we may set forth corn? making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances of deceit; 6 That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes, and sell the refuse of the corn?' 7 The LORD hath sworn by the pride of Jacob: Surely I will never forget any of their works. 8 Shall not the land tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwelleth therein? Yea, it shall rise up wholly like the River; and it shall be troubled and sink again, like the River of Egypt. {P} 9 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the



K6: Prophets of social justice

Lord GOD, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day. 10 And I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head; and I will make it as the mourning for an only son, and the end thereof as a bitter day. {P}

Right, if you seem a bit perplexed by the above passage, in short Amos is describing to Am Yisrael all the different ways in which the wealthy and powerful cheat the destitute and powerless [whom they should be assisting].

They withheld produce from the market until the next month so that they could drive up the prices and make a greater profit. They hoarded crops till after the Shemitta year when they would be able to charge more. They were dishonest and used false weights and measures to make more money. They had impoverished the poorest and most vulnerable members of society so much that the poor were in the end forced to sell themselves into slavery in order to survive.



As a result, rather unsurprisingly G-d decides that Am Yisrael needs some very severe punishment.

**CRIME &
PUNISHMENT**

Other Prophets to be aware of

Yirmiya [Jeremiah] like Yeshaya also prophesied to the Kingdom of Yehuda, though about 80 years approximately after Yeshaya died. Yirmiya prophesied during the reign of kings Yoshiyahu [Josiah], Yhoyakim and Tzidkiyahu [Zedekiah].

(see K5) Yoshiyahu was a really big tzaddik who fought against idol worship, started a national teshuva movement and repaired the Bet HaMikdash. Yoshiyahu's son Yhoyakim was another baddy who was really just a puppet monarch for Pharaoh and sucks up to him the whole time.

Tzidkiyahu, another son of Yoshiyahu was the last king of Yehuda and in the ninth year of his reign on the tenth of Tevet, the Babylonians led by Nevuchadnetzar besieged Yerushalayim eventually destroying it as well as burning the Bet HaMikdash and exiling most of Am Yisrael.

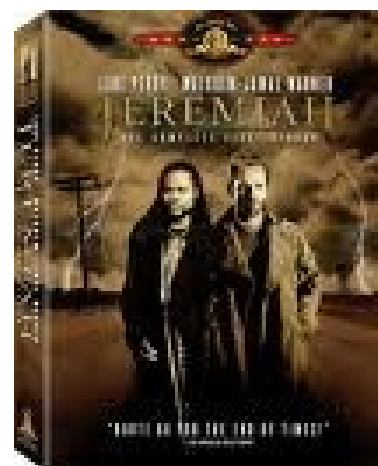
Yirmiya consistently prophesied that if Am Yisrael did not mend our ways and do teshuva then Yerushalayim and the Bet HaMikdash would be destroyed and Am Yisrael exiled. The people who thought that the Bet HaMikdash was indestructible and would protect them all didn't listen and chose instead for their own comfort on the plethora of false prophets who Yirmiya had to compete with.

In the years leading up to the destruction, Yirmiya was viewed by the [often corrupt] authorities as a troublemaker. Yehoyakim burned the scroll of Yirmiya's prophecies and Tzidkiyahu chucked Yirmiya into prison.

Not all was doom and gloom though as Yirmiya also prophesied about the redemption and return to the land which would take place after seventy years of exile and of the great things which could happen if we heed G-d's word.

Yechezkel [Ezekiel] also prophesied during the reign of Tzidkiyahu. He however prophesied not in the Holy Land but rather in Babylon. He prophesied to the large numbers of Am Yisrael who had already been exiled to Babylon with the previous king Yehoyachin already prior to the destruction of the Bet HaMikdash.

He also prophesied of the futility of relying on the Bet HaMikdash for protection when the sins of Am Yisrael had become so numerous. Yechezkel gave prophecy to the Jews of Babylon who may have felt detached from Am Yisrael and that 'it was all over' for Judaism. He in many chilling and famous prophetic visions including that of the 'Valley of dry bones', prophesied hope and the eventual renaissance of Am Yisrael and our return to our land.



Hadracha Hot Tip!

Give your kvutsa some time to come up with a social justice project to implement on machane. They will be given time at a meal or whenever to present it to the rest of the Machane if they want.

How are the prophecies of Social Justice relevant to life in the modern State of Israel??

Take a look at these sources and see if you think we've internalised the messages that the prophets of old tried to drum into us...

Source 1: Ethiopian protests in 2015

In April 2015 two policemen were suspended after video footage emerged on Monday showing them hitting an Ethiopian-born IDF soldier, Damas Pakada, who alleged he was the target of a racist attack. We will look at the aftermath of such an event together with a variety of quotes from leading Israeli figures on the subject.

Pakada said that he was riding his bicycle when he noticed the two officers, he asked them what they were up to and one of them confronted him and pushed him off his bike, saying, "I can do whatever I want." He said that the officer threatened to shoot him in the head, and that they only let up only after he backed away and lifted a rock. "The cop told me, 'I'm doing my job and if I need to put a bullet in your head, I would do it. I am proud of my job,'"

Several police then detained the soldier for alleged assault, although the footage showed that Pakada did not attack them with the rock in his hand.

A police source "It doesn't matter if this is a soldier in uniform or a normal citizen; this is not how an officer is expected to behave. Policemen work hard to serve the public and a rare event like this will not pass in silence," the source said. Another officer termed the incident "shameful."

Pakada's brother -"When I saw the clip, I couldn't believe I was in Israel, I was sure it was a prank, that this is a clip from the US of white cops beating black citizens for no reason. Only by the army uniform, could I see that it was my brother."

Subsequently several thousands of Israelis were involved in a number of rally's throughout the country. Many of which turned violent. At one protest in Jerusalem police deployed tear gas, stun grenades and water hoses against the protesters. Meanwhile, pockets of demonstrators threw stones and bottles at police and blocked streets as well as the city's light rail tracks as they attempted to march on the Prime Minister's Residence.

Police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld [referring to a rally in tel Aviv on May 3rd] Sunday's protest was mostly peaceful, though several arrests were made, according to media reports. Protesters chanted "Violent police officers belong in jail."

The Zionist Union's MK Stav Shaffir, and former Yesh Atid MK Pnina Tamano-Shata — the first female Ethiopian-born Knesset member — were in attendance at the rally.

Tamano-Shata -"The young generation that grew up in Israel is demanding, rightfully, equal opportunity,"It is fed up with being discriminated against from a young age."

K6: Prophets of social justice

Inbar Bolgleh, activist - "We want to show people that racism is not routine, and that is why we will disrupt their routines — to make them understand that,"

Spiano Malko, activist "We are Israelis, just like everyone else. A large portion of Ethiopian immigrants are people who were born here and they deserve their rights,"

Eventually it was decided to end the investigation on the grounds that it was the soldier who had provoked the clash, clearing the officer of having any racist motive for his actions.

Source 2: The Israeli charity 'Latet' [formerly known as 'table to table']

Mission:

LATET ("to give") - LATET was established in 1996 to reduce poverty, for a better and just society, by providing assistance to needy populations, mobilizing Israeli civil society towards mutual responsibility, and leading change in the national priorities.

Values, relative advantages and differentiation

- **Independent organization** - Non-governmental, non-political, non-partisan, non-profit
- **Equality and Universality** - Equivalent aid is given in all areas of the country and to all sectors, regardless of religion, race, gender, culture or nationality
- **Adherence to Proper Management Guidelines** - Latet has passed all intensive audits of the Registry of Associations.
- **Reliability and Financial Transparency** - All financial reports including salary data and all organizational data are published on our website and are open to all
- **Reporting, Control and Inspection** - Reporting on the use of donated funds, operation of a control and inspection system, full management of donations and recipients needing aid on the basis of a Priority system
- **Wide Public Support** - 93% of the organization's budget is based on donations from the Israeli public. Since their establishment of the organization, two million Israelis have donated food and commodities, and more than 100,000 volunteers have participated in activities
- **Volunteers** - 13,000 wonderful volunteers give 280,000 hours annually and serve as one of the cornerstones of Latet.
- **Effectiveness, Influence and Change** - Strives towards professionalism, develops sustainable models in wide circles of influence within Israeli society, and utilizes measures of effectiveness
- **Operational Efficiency** - successful in leveraging investment in the initiative for nutritional security.



Programs and projects:

LATET initiated and operates a number of programs and projects in several fields:

- Aid for life - Holistic and comprehensive support for impoverished Holocaust survivors
- Awareness and advocacy - Raising awareness to the problem of poverty in Israel and leading changes in the national priorities
- Late Youth - Youth organization that instills values of volunteering and develops social entrepreneurship

K6: Prophets of social justice

- City without Hunger - An innovative, ground breaking initiative to solve nutritional insecurity within a municipality
- Nutritional security - Reducing nutritional insecurity among families and individuals living in severe poverty
- To give a future - Micro-businesses development among impoverished women, empowering them towards financial independence

In summary:

Discuss and even more importantly **get your chanichim to discuss**

The relevance of these prophecies to our lives

How do they feel they can learn from these prophecies to help improve their Jewish communities in Britain?

When/if they make aliya, how do they feel they can contribute to improve Israeli society?

Idea: **Copy out some of the prophecies which we have discussed**, [or see some more ones which are listed below] and **discuss** with your kinderlach how **relevant** they feel these messages are to **our lives**, to the **Jewish community** and to the **State of Israel**.

The vision of the prophets was [not to chas vesholom diminish the extreme importance and continual everlasting relevance of mitzvot ben adam laMakom – mitzvot between man and G-d] a vision hugely based on Am Yisrael improving their mitzvot ben adam lechavero and thereby creating an ideal society – **A society which was 100% frum in every way and as an important part of that, a society based on the highest of moral and ethical standards and a beacon of social justice for the entire world.**

This therefore had and b'ezrat HaShem in the future will also have the potential to light up the world with the Glory of G-d when the nations of the world see the role model example Am Yisrael will set.

Other relevant prophecies to look at/discuss include – Make use of your own personalised wonderfully groovy Tanach!:

Criticism of Am Yisrael for lack of social justice: Yeshaya 5:8-23, 32:1-8, 56:1-2, 56:9-12, Micha 2:1-2, 3: Amos 2:6-8, 5:16-27

G-d's lack of interest in korbanot etc. without mitzvot ben adam lechavero: Yeshaya 58:1-12, 66:1-4 Malachi 1:1-14

Messianic/futuristic prophecies of social justice and/or Am Yisrael being an example to the world: Yeshaya 2:1-4, 11:1-10, 29: 13-16, 42:1-9 Micha – Beginning of chapter 4.

Extra chomer

Introduction to the sefarim:

K6: Prophets of social justice

There are four books in n'vi'im acharonim. Yeshaya [Isaiah], Yirmiya [Jeremiah] Yechezkel [Ezekiel] and Trei Asar ['The twelve' - they have sometimes been referred to as 'the twelve minor prophets'. This is however a very incorrect Xian translation as they were most certainly not 'minor' at all!].

Some more Prophets for your perusal...

The **Trei Asar** is a collection of the prophecies of twelve different prophets spanning a period of over 350 years. The Gemara in Baba Batra [14b] tells us that they were put together in one scroll in order that they would not be lost.

Hoshea prophesied at the same time as Yeshaya, though Hoshea may have started a bit earlier and also prophesied to the Kingdom of Yisrael as well as Yehuda. Hoshea, according to some opinions may have been Yeshaya's Rebbe. Hoshea being chronologically the first of the n'vi'im acharonim in many ways a 'prophet of transition' and was the first to actively start prophesying to Am Yisrael the concept, that if Am Yisrael don't wake up and do teshuva, they will lose Eretz Yisrael and the Bet HaMikdash and go into exile.

Amos and **Micha** also prophesied at the same time as Yeshaya and Hoshea. The Gemara in Pesachim says that Hoshea was the greatest of them all.

Amos and Micha both heavily admonished the people for their insincerity in religious practice and for the way they treated the vulnerable members of society as we shall see later. They also, like Yeshaya both prophesied of the amazing Messianic era which would follow and the reward for those who do good.

Yoel also prophesied of the tremendous destruction which would come to the land and also of the redemption which would follow. **Ovadya** gave prophecy of the destruction which would befall Edom and the nations of the world for the way they have treated Am Yisrael. **Yonah** tells of the famous narrative of Yonah and the big fish. **Nachum** prophesies the vengeance that will come against Nineveh. **Havakuk** prays and challenges G-d over His 'injustice' and prophesies punishment against Am Yisrael and the enemies. **Tzefanya** pleads with Am Yisrael to do teshuva before it gets too late and prophesies the destruction which will come and also of the great redemption in the end.

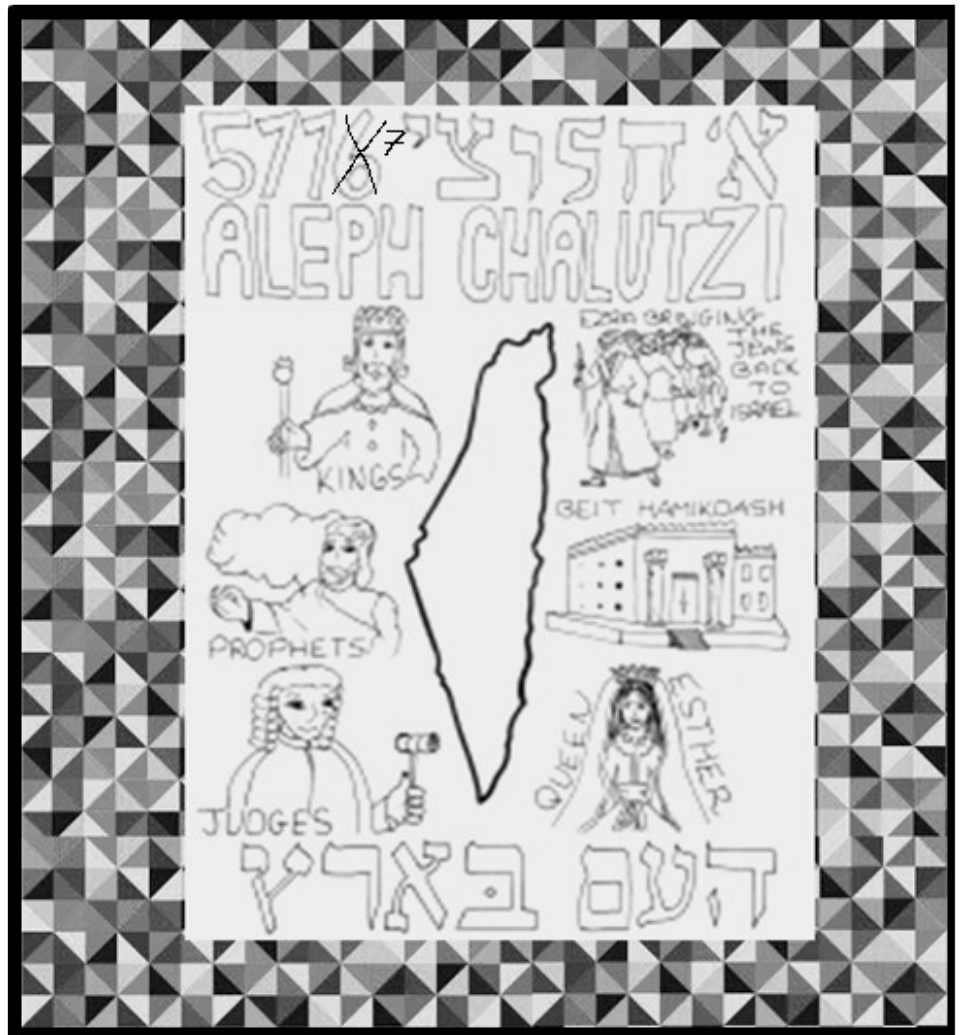
Hagai, Zecharya and **Malachi** are the last three prophets and come on the scene already after the destruction of the first Bet HaMikdash when Am Yisrael are already in exile. Their prophetic visions are 'less clear' as the era of prophecy is sadly coming to a close. They prophesie the construction of the second Bet HaMikdash and the return of Am Yisrael to Eretz Yisrael.



K6: Prophets of social justice

Zecharya also gives prophecies of the 'end of days'. Malachi the last of the prophets also pleaded with the people to do teshuva and prophecied of the rapid and widespread teshuva that will take place prior to the arrival of Mashiach.

K7: Galut as a concept - Ha'am not Ba'aratz?



Answers:

1. Exile as a necessary step - what do we need to learn from it?
2. Not just a pointless punishment
3. The story of Esther/Purim and it's context
4. The danger of Am Yisrael replacing Galut with Geula
4. What happens when we're not Am Echad

Introduction



In this Kvutsa we will explore what Galut means and its purpose, while looking into the story of Purim as an example. Megillat Esther is one of the few books in Tanach that is completely set outside the land of Israel. We will focus on the importance of that fact and what we can learn from that today.



Esther plots a little extra humiliation for Haman at her party.

The purpose of exile

Think about where left off in K5. We are at the point in history right before the 1st Beit Hamikdash was destroyed. Hezekiah – was a wonderful king who ruled the southern kingdom for many years, Manasseh, his son becomes king when his father dies. He is as bad as his father was good. Manasseh made altars to Baal (other “God’s” and caused the people to sin with his idols,

Then came Amon – he was also a terror! But then comes Josiah, who truly loves God and brings about a round of impressive religious reforms. Unfortunately when he dies, these reforms die with him and the spiritual decline continues.

At this time the Assyrians, who had been a threat to Israel, were conquered by the Babylonians. They come to take on the Kingdom of Judah to impose their rule and make what remains of Israel a vassal state. They succeed in capturing Jerusalem and 10,000 of the best and brightest Sages of the time.

As always, God gives the Jews plenty of time to repent as the Babylonians place a siege on Jerusalem. The prophet Jeremiah is calling on all to repent but his message goes unheeded. Instead, he is beaten and thrown into prison!

Subsequently the Jews go in to Galut and the 1st Beit Hamkidash is destroyed.

Why do you think exile needs to happen? What purpose does it serve? Doesn't HaShem want us to be in Israel?

We see exile as a punishment; we have been naughty now you're banished! HaShem's punishments are done in order to teach us a lesson and correct our ways (Hadracha lesson right there!), but how will living in a foreign land with foreign people help? – Surely that'll just make matters worse!

Let's look at this what mission HaShem sets the prophet Jeremiah:



רָאָה הַפְּקֹדֶתֶיךָ הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה, עַל-הַגּוֹיִם וְעַל-הַמַּמְלָכוֹת, לַנְּתוּשׁ וּלְנִתּוּץ,
וּלְהַאֲבִיד וּלְהַרוֹס--לְבָנוֹת

See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out and to pull down, and to destroy and to overthrow; to build, and to plant.

The fact is that the Jews have gone too far this time. HaShem is not willing to overlook their sins. He is fed up with their fake-ness and constant sinning followed by bringing of sacrifices / apologising afterwards as if that makes the sin OK (I'm sure we've a few examples from our own lives when we try this tact trick). HaShem finally breaks out and says that He "doesn't need their meat" i.e. there's no point offering sacrifices to appease Him.



This is what needs to happen - in order for the Jews to truly understand how to behave they need to be completely removed from their surroundings. It's not good enough to try and cover up the bad with a few good deeds. They need to be uprooted and placed in a new environment where they can learn from scratch. Only when this method has been achieved can they rebuild and replant and return to Eretz Yisrael.

In the famous words of tehilim **Turn from evil and then do good** סוּר מֵרַע וַעֲשֵׂה טוֹב - Yirmiyahu tells them to build a life in exile - yes exile is bad and of course we believe in making Aliya, but there is a time and a place for it and they had been told that they were not allowed to return before 70 years was up. They needed to utilise this time in order to change and create a firm and strong Jewish community holding Jewish and religious values as a forefront of their society. (In fact, huge

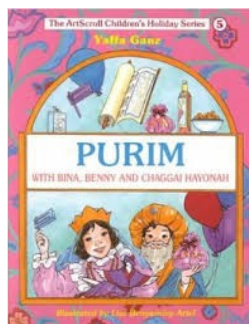
Torah centres were set up in Bavel!)

Am Yisrael are not deserving of Israel unless they keep HaShem's commandments, after all this is the condition He gave it to them!

A prime example of Galut and its effect on us is the story of Purim. There is a big discussion as to when the story took place but for our purposes we will follow the opinion that it all began in Ancient Persia in the 4th century BCE. The Holy Temple that had stood in Jerusalem was destroyed more than 50 years earlier, and the Jews were subjects of the mighty Persian Empire which extended over 127 lands. This incident took place 2 years before the beginning of the building of the 2nd Bet Hamikdash.

Who wrote the megilla?

The Babylonian Talmud attributes the writing to the Anshei Keneset haGedola (men of the Great Assembly), whereas Josephus (a Roman historian) affirmed that Mordechai wrote it. Some Chachachamim also believe that Mordechai wrote the book of Esther. However, the mention of Mordechai and his benevolence in Esther (10:3) may argue against Mordechai as the author of the book. But it need not completely eliminate him.



Brief outline of the story

King Ahasuerus decided to by throw a grand 180-day-long party for all his subjects. Following this extravagant gala, Ahasuerus hosted a smaller week-long party for the residents of the capital city of Shushan. Queen Vashti also hosted her own party for the Shushanite womenfolk.

K7: Galut as a concept - Ha'am not Ba'aratz

On the seventh day of this party, Ahasuerus' heart "was merry with wine," and he commanded his wife Vashti to appear before him at his party; he wanted to show them all her exquisite beauty. Vashti ignored this request, and at the advice of his advisor, Ahasuerus ordered Vashti's execution and there was the beauty contest for the new Queen.



The leader of the Jews at that time was Mordechai. He had a cousin, who was orphaned as a young girl whom Mordechai had raised and treated her as a daughter - Esther. Against her will, she ended up in the beauty contest and when she appeared before the king, he immediately liked her, and she became the new Queen of Persia. But as per Mordechai's directive, Esther refused to divulge her nationality - even to the king.

Meanwhile, Haman (boo), was promoted to the position of Prime Minister. Haman was a virulent Jew hater, who descended from Amalek, wanted to kill the Jews.

Mordechai had done a favour for the king in stopping him getting assassinated and therefore was praised for this. Acting on Esther's orders he gathered the Jewish people of Shushan together to daven and fast. Esther then identified Haman as the evil person who wished to kill her people. On that day, Haman's estate was given to Esther, and Mordechai was appointed Prime Minister instead of Haman. Woohoo!

Mordechai and Esther established a holiday to commemorate these amazing events. Jews worldwide celebrate on the 14th of Adar, while residents of walled cities from the days of Yehoshua - like Shushan - celebrate on the 15th of Adar. Partay.

Queen Esther

Let's delve into the character and history of Esther. According to the Megilla when Esther was conceived her father died and when she was born her mother died. Esther was from the tribe of Benjamin and her name means 'star'. Esther was also known as Hadassah which means 'myrtle'. Myrtle branches signify sweetness but bitter in taste - Esther was sweet to Mordechai but bitter to Haman. Esther made sure to only eat of her own food and not of the king's.



Esther and Israel

At first glance the Purim story looks like nothing more than a simple "they tried to kill us. We won. Let's eat" type of story. But behind that is something strange. As we'll discuss later on, the Jews had an opportunity to go back to Eretz Yisrael and rebuild the Beit Hamikdash. But they didn't. Why?

K7: Galut as a concept - Ha'am not Ba'aratz

Rav Leibtag says that the Jews of Persia replaced the Beit Hamikdash with Shushan. We can see it clearly in the quote that we all read out know but

אֵשֶׁת מְרַדְּחַי הַיְהוּדִים הָיְתָה בְּשֵׁם אֵשֶׁת מְרַדְּחַי הַיְהוּדִים Esther 2:5

not necessarily understand:

The phrase ISH YEHUDI is mentioned only ONE other time in Tanach (in Zecharia 8:23). There it describes a Jew leading tens of non-Jewish followers seeking God in Jerusalem.

In Divrei Hayamim (Chronicles) the phrase Habira (which translates as Capital) specifically means the Beit Hamikdash which King David instructed his son Shlomo to build. Prior to megillat Esther the word Bira does not appear.

Mordechai comes from the Babylonian word - Marduk who was a Babylonian deity. Today, it would be akin to naming your son Christopher.

Crazy stuff. So what is it hinting at? What can we learn?

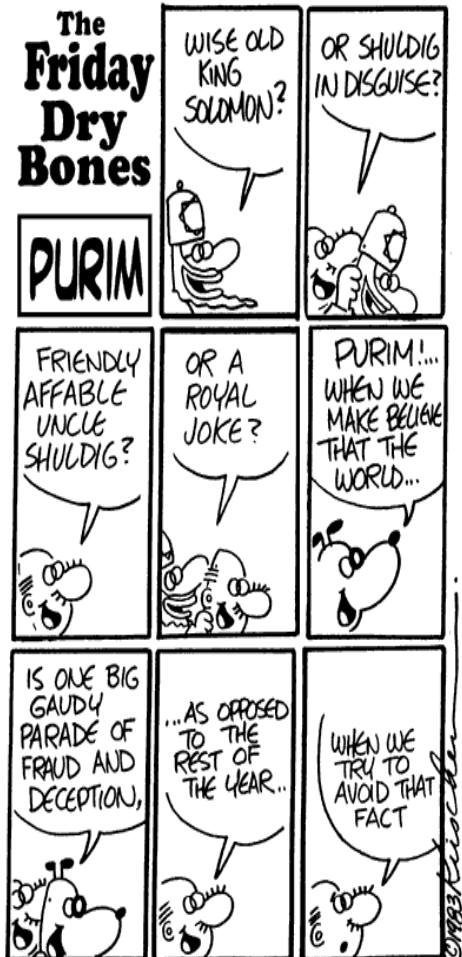


The megilla is filled with phrases alluding to this theme of the Jewish people substituting palace of Achashverosh for the Bet Hamikdash:

- The Jews at the party are using the vessels of the Temple according to Chazal.
- The Gemara (Megilla 12a) claims that Achashverosh donned the garments of the kohen gadol at his party.
- Entry to the inner chamber of the king's palace is forbidden under threat of death; this parallels the Holy of Holies in the Mikdash. (Perhaps another connection between Purim and Yom Ha kippurim...)
- The 'waiting area' outside the inner chamber is called the chatzer ha-chitzona where those close to the King - like Haman himself - are allowed to enter freely; this parallels the kodesh where kohanim are permitted to enter.
- In front of the palace is gate of the palace where people like Mordechai are permitted to stand; this parallels the azara in the Temple.

Have we, living in England, replaced the Beit Hamikdash with an alternative?

February 25, 1983



K7: Galut as a concept - Ha'am not Ba'aratz

Interestingly, the megillah is also the first time that the word Jew (יהודי) was used, thus denoting a distinction between the Hebrews, the Israelites, and their Jewish descendants in the diaspora.

We see the turning point where the Jews seem to grasp the reason that they were being punished in chapter 4.

K7: Galut as a concept - Ha'am not Ba'aratz



Until here the Jews (as a nation) weren't living the "3 pillars" (am yisrael, be'erezt yisrael, al pi torat yisrael). At the end of the previous chapter, Haman receives the King's signet ring and issues the decree to kill all the Jews. At the start of the forth

chapter Mordechai learns what happens and comes to Esther, who after some hesitation agrees to go to the king. However, she together with the rest of Am Yisrael will fast for three days.

This is really the turning point. Previously to this we have, as Haman puts it so well: Yeshno Am echad mefuzar umeforad bein ha'amim (there is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed amongst the peoples). Why does it say both scattered and dispersed? According to one interpretation Haman used both words to mean that not only are they a nation separate from one another, but they are also lacking in unity.

Gemarah Megilah 13b There is one people. Raba said: There never one who knew how to slander as skillfully as Haman. He said to Ahasuerus, Come, let us destroy them. He replied: I am afraid of their God, lest He do to me as He did to my predecessors. He replied: They are 'negligent' of the precepts. He said, There are Rabbis among them. He replied. They are 'one people'. Should you say that I will make a void in your kingdom, [I reply], they are 'scattered abroad among the peoples'. Should you say. There is some profit in them, I reply, 'they are dispersed' [nifredu], like an isolated bough [peridah] that does not bear fruit. Should you say that they occupy one province, I reply, 'they are in all the provinces of thy kingdom'. 'Their laws are diverse from those of every other people': they do not eat of our food, nor do they marry our women nor give us theirs in marriage, 'Neither keep they the king's laws', since they evade taxes the whole year by their loitering and sauntering. 'Therefore it profiteth not the king to suffer them', because they eat and drink and despise the throne. For if a fly falls into the cup of one of them, he throws it out and drinks the wine, but if my lord the king were to touch his cup, he would dash it on the ground and not drink from it. 'If it please the king, let it be written that they be destroyed, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver': Resh Lakish said: It was well known beforehand to Him at whose word the world came into being that Haman would one day pay shekels for the destruction of Israel. Therefore He anticipated his shekels with those of Israel. And so we have learnt: 'On the first of Adar³² proclamation is made regarding the shekalim and the mixed seeds'.



However, Esther commands Mordechai to assemble the Jews and uses the language: Knos et kol hay'hudim - assemble the Jews. This is to contradict Haman and unify the Jews. It is only once the Jews are united - am echad, that they deserved to be saved and that the tables turned.



Clan Gathering

So at the beginning of the Megillah they only have 1 of the "3 pillars" but at the end, once the Jews have been saved and the day of Purim is proclaimed as a chag, we have the line "Kimu v'kiblu hayehudim aleihem" the

K7: Galut as a concept - Ha'am not Ba'aratz

Jews confirmed and undertook upon themselves. It was here that they reaccepted the Torah upon them.

The Gemara (Shabbat 88a) explains that during Matan Torah "they stood under the mount". God had lifted the mountain and placed it over them. God said to them "if you accept the Torah is well; if not, here is your grave." Rav Acha says that this provides an excuse for non-observance since the Torah was imposed by threat of death thus rendering its acceptance invalid. The gemara responds by saying: "Even so, they reaccepted it in the

days of Achashveirosh".

By the end of the megilla we have 2 out of 3. We have am yisrael living in pi torat yisrael. But this isn't complete.

The story of miracle of the saving of the Jews during the time of the megilla is not a complete victory. If we compare the Al Hanissim of Purim to its Chanukah counterpart we see a big difference. The structure of the Chanukah one is one line of the problem and a whole paragraph of how we were saved whereas it's the direct opposite of that with Purim i.e. a whole paragraph of the problem and then we were saved. The key difference between them is eretz yisrael. With Purim it's more of a temporary release but with Chanukah it's a full victory.

Since the Purim story has taken place, what lessons have we taken on??

Do we still worship the ipads and football teams of England as if they were our temple?

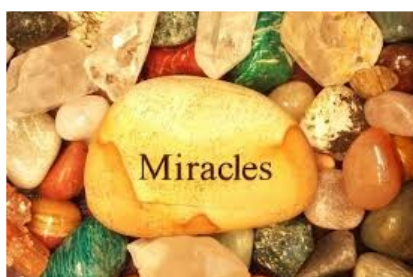
Do we feel so comfortable in the UK that aliyah is a retirement plan?

Are we at least unified as a people?

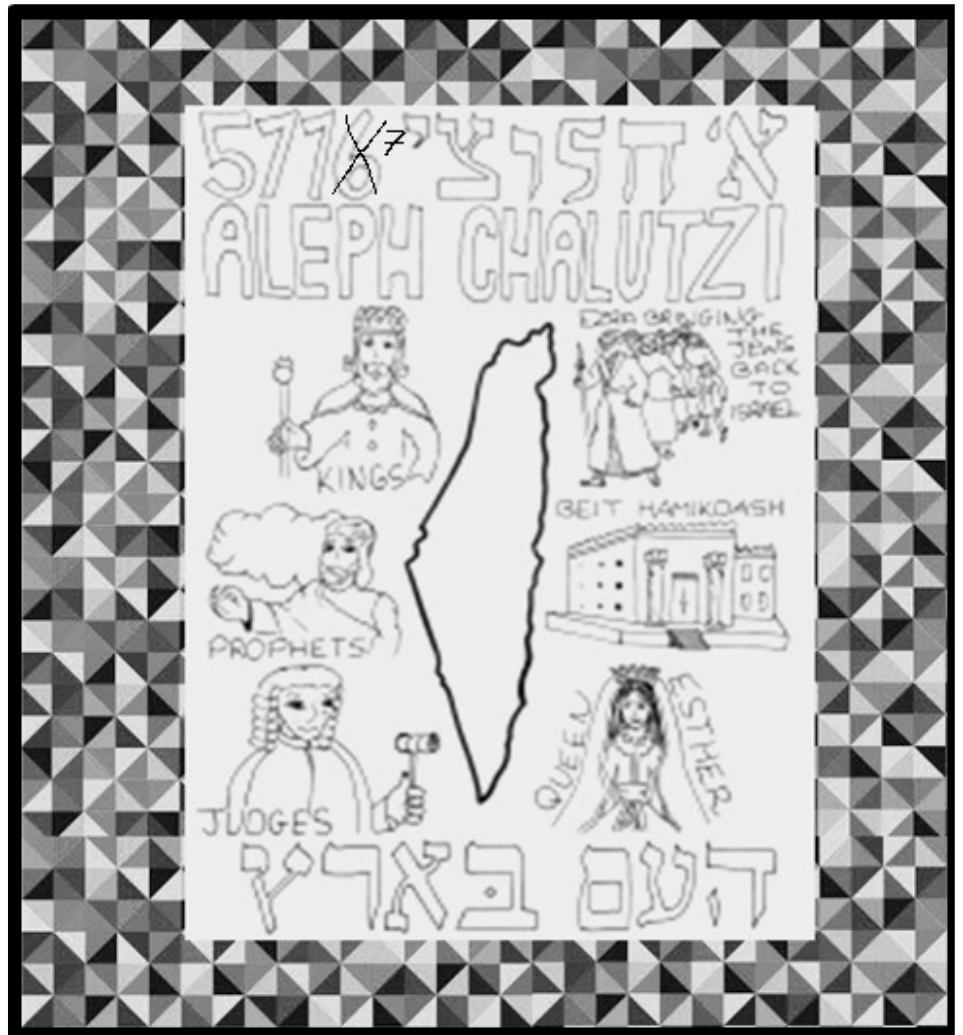
Have we accepted HaShem's Torah of our own accord or have we also operating under a forced inheritance?

Have we achieved the aims HaShem sent us into Galut for?

Are we spiritually ready to return to our land yet?



K8: Ezra and his modern connections



Aims:

1. To learn about the background and story of Sefer Ezra
2. The parallels and relevance of Ezra to our lives today as individuals, as religious Jews, as a Jewish community and as the State of Israel
3. What we can learn from the mistakes and achievements of Am Yisrael in the time of Ezra and in recent times

Introduction

The sefer of Ezra, (part of the twin sefarim - Ezra/Nechemya) deals with the return of Am Yisrael to Eretz Yisrael before the building of the second Bet HaMikdash. (Woohoo!!)



If you recall, there were seventy years of exile in between the destruction of the first Bet HaMikdash and the building of the second one.

A basic timeline of the events goes as follows:

- In the Jewish year 3338 [a little less than 2500 years ago] the evil Babylonian king Nebuchadnetzar destroyed the 1st Bet HaMikdash, the whole of Yerushalayim and exiled the remaining Jews to Babylon.
- Nebuchadnetzar eventually died and was succeeded by his son Merodach, was quite evil, but better than Nebuchadnetzar.
 - Then came Belshazzar, (he happened to be the father of Vashti). He was the last Babylonian king because his empire was destroyed and conquered by the Persians led by Daryavesh [Darius] the 1st.
 - One night, a hand and writing appeared on the wall of Belshazzar's palace while he was in the middle of a party. Daniel was called on to interpret it; he explained that G-D had judged Belshazzar, found him guilty and that his empire would be destroyed.



[Culture alert: This whole fascinating scene from the book of Daniel is depicted in a famous painting by the Dutch artist Rembrandt which can be found in the National Gallery. It's worth a trip down to Trafalgar Square to see it!]

- Daryavesh died about a year later and was succeeded by the next king of the Persian-Median Empire, Coresh [Cyrus]. As we shall soon see, he was very good to the Jews and it is during his reign that most of the book of Ezra occurs.
- Coresh is succeeded by Achashverosh [yes, that guy], who contrary to what you may have learnt in your primary school Purim play, was actually not a good guy at all.
- After Achashverosh's fourteen years of reign, he is succeeded by his and Esther's son Daryavesh [Darius] the 2nd. It is during his reign that the rest of the story of the book of Ezra occurred.
 - There were 70 years between the destruction of the 1st Bet HaMikdash & the authorisation of Daryavesh the 2nd to finish building the second - just as Yirmiyahu [Jeremiah] had prophesied all those years earlier. Trust the prophets to know!
 - The first four chapters of Ezra take place before the Purim story and the last happen after it.



No Jewish scholars refer to Daryavesh the 1st & 2nd. The other way round!!!

K8: Ezra and his modern connections

[Note: There are a number of different opinions on the order of the events in Ezra, This order follows 1 opinion, there are other Rabbinic and historical opinions.]

K8: Ezra and his modern connections

The Gemara in Megilla tells us that Belshazzar had tried to calculate the 70 years but a mistake in his calculations. When he thought that the period was up and Am Yisrael had not been redeemed, he thought that G-d had 'forgotten' Am Yisrael so he made a party to celebrate using the vessels of the Bet HaMikdash. This scene is also depicted in that painting by Rembrandt, who gives fantastic attention to detail using thick; rich oil colours to paint the vessels!



	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X
1	I									
2	II									
3	III									
4	IV									
5	V									
6	VI									
7	VII									
8	VIII									
9	IX									
10	X									
20	XX									
30	XXX									
40	XL									
50	L									
60	LX									
70	LXX									
80	LXXX									
90	XC									
100	C									
200	CC									
300	CCC									
400	CD									
500	D									
600	DC									
700	DCC									
800	DCCC									
900	CM									
1,000	M									

Achashverosh also did his calculations; he knew that Belshazzar had got it wrong, so he, as Gemara Megilla tells us, tried a different method of calculations. Quelle-surprise, but he also miscalculated [possibly, due to the Persian government's dumbing down of Maths GCSE] and when he thought that the LXX years were up he also threw a massive party where he ate and drank from the vessels of the Bet HaMikdash. This is the party which is spoken of at the beginning of Megillat Esther.

When we stop to appreciate the context of this story we can understand why it was so bad that the Jews had gone and joined in in Achashverosh's booze fest - best to join Mordechai in wearing sackcloth.

Ok, so back to Ezra, according to Gemara in Sanhedrin he was great enough to have received the Torah had Moshe not turned up before him!

Right at the beginning of the Sefer, we are told of Coresh's declaration, which reads as follows [Read with a Persian accent, if desired]

1 Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying: 2 'Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD, the God of heaven, given me; and He hath charged me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. 3 Whosoever there is among you of all His people--his God be with him--let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD, the God of Israel, He is the God who is in Jerusalem. 4 And whosoever is left, in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, beside the freewill-offering for the house of God which is in Jerusalem.' 5 Then rose up the heads of fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, even all whose spirit God had stirred to go up to build the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem. 6 And all they that were round about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, beside all that was willingly offered. {S} 7 Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put them in the house of his gods; 8 even those did Cyrus king of Persia bring forth by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and numbered them unto Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah. 9 And this is the number of them: thirty basins of gold, a thousand basins of silver, nine and twenty knives; {S} 10 thirty bowls of gold, {S} silver bowls of a second sort four hundred and ten, and other vessels a thousand. {S} 11 All the vessels of gold and of silver were five thousand and

K8: Ezra and his modern connections

four hundred. All these did Sheshbazzar bring up, when they of the captivity were brought up from Babylon unto Jerusalem.

So, picture the scene: it's about fifty or seventy years [depending from which exact event you are counting from] after the exile of Am Yisrael from Eretz Yisrael by that evil hovercraft from the Matrix, Nevuchadnetzar.

And, suddenly, along comes Coresh, the Emperor of the mightiest, most powerful empire in the known world, the Queen Bey of his day, sends out a letter throughout his empire and announces:

'Jews, I'm gonna let you go back to Israel, and build the Temple in Jerusalem'.



As simple as that, no shenanigans of not being allowed to build in 'East Jerusalem' or of 'peace treaties' with terrorist organisations etc.

Not only that, but according to Rashi's understanding of pasuk daled, the local peeps were instructed to give the Jews loads of dosh so that even the poorest of Jews would be able to afford the peak season El Al fares.

So what do you think would've or should've happened?

Millions of Jews with loads of overweight baggage as usual cramming into the departures terminal at Tehran International Airport?



However, a look at perek bet of Ezra tells us a different story.

64 The whole congregation together was forty and two thousand three hundred and sixty.

טו כל-הקהל, כאחד--ארבע
רבוא, אלפים שלש-מאות
ששים.

Just over 42 000 of the Jews, a tiny fraction of the Jewish population chose to return to the Land of Israel. The vast majority of the Jews chose to continue living their lives in the Galut of Tehran, Shushan, Baghdad, London, Manchester, Leeds, Hertfordshire, Caerwys, etc. etc. (Birmingham was so bad the Jews from left speedily!)

We should note that it seems that many of those who returned were not the 'frummet' of the Jews or the communal leaders. A very large amount of them were from semi-Jewish tribes and from families of dubious descent.

The fact that many religious Jews didn't return back to the Land, even caused friction and dispute amongst some of the greatest Rabbis [just like it does today!]. There is a fascinating story from the Gemara in Yoma [9b]



Resh Lakish [who was from Israel] said to Rabba bar bar Chana [who was from Bavel] "By G-d I hate you, because if you had all ascended together to Eretz Yisrael at the time of Ezra, you would have been compared to silver which doesn't

K8: Ezra and his modern connections

decay” [and the redemption would have been a complete redemption and not a temporary one]

Q. Why would so few people choose to go back? And why would there not be more religious Jews amongst the returnees?

These returnees were led by a small group of leaders, including Zrubavel, Nechemya and Mordechai [Him again!]. Ezra [who may have also been the prophet Malachi] himself did not go to the Eretz Yisrael, at that time, he was one of the leaders of the Jews of Bavel.

K8: Ezra and his modern connections

Come Tishrei of that year, the people 'assembled as one man' and went up to Yerushalayim to start building the Bet HaMikdash. All was going well until some of the enemies of Am Yisrael decided to tell Coresh that the Jews are building Yerushalayim in order that we can rebel against him. As a result, Coresh halts the construction of the Bet HaMikdash which remains partially built for the next eighteen years.



Fast forward eighteen years and Daryavesh 2nd is ruling the empire. Hagai and Zecharya, two of the last prophets prophesise to start re-building the Bt HaMikdash - the Jews go ahead and do so. Tatnai, the local governor complains to King Daryavesh about this.



King Daryavesh investigates the royal archives before replying to Tatnai, telling him to 'Leave them Jews alone' and allow them to build the Bet HaMikdash. Daryavesh instructs Tatnai to assist the Jews and give them everything they need for the Bet HaMikdash. Daryavesh adds that whoever prevents the Jews from doing so will be hanged from a beam in his house and have his house destroyed. Good news for the Jews. 😊

In some ways, this is no surprise given that Daryavesh had a Jewish mother So, the Bet HaMikdash was successfully built. Yay! And there was a big opening party in Adar and a Korban Pesach soon followed, just under six weeks later.

Foreign Office,
November 2nd, 1917.

Dear Lord Rothschild,

I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet

"His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country"

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.

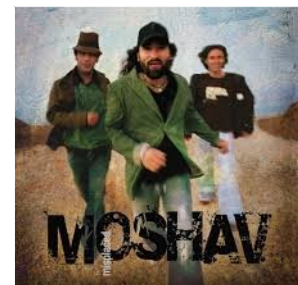


Following this, Ezra moves to Eretz Yisrael together with a bunch of Jews he brought with him and 'set his heart to expound the Torah of G-d, and to do it and teach in Israel it's statute and law' [7:10]. Ezra puts huge efforts into teaching and spreading Torah throughout the Land of Israel.

It is not necessary to go on further with the rest of Sefer Ezra, but chapters 7-10 explain in detail, the wonderful work Ezra did in spreading Torah, encouraging teshuva, and avoiding sins in Eretz Yisrael.

So how is this relevant to us as Jews today and perhaps to the State of Israel?

If we analyse this properly we see a numerous parallels between the narrative of Sefer Ezra and the narrative of the Jewish return to the Land of Israel in the past century.



K8: Ezra and his modern connections

- Koresh, the world's most powerful empire, proclaimed the Jewish right to return to and rebuild Eretz Yisrael. The Balfour declaration was proclaimed in 1917 by the [then] world's most powerful empire. The British foreign minister proclaimed their support in favour of Jewish rights to return and rebuild in Eretz Yisrael.
- After Koresh's declaration, sadly only 42,000 Jews went back, most of Am Yisrael stayed in Galut. After 1917, the vast majority of us didn't go home but chose to carry on living in USA, England, Germany, Poland, North Africa etc.
- It is sad to note that most of Am Yisrael who have returned to Eretz Yisrael have gone because of 'push' factors, the Kishinev pogroms, the Holocaust, persecution in Arab countries, economic collapse in the former Soviet Union, civil war in Ethiopia etc. The amount of us who have actively chosen to move back to Eretz Yisrael is sadly relatively low.
- 100 years after the revolutionary Balfour Declaration, we still stay in Chutz La'aretz. This took place also in the time of Koresh, and even twenty or so years later when Ezra led another group of Jews up.
- Those 42,000 [who were later joined by a few more thousand] Jews that did make Aliya in the time of Ezra were on the whole not the most religious at all. Rav Ovadya Sforno writes that G-d complained about the righteous Jews who remained in Bavel, because seeing as only the ones who were sinners came, His Shechina was [so to speak] unable to reside in Eretz Yisrael.



Rashi differs with the Sforno and explains that as these otherwise irreligious people were involved in building up the Land of Israel, their involvement in such an important mitzva caused them to be treasured by G-d and thought of as righteous.[This idea with reference to nowadays is very much promulgated in the writings of Rav Kook and in Rav Teichtal's Em HaBanim Semeicha - highly recommended reading!

Either way, Rashi, and Sforno are all in agreement that most of the olim chadashim from Bavel were not particularly religious and most of the religious guys sadly stayed in Chutz

La'aretz.

How does this parallel with the Zionist movement of the 20th Century? [Think about Herzl, Nordau, Weitzman, Ben Gurion etc.]

How might things have been different if the religious community as a whole made aliya and became a part of the Zionist movement? And why didn't this happen?!

Rav Teichtal was one of the leading Rabbis of Hungary/Slovakia. Like most he was quite anti-zionist. However, during the Holocaust he started to see things differently and while in hiding in Budapest in 1942-3 he wrote the ground-breaking book Em HaBanim Semeicha encouraging Orthodox Jews to actively return to Eretz Yisrael to help build the Land and bring the

K8: Ezra and his modern connections

ultimate redemption. He was later killed in the Holocaust. He writes as follows:

K8: Ezra and his modern connections

“If the Kings grant us permission to return to our Land, this is the Creator’s will. It will develop into what should have developed at the time of Coresh, had all the Jews returned. All we have to do is see to it that everyone returns. Then we will attain our heart’s desire, the final redemption, b’ezrat HaShem”

Rav Teichtal also writes as follows:

“Ever since the beginning of this [the Zionist] movement, the G-d fearing, Orthodox Jews separated themselves from it and opposed it. The simpletons on the other hand took the matter into their own hands and exerted themselves greatly to achieve their goals. They toiled and laboured until G-d’s desire succeeded through them. Now, **since the G-d fearing Jews kept their distance from this entire undertaking, is it surprising that the building was accomplished with a free [non-religious] spirit? Had we all co-operated from the very beginning, an abounding spirit of Torah and devotion would undoubtedly have pervaded the Land.** Now that the simpletons have already established a fine settlement, it is obvious that they are the lords of the Land, for it is the fruit of their labour.....Therefore the G-d fearing Jews must not withdraw from their building effort. **On the contrary they have a sacred obligation to contribute, from now on, to this holy endeavour and untie all of the forces.** They must accompany the initial builders in this lofty endeavour, in order to elevate it higher and higher.....When these simpletons see that we, the Orthodox Jews, do not reject them and that we want to work together with them, they will come closer to us and improve their ways.”



Rav Kook also encouraged and pushed the ‘frummer yidden’ to come and get involved in the building up of the State and suggested that if they did, then their actions would positively influence the Religious make-up of the State.

The fifth and final comparison I wish to look at takes us to the second half of Ezra. Though Ezra was quite successful in [albeit temporarily] stopping some of these practices, intermarriage, desecration of Shabbat [see end of Nechemya] and other major religious problems were a serious issue amongst those who had returned to the Land.

*What can you see about society in the ‘State of Israel’ in the time of Ezra that is **similar** to society in the State of Israel today?*

*How **different** might it have been if the **religious Jews** all came back from Bavel also?*

*How **different** would it be **today** if the **religious Jews** had all come back to Eretz Yisrael in the pre-state years?*

Are there any other relevant parallels between Sefer Ezra and nowadays which you can think of?

In summary:

Get over to the chanichim the important narrative of what happened in the time of Ezra.

Emphasise the **important parallels** between the goings on in the time of Ezra and the goings on in **our times** and in the past century.

Get the chanichim to discuss and debate:

To what extent are their **parallels** between The **Koresh declaration** and the **Balfour declaration**?

To what extent are their **parallels** between the **response** of the majority of **Am Yisrael** to the Koresh declaration and the **response** of the majority of **Am Yisrael** to the Balfour declaration [and to other events leading towards the establishment of the State of Israel]?

To what extent are their **parallels** between the dispute between the Rabbanim in the Gemara above and similar **disputes between Rabbis today** regarding similar issues?

To what extent are their **parallels** between the **response** and actions of **religious Jews** in the time of Ezra and during the 20th century and **nowadays**?

How **different** may things have been had **religious Jews** taken a more **positive attitude** both in the time of Ezra and in the 20th Century and nowadays?

To what extent are their **parallels** between the **religious observance** of general society in Eretz Yisrael in the time of Ezra and nowadays?

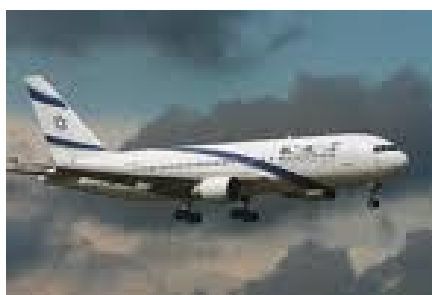
If despite all of the problems of most of Am Yisrael, and most religious Jews not joining in and returning to the Land, and the problems of most of the returnees not being religious, the return to Israel was still considered good enough to be considered 'an end of exile' and could've been the beginning of the final Geula [had it not been destroyed by the Romans a few hundred years later], what may this tell us about the State of Israel today?

Consider - The Sefer Ezra/Nechemia is not in Neviim but instead Ketuvim.

- It took place after Nevuah had ceased to be amongst the Jewish People, although Ezra and Nechemiah still had incredible Ruach Hakodesh.

So why are we including this Sefer at all if it is Ketuvim? Think back over what we have discussed - try and incorporate these messages into your Tochinit and Kvutsot.

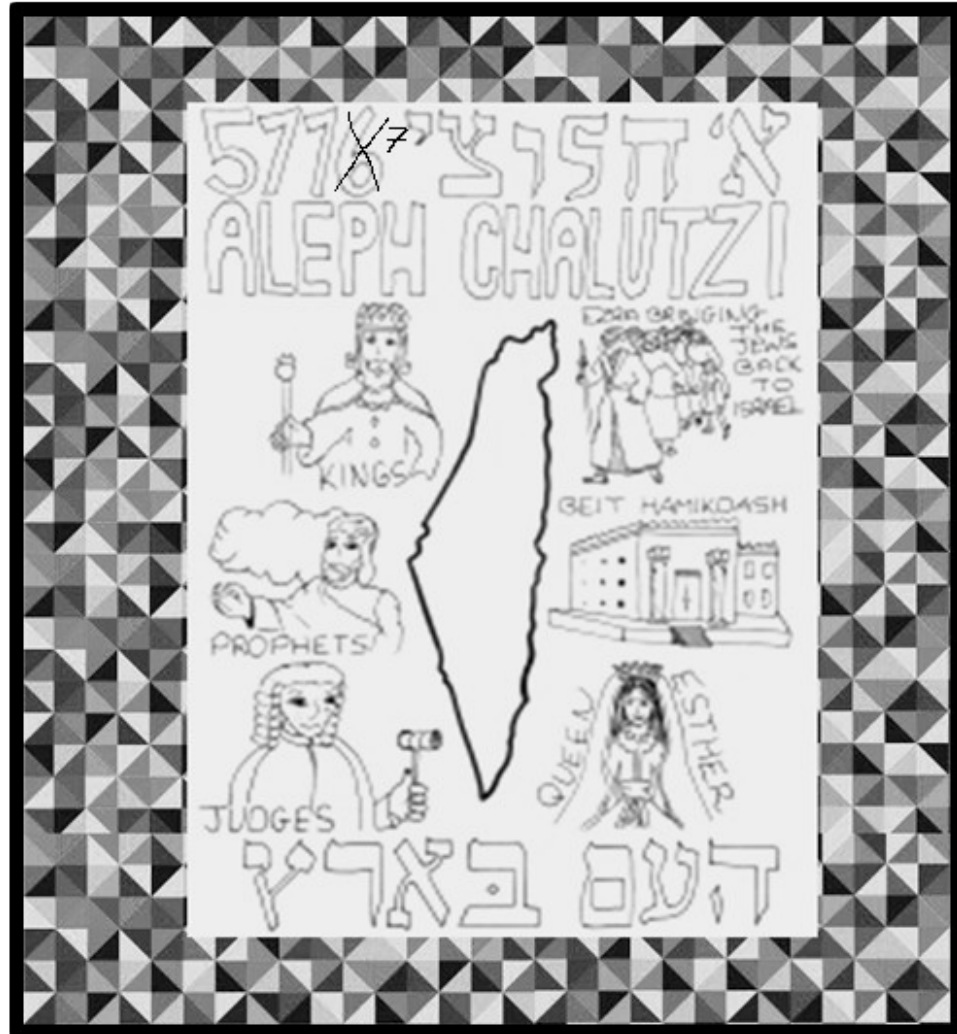
How can we use Ezra as a way of concluding what we have discussed and learnt from the other K's? how does it link the Sefarim?



K8: Ezra and his modern connections



K9: Sikkum



Aims:

1. To look back over all the past K's
2. To see the whole of machane as a journey
3. To really understand what B'Ikvot Avoteinu means for us as Bnei Akiva
4. Leave on a positive

K9 - Sikkum

So it's going to be the final Kvutseh and as well as playing all your favourite games, giving them extra grub and writing notes to each other - it would be good to spend some time chazaring (a Yeshivish word for 'going over') what we have learnt over the past two weeks, consolidating all the many different personalities that we have encountered in our journey through Tanach and understanding where we have reached in our tour of Jewish history.

With anything that we learn, it is always important to do chazarah. Machane, though the most important aspect is having fun - it is still an intense learning environment, our aim is that our chanichim will learn more in two weeks than they have done all year. Often, however, we do not realise how much we have learnt. Through looking back at what we have done, we can see how much we have learnt, reinforce it so we do not forget it and also gain a unique perspective of Tanach as a whole.

We have gone through Nach starting with Yehoshua taking over the reigns from Moshe and leading the Bnei Yisrael in to Eretz Yisrael, right up until Ezra, we have tried, throughout machane to meet and learn from as many different characters as possible within the short time we have. But the journey does not end here. For us, the destruction of Bayit Sheini was really only the beginning of this story. Our story of how we got to where we are today, this field in Caerwys, a religious Zionist youth movement, is all part of what happens next and our chanichim will spend the rest of their Summer machanot learning about this. Until next Summer, however, what are the messages we can take with us?

K1 - Yehoshua, K2 - Shoftim, K3 - Melachim, K4 - Shlomo, K5 - End of kingdoms,

K6 - Prophets, K7 - Galut, K8 - Ezra

Firstly, we should look over all the different messages that we have learnt from the different characters we have looked at...

Can you list at least one different message we got from each of these things?

Make sure you can, because, if you can't your chanichim won't be able to either!

As we said back in K0.5:

"Like we do right here on machane, the Tanach doesn't educate us by giving us a long list of rules, but rather teaches us through role models to be role models! Yes, we have all the mitzvot that appear in commandment form in the Torah, but first and foremost comes the stories of our ancestors and their deeds, from the good qualities to their not so good qualities, through walking in their footsteps and following the example they led for us we see how we should live our lives as Jews."

We learn how we should live our lives as Jews by learning of the footsteps of our fathers and following them and by looking at their journey into Israel and the times of the 1st/2nd Beit hamikdashim. This does not mean

K9 - Sikkum

copying their every action but internalising properly the messages that they show us and applying them to our own lives.

In what situations in our everyday life do the messages of the people we have learnt about become practical?

K9 - Sikkum

The above question seems slightly strange, a bit broad, and that's because the answer should be - like we have said, the reason why we get so many details of the lives of the The Neviim is so that we know how they brought their Avodat HaShem into every facet of their lives especially meaningful to us as Bnei Akiva.

For the past two weeks (three weeks for us) our chanichim have been eating, sleeping and living in a small microcosm of the world that we have created, a world based on the ideals of Bnei Akiva, and before us - the period of Nach. Torah V'Avodah is not just the message of Bnei Akiva - it is the message of our Avot,, Nevvim, Melachim and Shoftim, Yehoshua who fought for Eretz Yisrael whilst ensuring he left time to learn Torah, all of our ancestors lived Torah all day every day - this is the meaning of Torah V'Avodah - nothing in this world is mundane and we have the power to elevate it to a higher level, to sanctify it just as our Avot did. The Tanach tells the story of Am Yisrael B'Eretz Yisrael Al Pi Torat Yisrael, it is our instruction book - it tells us how we can achieve that goal and how we can fail - and ultimately, Aleph Chalutzi has shown us that if we follow in the footsteps of our fathers, we can achieve this ideal - to bring Am Yisrael to be in Eretz Yisrael according to the Torah of Israel.

Ha'am Ba'aratz is not just a theme for this machane - it is a message for life. Let's make this K go out with a bang!