



PARSHA PERSPECTIVES RABBI YOAV DRUYAN

יתן ה' את איביך הקמים עליך נגפים לפניך בדרך אחד
יצאו אליך ובשבעה דרכים ינוסו לפניך

"G-d will render your enemies who rise up against you fallen, along one path they will attack you and in seven directions they will flee from you." (Deuteronomy 8:7)

Ever heard of anyone scattering in seven directions? There are four directions on a compass, and I may even add two for up and down – but there is positively no seventh direction. So what can the Torah mean by implying that our enemies will be so overwhelmed that they will scatter to seven directions?

The Torah is hinting at a deeper truth. To get to it, let's begin by asking: Why are the enemies of the Jewish people attacking us, and what is making them flee? It can't be superior military might; one could assume that the Jewish army is a known commodity and its strength is readily measured. If an enemy chooses to wage war against such odds, they will charge the battlements regardless.

The verse tells us what will cause the nations to fear us: "And the nations will see that the name of G-d is recited upon you, and they will fear you" (Deut. 28:10).

When going out to battle, the

nations will regard Israel as just another foe. They will ride into war in a unified charge. But when they arrive at the battlefield, they will be completely thrown. Not by conventional weapons and not by divine lightning bolts; they will be flummoxed by the identity of those they wish to destroy. They will see that the Jews are not just a people, they are G-d's very representatives – they are adorned with His name!

How will the nations then flee? In pursuit and recognition of this awesome truth.

The menorah in the Holy Temple had seven branches. Our Sages teach us that this was a representation

of the seven branches of Divine wisdom. Its light was the light of Torah. These seven branches are the seven directions that the nations will run to.

In the Talmud (Menachot 35b), Rabbi Eliezer the Great says, "The Name of G-d is recited upon you"

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WORD of the WEEK

משוגע – *meshuga* means mad, or insane. When the Torah lists all the terrible punishments that will befall the Jewish People in exile, it states, "You will become משוגע – insane – as a result of what your eyes see" (Deut. 28:34). This word is commonly used in its Yiddishized version as "*meshugena*" – a crazy person, or "*meshugass*" – a crazy idea or trend. In modern Hebrew, an experience that is particularly enjoyable, is described as "*meshageiah*" – so good it "makes you crazy."

HEY, I NEVER KNEW THAT

One of the reasons punishments befall the Jews is, "Because you did not serve Hashem, your G-d, amid gladness, and goodness of heart, when everything was abundant" (Deut. 28:47). We also find that King David exhorts us to "Serve G-d with happiness, come before Him in joyful song" (Psalms 100:2). Maimonides actually legislates this as an obligation, stating, "The happiness one experiences in performing a mitzvah and in the love of G-d Who commanded them is a great duty" (*Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Lulav, 8:15), citing the verse from our *parsha* as evidence. We also see the obligation to be happy from the Talmud's famous statement, "Just as when Av (the month in which we mourn the Temple's destruction) begins we reduce our happiness, so, too, when Adar (the month in which Purim falls) begins we increase our happiness" (Ta'anit 29a). This implies that the correct status quo of a Jew is happiness. We reduce it in Av and increase it in Adar, but happiness, to some degree, should always be there.

Table Talk FOR DISCUSSION AROUND THE SHABBAT TABLE

Upon entering the Land of Israel, the Jews were told to assemble on Mount Gerizim and Mount Eival. Twelve commandments were enumerated with the tribes pronouncing "Amen" after each, as a way of reaffirming their commitment to G-d and to the Torah (Deut. 27:11-14).

נ) According to the Talmud (see Rashi on 27:12), each commandment was pronounced along with a blessing for its observance and a curse for its rejection. The Torah, however, spells out only the curse. Since serving G-d out of love is better than serving Him out of fear, why are the consequences highlighted instead of the blessings?

ב) Several commentaries note that these twelve commandments share a common thread: each can be done secretly. Why was a focus on avoiding secret sins (as opposed to all the commandments) so critical upon the Jewish People's entry into the land of Israel?

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A QUESTION FOR THE RABBIS

It is customary for the *ba'al koreh* (Torah reader) to chant the rebuke, which lists all the terrible curses of the exile, in a low voice (*Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* 78:4). This is a sign of contrition and embarrassment that our sins brought these curses upon us, and also because we are scared by these curses. In the 1940s, just after the Second World War, a great Chassidic leader, Yekusiel Yehudah Halberstam (known as the Klausenberger Rebbe), who lost his wife, eleven children, and most of his followers in the Holocaust, was in New York listening to the Torah reading. As is customary, the reader chanted the portion in a low voice. The Rebbe asked him to read louder, and louder still, until he was chanting even louder than usual. Afterwards, the Rebbe explained that we no longer have to be scared of the curses, nor hang our heads in shame when we hear them. During the Holocaust, we already experienced all the curses, and we survived. The fact that we are in the synagogue, listening to the Torah reading despite the Holocaust, is a reason to be proud and confident when listening to the curses, not fearful or ashamed.

Parsha Perspectives

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is referring to the *tefillin* of the head. (*Tefillin*, or phylacteries, are worn on the head and the arm. See Deut. 6:8.)

The Vilna Gaon reads the above statement critically and points out that Rabbi Eliezer didn't say the *tefillin* upon our heads, but rather the *tefillin* that we embody within our heads!

The Torah's teachings are not meant to be mere anecdotes, neither should they be viewed as a penal code. The Torah's wisdom can and should be assimilated into who we are.

We should not merely perform kindness, we should become kind people!

And when we manage to blossom forth as the Torah's wisdom personified, we will certainly be worthy of bearing G-d's divine name tag. And this tag will definitely send any foes scattering to all seven directions.

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