

## K1: Intro to Theme



### **Aims:**

1. **Learn** about Tanach.
2. **Teach** the 24 Sifrei Tanach.
3. **Introduce** the theme of Ha'am Ba'Aretz.

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Aleph Chalutzi: Ha'Am Ba'Aretz – העם בארץ

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### What is Tanach?

Tanach is an acronym made up of the three sections, 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.

Torah is made up the five books of Moshe: **בראשית** - Bereishit, **שמות** - Shemot, **ויקרא** - Vayikra, **במדבר** - Bamidbar, **דברים** - Devarim.

We also have the books of Neviim – the prophets. We read bits and pieces throughout the year in our Haftarat.

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

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

Then 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.

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1. Tehillim - תהלים - Psalms
2. Mishlei - משלי - Proverbs
3. Iyov - 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

## The Timeline of Tanach

2488	1272 BCE	Death of Moses/ Yehoshua (Joshua) leads Jews into Israel
<b>Judges Rule Israel</b>		
<b>Jewish Year</b>	<b>Civil Year</b>	<b>Historic Event</b>
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
<b>Saul, David &amp; Solomon</b>		
<b>Jewish Year</b>	<b>Civil Year</b>	<b>Historic Event</b>
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
<b>First Temple Period</b>		
<b>Jewish Year</b>	<b>Civil Year</b>	<b>Historic Event</b>
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

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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.
<b>Purim Events</b>		
<b>Jewish Year</b>	<b>Civil Year</b>	<b>Historic Event</b>
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.

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



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## K2: Yehoshua



### **Aims:**

1. **Learn** about Yehoshua and his wars.
2. **Discuss** the prioritisation of Hishtadlut as opposed to Bitachon.
3. **Explore** the ethics of war, then and now

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K2: Yehoshua

### Intro to Yehoshua

Sefer Yehoshua depicts the triumphant entrance 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. But although 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.

#### 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.

### 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 the necessity for Hishtadlut in 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 G-d 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:

כִּי עִמָּךְ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ, בְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר תֵּלֵךְ

"Because Hashem your G-d is with you wherever you go." (1:9)

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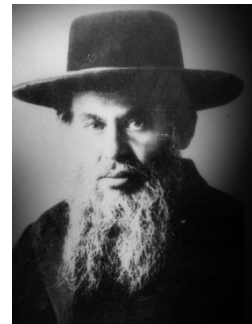
Yehoshua still does not stroll casually across the border, but instead cautiously appraises the situation in Yericho through tactical espionage. The in-depth strategic planning that Yehoshua engages in can be particularly seen regarding the ambush at Ai (one example of a victory, see Perek 8).

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 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.

### The need for Bitachon as well

Despite emphasising the importance of Hishtadlut, the message of Sefer Yehoshua is not that we only get something when we put the effort in. Rather, 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 בְּה' עֲזָרָם וּמִגֹּנָם הוּא** – *"Israel, trust in Hashem! He is their help and shield."* (Tehillim 115:9) 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 mitzvot, 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 mitzvot, G-d forbid, we have absolutely no portion in our forefather's inheritance. We would be unsuccessful in conquering the Land, for it would not be rightfully ours."*



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

לֹא־יִמּוּשׁ סֵפֶר הַתּוֹרָה הַזֶּה מִפִּיךָ וְהִגִּיתָ בוּ יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה לְמַעַן תִּשְׁמַר לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּכֹל־הַכְּתוּב בּוֹ כִּי אַז תִּצְלִיחַ אֶת־דְּרָכְךָ וְאַז תִּשְׁפִּיל:  
אֶז תִּצְלִיחַ אֶת־דְּרָכְךָ וְאַז תִּשְׁפִּיל:

*"Let not this Sefer Torah cease from your lips, but recite it day and night, so that you may observe faithfully all that is written in it. Only then will you prosper in your undertakings and only then will you be successful." (1:8)*

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 what is Hashem's Will if not following his Torah?

רַק חֲזַק וְאַמֵּץ מְאֹד לְשָׁמֵר לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּכֹל־הַתּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר צִוְּךָ מֹשֶׁה עַבְדִּי אֶל־תִּסּוּר מִמֶּנּוּ יָמִין וּשְׂמֹאל לְמַעַן תִּשְׁפִּיל בְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר תֵּלֵךְ:  
רַק חֲזַק וְאַמֵּץ מְאֹד לְשָׁמֵר לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּכֹל־הַתּוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר צִוְּךָ מֹשֶׁה עַבְדִּי אֶל־תִּסּוּר מִמֶּנּוּ יָמִין וּשְׂמֹאל לְמַעַן תִּשְׁפִּיל בְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר תֵּלֵךְ:

*"But you must be very strong and resolute to observe faithfully all the Mitzvot that My servant Moses enjoined upon you. Do not deviate from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go." (1:7)*

**DISCUSSION POINT – 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 the study of Torah with serving 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 Israeli government that religious boys will over 5 years spend approximately 1.4 years in the IDF and 3.6 years in yeshiva.



## The case for Hesder

"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

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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 Chazal conceived and described them, but Yeshivot Hesder?...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'milut chasadim, the empathetic concern for others and action on their behalf...When, as in contemporary Israel, the greatest single Chesed done can perform is helping to defend his fellows' very lives, the implications for yeshiva education should be obvious..."

- Rav Aharon Lichtenstein zt'l,  
Former Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Har Etzion  
(a Hesder Yeshiva)

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.



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?



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**DISCUSSION POINT – Do you think that Hesder is the best way of integrating Torah observance with military service?**

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

### HADRACHA HOT TIP!

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 guy who was drowning story

### Surely war is not ideal?!

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 Mashiach who will bring world peace. So why does Sefer Yehoshua document so many wars? The answer is that 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 Mitzva' – Obligatory War, and 'Milchemet Reshut' – Optional War. Rambam defines these categories:

*"A king should not initiate war unless it is Milchemet Mitzva (an Obligatory War). And what is an Obligatory War? This is a war against the seven nations (see Devarim 7:1), war against Amalek, or to assist Israel from trouble that has come upon them (see Bamidbar 10:9). Secondly, one can fight Milchemet Reshut (an Optional 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." (Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Melachim u'Milchamot 5:1)*



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.

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As Jews, we do not glorify war for its own sake, Yehoshua's wars were considered 'Milchemet Mitzva' because Hashem commanded them and because they 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 yourself. 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 once they were in the land of Israel.

### **DISCUSSION POINT- 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 and 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.

### **Acting Ethically in War**

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 and 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. In response G-d commanded that Achan, his entire family and all his possessions be destroyed.

Additionally, Yehoshua made a peace treaty with the Gibeonim (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

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Kiddush HaShem would be achieved. In fact, he even goes to fight in defence of the Gibeonim 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 Yericho, which they honour.

Moreover, 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.

This is in line with the Halacha according to Rambam:

*"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 (Devarim 20:10)." (Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Melachim u'Milchamot 6:1)*

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 Avodat Hashem is a perfect symbol of this and Achan's transgression of the command reveals a fundamental misunderstanding of why Bnei Yisrael were waging war.

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

*– Golda Meir, Prime Minister 1969-74*



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**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 in the recent conflict to meet their obligation to operate within the laws of war?

Firstly, Israel gave advance warning before taking out targets (scan the QR code for more).



Moreover, the IDF adheres to an unusually high moral standard of conduct. As Defense Minister Benny Gantz put it in 2019: "Our battle orders include the rules of engagement and the [Biblical] Ten Commandments. The computer code of the F-35 and the moral code of the prophets of Israel." This concept is made more explicit in Ruach Tzahal, the IDF's Code of Ethics, which every Israeli soldier studies during basic training:

*The soldier shall make use of his weaponry and power only for the fulfillment of the mission and solely to the extent required; he will maintain his humanity even in combat. The soldier shall not employ his weaponry and power in order to harm non-combatants or prisoners of war, and shall do all he can to avoid harming their lives, bodies, honor and property."*



*"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, Commander in Chief of the IAF 2004-08

**DISCUSSION POINT - 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?**

## **K3: Shoftim**



### **Aims:**

1. **Discuss** lessons we can learn from the Shoftim.
2. **Learn** about the disastrous cycle of Sefer Shoftim.
3. **Discuss** Devorah as the only female judge.
4. **Explore** 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 Sefer 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.

## The Cycle of Sefer Shoftim

Shmuel's message is conveyed 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 – Avodah Zara (reliance on 'powers' other than G-d)
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....





## Bad neighbours and bad influences

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: ***"So Yehoshua took the whole land, according to all that Hashem spoke unto Moshe; and Yehoshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. And the land had rest from war."*** (Yehoshua 11:23)

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

However, this wasn't quite the case. Even though Am Yisrael conquered and occupied Eretz Yisrael 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 [see 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' (a big no-no!).



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

## It gets worse

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, the 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

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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 Eretz Yisrael 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.

**DISCUSSION POINT- Does this mean that living amongst other "nations" is inherently a problem? Does it have other advantages?**

**Rabbi Zev Leff once said that we, as the Jewish People, are supposed to be 'insulated, not isolated'. What does this mean? How can we achieve this?**

### A Crisis of Leadership

איזה דור שכולו הבל? הוי אומר: זה דורו של שפוט שופטים

*"Which is the generation of foolishness? The generation of the Shoftim."*

*(Bava Batra 15b)*

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.

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### Points to Ponder

- ☛ 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. Is there always an objective advantage to having a permanent leader?

### A Failed Mission

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 G-d's original expectations.



### Sefer Shoftim's Relevance to Us

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 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 any event, let's take a brief look at some of the Shoftim...

### 'Good' Shofet 1] Gidon

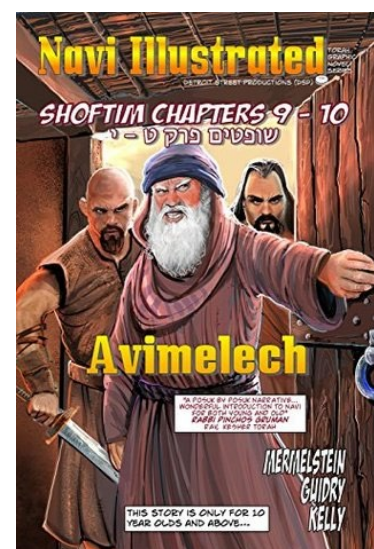
- 📖 From Shevet Menashe, successful military leader and spiritual leader. Rules over all of Bnei Yisrael for 40 years
- 📖 He is very humble, nervous and has low self-esteem as a leader. He needs signs and encouragement at every step of the way.
- 📖 He cares about the nation and Hashem helps him realise 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.

### 'Good' Shofet 2] Devorah (and Barak)

- 📖 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.

### 'Not so good' Shofet 1] Avimelech

- 📖 Avimelech is the only self-appointed Shofet!! He is NOT appointed by Hashem!
- 📖 His 'kingship' 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.
- 📖 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).



### 'Not so good' Shofet 2] Shimshon

- 📖 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.

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- 📖 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.

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, but now they were fighting Canaan. They were an internal nation, which the Bnei Yisrael were supposed to conquer. Canaan was the local superpower in the Middle East, it was much more technologically advanced than Am Yisrael, (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 (prophet) and to actually engage in judging the people. The text also calls her *"eshet lapidot"* (Shoftim 4:4) – literally 'wife of torches', upon which the Mefarshim comment:

- 📖 Rashi : 'Lapid' means 'wicks' – Devorah made wicks for the Mikdash
- 📖 Ralbag: 1) 'Lapid' means 'lightening', which refers to Barak i.e. simply she was Barak's wife. 2) Devorah was an Eshet Chayil, a gibor (warrior), and had high level of neviah (prophecy) 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 shira, with her 'charif' criticism of the Shvatim who do not come and fight.

## Girl Power

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.



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' (modest), 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"* (5:7). Of course she was far more than just a mother: she was a judge, a warrior, a prophetess and a role model for our

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own generation, for all women looking to define themselves and fulfil 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 Yisrael 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 Avot: "Bemakom she'ein anashim – hishtadel 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 hammer 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.



**DISCUSSION POINT – What does the story of Devorah teach us about women's role in Judaism?**

**Do we have female leaders like Devorah today? Should we?**



### 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!

#### Hadracha Hot Tip

Explore how today's society relate to its leaders?

Who do our Chanichim see as leaders?

What do people want most from their leaders?

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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.

### Point to Ponder

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?



# K4: Shlomo and the Golden Years of Tanach



## **Aims:**

1. **Discover** who Shlomo was and what he achieved.
2. **Learn** about the Beit Hamikdash, its necessity and its importance.
3. **Explore** the concept of Or la'Goyim through the Bet haMikdash and the Golden Years of Tanach.
4. Consider if Medinat Yisrael is an Or 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. Shlomo's rule 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:

**וַתֵּלֶד בֵּן וַתִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ שְׁלֹמֹה וְה' אָהָבוּ:**

*"She [Batsheva] bore a son and she named him Solomon, Hashem favoured 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.

### DISCUSSION POINT – 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 said that he would be the wisest man in the world, then and in the future:

**הִנֵּה עָשִׂיתִי כַדְבָרֶיךָ הַנֵּה נָתַתִּי לְךָ לֵב חָכָם וְנָבוֹן אֲשֶׁר כָּמוֹךָ לֹא־הָיָה לְפָנַי וְאַחֲרָיִךְ לֹא־קִוּם כָּמוֹךָ:**

*"I now do as you have spoken. I grant you a wise and discerning mind; there has never been anyone like you before, nor will anyone like you arise again."*

*(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, such as riches, honour and a long life.

Immediately after this comes a very famous story (Perek 3:16). In brief: two 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 and was content with cutting the baby in half if it meant she would benefit in some way.

## The Golden Years

It says in 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 Bet haMikdash 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 was overjoyed to help Shlomo build the Mikdash.



These 40 years were the realisations of our goals, the completion of our projects and 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 and 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 couldn't do it himself for prophetically revealed technical reasons. 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 and 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.

## The Bet haMikdash

During 'Temple Times', Judaism was very much focused on the Bet haMikdash. It was a football-stadium sized, multi-level structure standing on Jerusalem's Har 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 haMikdash?

### 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'.

### Point to Ponder:

*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 Bet haMikdash – a place of worship).*

Now cast your minds as far back as the period of Ya'akov 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).

What kind of statement is having a Bet haMikdash in Jerusalem making? 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 and 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!

וְהִבִּיאוּתִים אֶל-הָהָר קֹדֶשׁי, וְשִׁמְחָתִים בְּבַיִת תְּפִלָּתִי עוֹלֹתֵיהֶם וְזִבְחֵיהֶם לְרִצּוֹן, עַל-מִזְבְּחִי כִּי בֵיתִי, בֵּית-תְּפִלָּה יִקְרָא לְכָל-הָעַמִּים

*"I will bring them to My sacred mount and let them rejoice in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices Shall be welcome on My altar; For My House shall be called A house of prayer for all peoples." (Yishayahu 56:7)*

## Or la'Goyim 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 Bet haMikdash. She was so impressed with the passageway from Shlomo's palace to the Bet haMikdash because it represented such humility. He was a king and had his own palace yet he still wanted it to be connected to the Bet haMikdash 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

וַיָּבֹאוּ מִכָּל-הָעַמִּים לִשְׁמֹעַ אֶת חֻכְמַת שְׁלֹמֹה מֵאֵת כָּל-מְלָכֵי הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר שָׁמְעוּ אֶת-חֻכְמָתוֹ:  
*"Men of all peoples came to hear Solomon's wisdom, [sent] by all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom."*

*(Melachim 1, 5:14)*

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

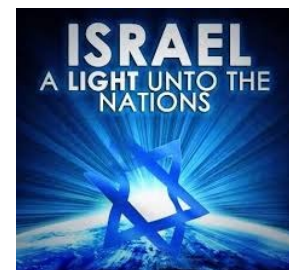
They gazed at our Bet haMikdash and learned that a building can be sublime. They gazed at our King and learned that a ruler can be benevolent. They gazed at our nation and learned that a people can be loving. They gazed at our laws and learned that there was actually be only one G-d.

Eretz Yisrael 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?

## Or la'Goyim

A common phrase that is thrown around is the phrase "Or la'Goyim"- is loosely translated English "being a light to the nations".

When Or la'Goyim 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 recent 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 "Or la'Goyim" because we think we're cool or is there actually a source for this?

The first source is Yishayahu 42:6:

אָנִי ה' קְרֵאתִיךָ בְּצִדְקָה וְאַחֲזֶק בְּיָדְךָ וְאַצְרִיךָ וְאַתִּנֶּנְךָ לְבְרִית עִם לְאוֹר גּוֹיִם:

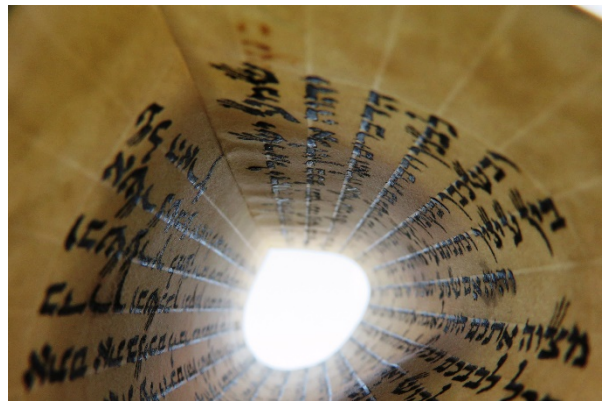
*"I, Hashem, in Tzedek, have summoned you, And I have grasped you by the hand. I created you, and appointed you A covenant people, a light of nations."*

The second source is Yeshayahu 60:2-3:

כִּי-הִנֵּה הַחֹשֶׁךְ יִכְסֶה-אֶרֶץ, וְעֲרַפֵּל לְאֻמִּים; וְעֲלֵיךָ יִזְרַח ה', וְכְבוֹדוֹ עָלֶיךָ יֵרָאֶה. וְהָלְכוּ גוֹיִם, לְאוֹרְךָ; וּמְלָכִים, לְנֹגַהּ זְרֹחֲךָ.

*"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."*

Malbim in both these sources explains that the "light" refers to the light of the Torah and the "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.



Rav Avraham Yitzchak 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.

**Point to Ponder:**

*How do we achieve this status? Do we provide a lighthouse of Torah study that will continue in the world no matter what situation? Or, perhaps we take the approach of reaching out to all the disconnected Jews around the world or contributing to the wider development of society?*

The notion of Or la'Goyim is used in a communal, national level by the Navi. Similarly, 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?

## Is Medinat Yisrael an Or la'Goyim?

If you were to ask how Israel is 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's a question of whether or not Israel is doing good for the world, the answer is a clear yes; just look at any of Israel 's technological/medical achievement, the fact it treats all it's citizens equally, and the fact that it's the only Middle East Democracy.



It seems that Israel is doing all it can to come across in a positive light unfortunately the world needs to realize this. In a recent speech staunch defender of Israel, Colonel 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 (and thus, 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 Or la'Goyim 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 Or la'Goyim because that is the ideal situation and at that point

וְהָיָה ה' לְמֶלֶךְ עַל-כָּל-הָאָרֶץ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יְהִי ה' אֶחָד וְשֵׁמוֹ אֶחָד:

*"Then Hashem will be King over all the world, on that day shall Hashem be one and his name be one."*

(Zechariah 14:9)

### Point to Ponder:

*What can we do to help Medinat Yisrael be an Or la'Goyim?*





## SUMMER MACHANE 5781

העם בארץ - Ha'am Ba'Aretz - Aleph Chalutzi

K4: Shlomo and the Golden Years of Tanach

In this Kvutza we have looked at the Golden Age of Tanach through the Bet haMikdash and the personality and 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.

# K5: End of the Kingdoms and Exile



## **Aims:**

1. **Learn** about some of the different Kings in Jewish History.
2. **Understand** the dangers of relying on other countries for help.
3. **Discuss** the extent to which you can serve Hashem in your own way.

## Introduction

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 Hashem, 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 and 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 there was much more room for individual movement. The judge didn't 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 can't go through every king and their stories in this Chomer but it's an easy read in Sefer 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.

## SUMMER MACHANE 5781

Aleph Chalutz: Ha'am Ba'Aretz - העם בארץ

K5: End of the Kingdoms and Exile



### 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 sacrificing his son through fire as a form of worship to the idol



Molech. Aram and Israel teamed up to go to war against Yehuda, but they did not defeat Achaz in battle. Aram did, however, recapture one city, Eilat, and they evicted the Jews who were living there.

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, but neither redeemed Eilat for Yehuda nor gave it back to Israel.

### 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, but Achaz went even further to undermine the Temple service. He insisted on bringing the sacrifices himself on the altar even though he was not a Kohen and the true altar became secondary. He also made a personal shortcut to the palace. (One may not make a shortcut through a synagogue and certainly not through the Temple!)



The reign of Achaz was just sixteen years. When he died, he was replaced by his son Chizkiyahu, 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 and often struggle 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 Mizrahi Jews, etc.) are not uncommon.



This period of history also witnessed the introduction of blood libels. A blood libel is a false accusation or claim that religious minorities murder children to use their blood in certain aspects of their religious rituals and holidays. The concept of the 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 G-d 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. Sancheriv imposed a heavy tribute; Chizkiyahu was forced to strip the gold from the Temple doors to meet the payment. (This was 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 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 silent and not reply – so they do. Chizkiyahu was a pretty great king and according to the Gemara (Masechet Sanhedrin 94b) he managed to persuade Jews all over Israel to learn Torah. *"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 lifetime.

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

**Point to Ponder:**

*Is tefilla always the answer? Think back to K1...*

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

**Point to Ponder:**

*How could someone worthy of being Mashiach forget to thank Hashem for such a great miracle?! Do we always appreciate the miracles we merit? Think back to 1948...*

Eventually Chizkiyahu dies and evidently 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 Hashem had destroyed before the Israelites"*!

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. Eventually enough was enough and promises to exile them...

## **Don't forget about Hashem when you serve Hashem!**

King Uzziya is an example of a good king who turned bad. Because he was loyal to G-d, He helped him and he became successful. 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 G-d's rules, seeking personal grandeur, the desire to follow one's desire despite the convention and authority that restricts a person.



**Point to Ponder:**

*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 the prophet does Hakhel [reading the whole 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.

G-d advised Yirmiyahu to announce throughout Yehuda and Yerushalayim 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 (Devarim 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.



# K6: Prophets of Social Justice



## Aims:

1. **Understand** what prophecy is and why it's important.
2. **Discover** the Nevi'im as prophets of social justice.
3. **Explore** the relevance of their messages for us today.

## Introduction to Prophecy

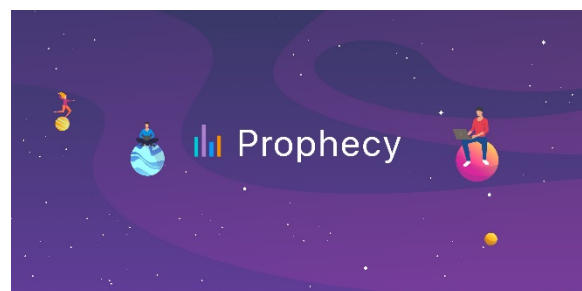
A prophet is someone who receives prophetic messages from G-d and is instructed to either act on these messages or prophesise these messages to other people. The Hebrew word for a prophet is a 'Navi'. In Devarim, in Parshat Shoftim we are told:

כִּי אַתָּה בָּא אֶל-הָאָרֶץ, אֲשֶׁר-ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ--לֹא-תִלְמַד לַעֲשׂוֹת, כְּתוֹעֵבֹת הַגּוֹיִם הָהֵם... נְבִיא אֲקִים לָהֶם מִקֶּרֶב אַחֵיהֶם, כְּמוֹךָ; וְנִתְּתִי דְבָרִי, בְּפִיו, וְדִבֶּר אֵלֵיהֶם, אֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר אֶצְוֶנּוּ. וְהָיָה, הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יִשְׁמַע אֶל-דְּבָרִי, אֲשֶׁר יְדַבֵּר, בְּשֵׁם-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי, אֲדַרְשׁ מֵעַמּוֹ. אִךְ הַנְּבִיא אֲשֶׁר יִזְדָּ לְדַבֵּר דְּבַר בְּשֵׁם, אֶת אֲשֶׁר לֹא-צִוִּיתִי לְדַבֵּר, וְאֲשֶׁר יְדַבֵּר, בְּשֵׁם אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים--וּמֵת, הַנְּבִיא הַהוּא.

*When you come to the Land that Hashem, your G-d, gives you, you shall not learn to act according to the abominations of those nations... 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. 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. But the prophet who wilfully shall speak a word in My name, that which I have not commanded him to speak, or who shall speak in the name of the gods of others - that prophet shall die. (Devarim 18:9, 18-20)*

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 **נ-ב-א** which comes from the root, **נ-ב**, meaning openness and hollowness. A true Navi is someone who has made themselves 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 Masechet Megilla (14a), we only actually know of 55 of them [48 blokes and 7 ladies]. The Gemara challenges this, 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 Bet (2:3), Elisha comes to Bet-El and is greeted by the 'Bnei haNevi'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 Beraita cited in Masechet Megilla [14a] teaches 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 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.



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. Ovadia's recorded prophecy takes up less than one page in the Stone edition green Artscroll Tanach! And Yehoshua, whose narrative takes a large section of Tanach, has very little of his prophecy recorded.

The following points to ponder arise:

- ❏ *Why are we only informed of the existence of a small proportion of the prophets who existed during the history of Am Yisrael?*
- ❏ *Why is it that of the prophets we know of, at times the vast majority of their prophecies are not recorded 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?*

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." (Megilla 14a)*

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 le'Chavero 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.

## Yeshayahu

Yeshayahu 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 and during the reign of Kings Uziyahu, Yotam, Achaz and Chizkiyahu.



The Gemara in Pesachim 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 le'Chavero 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 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 Haftara of Parshat Devarim, where Yeshayahu prophesies the word of G-d and declares:

שמעו דבר-ה', קציני סדם; האזינו תורת אלקינו, עם עמרה. למה-לי רב-זבחיכם יאמר ה', שבעתי עלות אילים וחלב מריאים; ודם פרים וכבשים ועתודים, לא חפצתי. כי תבאו, לראות פני-מי-בקש זאת מידיכם, רמס חצרי. לא תוסיפו, הביא מנחת-שוא-קטרת תועבה היא, לי; חדש ושבט קרא מקרא, לא-אוכל און ועצרה. חדשיכם ומועדיכם שגאה נפשי, היו עלי לטרח; נלאיתי, נשא. ובפרשכם כפיכם, אעלים עיני מכם-גם כיתרבבו תפלה,

אינני שמע: ידיכם, דמים מלאו. רחצו, הזכו--הסירו רע מעלליכם, מנגד עיני: חדלו, הרע. למדו היטב דרשו משפט, אשרו חמוץ; שפטו תום, ריבו אלמנה.

*Hear the word of Hashem, You chieftains of Sodom; Give ear to our G-d's instruction, You folk of Gomorrah! "What need have I of all your sacrifices?" Says Hshem. "I am sated with burnt offerings of rams, And suet of fatlings, And blood of bulls; And I have no delight In lambs and he-goats. That you come to appear before Me— Who asked that of you? Trample My courts no more; Bringing oblations is futile, Incense is offensive to Me. New moon and sabbath, Proclaiming of solemnities, Assemblies with iniquity, I cannot abide. Your new moons and fixed seasons Fill Me with loathing; They are become a burden to Me, I cannot endure them. And when you lift up your hands, I will turn My eyes away from you; Though you pray at length, I will not listen. Your hands are stained with crime - Wash yourselves clean; Put your evil doings Away from My sight. Cease to do evil; Learn to do good. Devote yourselves to justice; Aid the wronged. Uphold the rights of the orphan; Defend the cause of the widow. (Yishayahu 1:10-17)*

**DISCUSSION POINT – What is the relevancy of this prophecy today? To us as individuals? As a nation? To 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 prophesies:

שמעו-זאת, השאפים אביון; ולשבית, ענוי- (עניי-) ארץ. לאמר, מתי יעבר החדש ונשבירה שבר, והשבת, ונפתחה-בר--להקטין איפה ולהגדיל שקל, ולעות מאזני מרמה. לקנות בכסף דלים, ואביון בעבור נעלים; ומפל בר, נשביר. נשבע ה', בגאון יעקב; אם-אשכח לנצח, כל-מעשיהם. העל זאת לא-תרגז הארץ, ואבל כל-יושב בה; ועלתה כאר כלה, ונגרשה ונשקה (ונשקעה) כיאור מצרים. והיה ביום ההוא, נאם אד-ני ה', והבאתי השמש, בצהרים; והחשכתני לארץ, ביום אור. והפכתי חגיכם לאבל, וכל-שיריכם לקינה, והעליתי על-כל-מתננים שק, ועל-כל-ראש קרחה; ושמתיה כאבל יחיד, ואחריתה ביום מר.

*Listen to this, you who devour the needy, annihilating the poor of the land, saying, "If only the new moon were over, so that we could sell grain; the sabbath, so that we could offer wheat for sale, using an ephah that is too small, and a shekel that is too big, tilting a dishonest scale, and selling grain refuse as grain! We will buy the poor for silver, the needy for a pair of sandals." Hashem swears by the Pride of Jacob: "I will never forget any of their doings." Shall not the earth shake for this And all that dwell on it mourn? Shall it not all rise like the Nile And surge and subside like the Nile of Egypt? And in that day —declares my L-rd Hashem— I will make the sun set at noon, I will darken the earth on a sunny day. I will turn your festivals into mourning And all your songs into dirges; I will put sackcloth on all loins And tonsures on every head. I will make it mourn as for an only child, All of it as on a bitter day. (Amos 8:4-10)*

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).



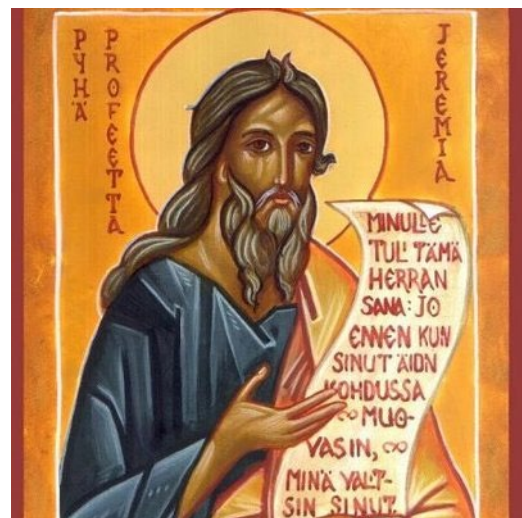
They withheld produce from the market until the next month so that they could drive up the prices and make a greater profit. They hoarded crops till after the Shemitta year when they would be able to charge more. They were dishonest and used false weights and measures to make more money. They had impoverished 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.

## Yirmiya

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

Yoshiyahu was a really big tzaddik (see K5) 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 Pharoah 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

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.

## Other relevant prophecies to look at/discuss

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 le'Chavero: 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: Intro to the Sifrei Nevi'im

There are four books in Nevi'im Acharonim. Yeshaya [Isaiah], Yirmiya [Jeremiah] Yechezkel [Ezekiel] and Trei Asar.

The **Trei Asar** is a collection of the prophecies of twelve different prophets spanning a period of over 350 years. The Gemara in Bava 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 Nevi'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. **Ovadia** 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** prophecies the vengeance that will come against Nineveh. **Havakuk** prays and challenges G-d over His 'injustice' and prophecies punishment against Am Yisrael and the enemies. **Tzefanya** pleads with Am Yisrael to do teshuva before it gets too late and prophecies 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 prophecy the construction of the second Bet HaMikdash and the return of Am Yisrael to Eretz Yisrael.

**Zecharya** also gives prophecies of the 'end of days'. **Malachi** the last of the prophets also pleaded with the people to do teshuva and prophesied 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'Aretz



### **Aims:**

1. **Explore** the concept of Galut as a necessary step.
2. **Learn** about Esther/Purim and it's context.
3. **Consider** the dangers of being negatively impacted by Galut and not being Am Echad ba'Aretz.

## Introduction

In this Kvutza we will explore what Galut means and it's 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.



## The Purpose of Exile

Think about where left off in K5. We're at the point in history right before the First Bet Hamikdash was destroyed. Chezkiya was a wonderful king who ruled the southern kingdom for many years, but Menasseh, his son becomes king when his father dies. He is as bad as his father was good. Menasseh 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 Yoshiyahu, who truly loves G-d 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, G-d gives the Jews plenty of time to repent as the Babylonians place a siege on Jerusalem. The prophet Yirmiya is calling on all to repent but his message goes unheeded. Instead, he is beaten and thrown into prison!

Subsequently the Jews goes in to Galut and the First Bet Hamkidash is destroyed.

### Points to Ponder

*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've been naughty now we'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!

## Yirmiya's mission

**רָאָה הַפְּקֹדֶתֶיךָ הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה עַל־הַגּוֹיִם וְעַל־הַמְּלָכוֹת לְנִתּוֹשׁ וְלְנִתּוּץ וְלִהְיוֹת לְבָנוֹת וְלִנְטוּעַ:**

*See, I appoint you this day Over nations and kingdoms: To uproot and to pull down, To destroy and to overthrow, To build and to plant. (Yirmiya 1:10)*

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 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.

Therefore, 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 line with the words of Tehillim, **סור מרע ועשה - "Turn from evil and then do good"** (Tehillim 34:15) - 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.

### The Purim Story in Brief

King Achashverosh decided to by throw a grand 180-day-long party for all his subjects. Following this extravagant gala, Achashverosh 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.



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 Esther 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 a 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?



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 not necessarily understand:

**אִישׁ יְהוּדִי הָיָה בְּשׁוּשַׁן הַבִּירָה וְשֵׁמוֹ מֶרְדֳּכָי בֶן יָאִיר בֶּן־שִׁמְעִי בֶן־קִישׁ אִישׁ יְמִינִי:**

*“In Shushan, the capital, lived a Jew by the name of Mordecai, son of Jair son of Shimei son of Kish, a Benjaminite.” (Esther 2:5)*

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.

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) teaches that Achashverosh donned the garments of the Kohen Gadol at his party.

## SUMMER MACHANE 5781

Aleph Chalutz: Ha'Am Ba'Aretz - העם בארץ

K7: From Confusion to Clarity: The Enlightenment and Jewish Reactions

- 📖 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 HaKippurim...)
- 📖 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 kodosh 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.

**DISCUSSION POINT - Have we, living in England, replaced the Beit Hamikdash with an alternative?**

### Learning from Galut

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 Perek 4.

Until this point the Jews (as a nation) weren't living the "Three Pillars" (Am Yisrael, b'Eretz 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 fourth Perek, 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: "לִשְׁנוֹ עַם-אֶחָד מְפֹזָר וּמְפֹרָד בֵּין הָעַמִּים" - *there is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed amongst the peoples* (Esther 3:8). 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.

However, Esther commands Mordechai to assemble the Jews and uses the language: *Knos et kol haYehudim* - "assemble the Jews" (Esther 4:16). 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.

So at the beginning of the Megilla they only have one of the "three pillars" but at the end, once the Jews have been saved and the day of Purim is proclaimed as a festival, we have the line "*Kimu v'kiblu haYehudim aleihem*" the Jews confirmed and undertook upon themselves (Esther 9:27). It was here that they reaccepted the Torah upon them.



The Gemara (Shabbat 88a) explains that during Matan Torah "they stood under the mount". G-d had lifted the mountain and placed it over them. G-d said to them "if you accept the Torah all 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 a threat of death, thus rendering its acceptance invalid.

The Gemara responds by saying: "Even so, they reaccepted it in the days of Achashverosh".

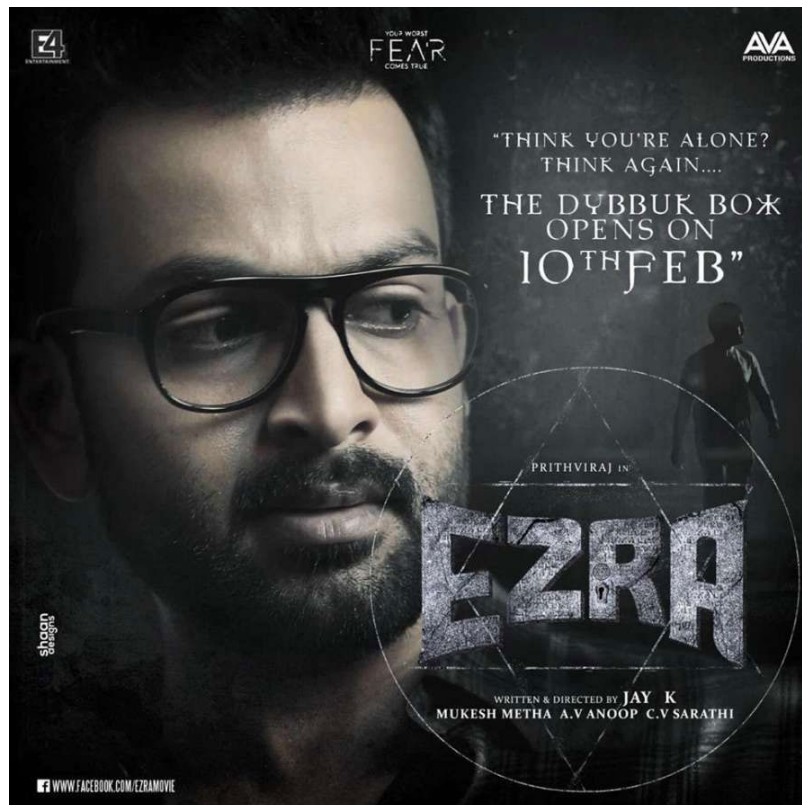
By the end of the Megilla we have two out of three. We have Am Yisrael living al pi Torat Yisrael. But this isn't complete. The story of miracle of the saving of the Jews during the time of the Megilla is not a complete victory. If we compare the 'Al Hanissim' of Purim to its Chanukah counterpart we 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.

### Points to Ponder

- 🔊 *Do we still worship the 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: Sefer Ezra and the Modern Parallels



## **Aims:**

1. **Learn** about the background and story of Sefer Ezra.
2. **Explore** 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. **Consider** 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, (the first half of Sefer 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.



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

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!

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. But shockingly, he also miscalculated and when he thought that the 70 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):

*Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of Hashem by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, Hashem 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: 'Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth has Hashem, the G-d of heaven, given me; and He has charged me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever there is among you of all His people - his G-d be with him - let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of Hashem, the G-d of Israel, He is the G-d who is in Jerusalem. And whoever is left, in any place where he sojourns, 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 G-d which is in Jerusalem.' Then rose up the heads of fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, even all whose spirit G-d had stirred to go up to build the house of Hashem which is in Jerusalem. And all they that were round about them*

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העם בארץ - Ha'Am Ba'Aretz - Aleph Chalutz: Sefer Ezra and the Modern Parallels

K8: Sefer Ezra and the Modern Parallels

*strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, beside all that was willingly offered. Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of Hashem, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put them in the house of his gods; 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. And this is the number of them: thirty basins of gold, a thousand basins of silver, nine and twenty knives; 10 thirty bowls of gold, silver bowls of a second sort four hundred and ten, and other vessels a thousand. All the vessels of gold and of silver were five thousand and four hundred. All these did Sheshbazzar bring up, when they of the captivity were brought up from Babylon unto Jerusalem.*

(Ezra 1:1-11)

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 the evil Nevuchadnetzar. Then, suddenly, along comes Coresh, the Emperor of the mightiest, most powerful empire in the known world, 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 non-Jews were instructed to give the Jews loads of money so that even the poorest of Jews would be able to afford the peak season El Al fares.

*What do you think would've or should've happened?*

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

## Remaining in the comforts of Galut

A look at Perek Bet of Ezra tells us a different story to the one we might be imagining:

**כָּל-הַקְּהָל, כְּאַחַד-אַרְבַּע רְבּוּאָה, אַלְפִּים שְׁלֹשׁ-מֵאוֹת שְׁשִׁים.**

*"The whole congregation together was forty and two thousand three hundred and sixty." (Ezra 2:64)*

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, Dol-y-Gaer, 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): Reish 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 decay" [and the redemption would have been a complete redemption and not a temporary one].

**DISCUSSION POINT - 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.

**"We believe in Aliya..."**

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 2<sup>nd</sup> is ruling the empire. Hagai and Zecharya, two of the last prophets prophesise to start re-building the Bet

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.

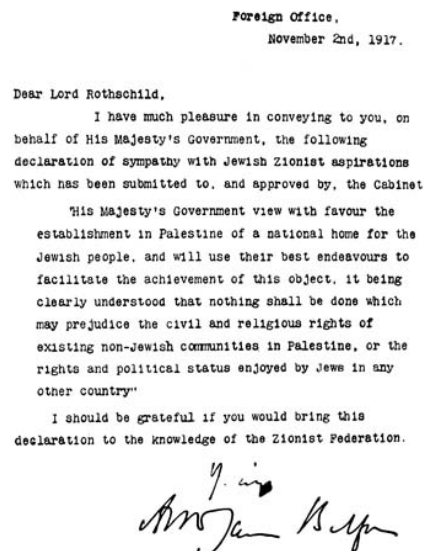
Following this, Ezra moves to Eretz Yisrael together with a bunch of Jews he brought with him and *'set his heart to expound the Torah of G-d, and to do it and teach in Israel it's statute and law'* (7:10). Ezra puts huge efforts into teaching and spreading Torah throughout the Land of Israel.



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.

### The Relevancy to Us Today

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.



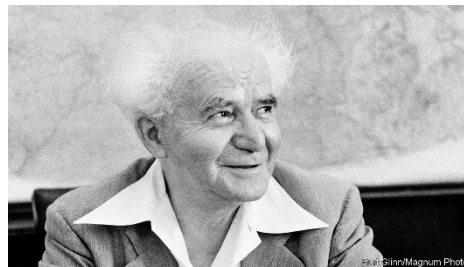
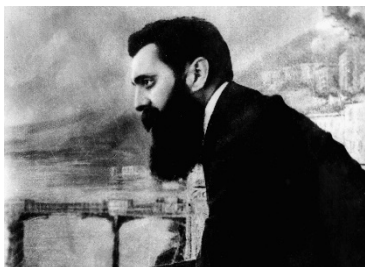
🗡️ Koresh, the world's most powerful empire, proclaimed the Jewish right to return to and rebuild Eretz Yisrael. The Balfour declaration was proclaimed in 1917 by the [then] world's most powerful empire. The British foreign minister proclaimed their support in favour of Jewish rights to return and rebuild 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.

### DISCUSSION POINTS

*How does this parallel with the Zionist movement of the 20th Century? [Think about Herzl, 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 ultimate redemption. He was later killed in the Holocaust. He writes as follows:



*"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:

*"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 we should 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 the end of Nechemya) and other major religious problems were a serious issue amongst those who had returned to the Land.



### Points to Ponder

*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?*

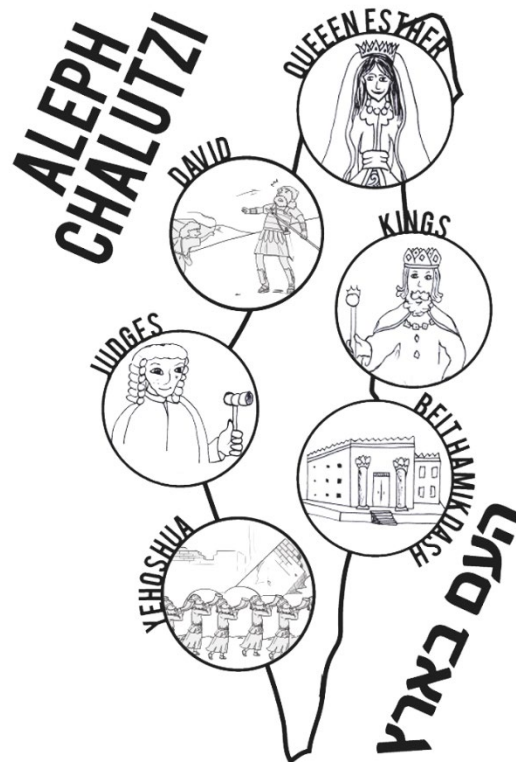
*How different would it be today if the religious Jews had all come back to Eretz Yisrael in the pre-state years?*

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

### Discussion points for Kvutza

- 🔊 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> Century and nowadays?
- 🔊 To what extent are there **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?

# K9: Ha'Am Ba'Aretz: A Summary



## **Aims:**

1. **Look** back over the past Kvutzot.
2. **See** the whole of Machane as a journey.
3. **Understand** what Ha'Am Ba'Aretz really means for us as Bnei Akiva.

## Chazara, Chazara, Nachamu Chazara!

So it's going to be the final Kvutza and as well as playing all your favourite games, giving them extra tuck 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 chazara. Machane, though the most important aspect is having fun, is still an intense learning environment, and 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 reins from Moshe and leading the Bnei Yisrael in to Eretz Yisrael, right up until Ezra. Over the past Kvutzot, we have tried 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, on this field Preston Montford as 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?



## Finding those 'take-home' messages

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!



## SUMMER MACHANE 5781

Aleph Chalutzi: Ha'Am Ba'Aretz - העם בארץ

K9: Ha'Am Ba'Aretz: a summary

As we said back in K1:

*"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 from the actions of our ancestors, following them and looking at their journey into Eretz Yisrael, exploring the eras of the First and Second Batei Mikdash. This does not mean 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?**

The above question seems slightly strange, a bit broad, and that's because the answer should be – as we have said, the reason why we get so many details of the lives of the the Nevi'im is so that we know how they brought Avodat Hashem into every facet of their lives, a concept which is 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 our ideological forebearers in the period of Nach. Torah V'Avoda is not just the message of Bnei Akiva – it is the message of our Avot, Nevi'im, Melachim and Shoftim.

From 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'Avoda – nothing in this world is mundane and we have the power to elevate it to a higher level, to sanctify it just as our those who preceded us did.

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 continue this legacy we can achieve this ideal – to bring Am Yisrael to be in Eretz Yisrael according to the Torah of Israel.

**Ha'Am Ba'Aretz is not just a theme for this machane – it is a message for life. Let's make this Chomer go out with a bang!**