



SERMON RESOURCE FOR SHLUCHIM  
*RE'EI* • ראה / CAN THERE BE A BENEFIT FROM GOLUS?

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**PARSHA:**

**RE'EI / ראה**

**SERMON TITLE:**

**CAN THERE BE A BENEFIT FROM GOLUS?**

**PLEASE NOTE:**

The English translation of this week's sermon (Parshas Reeh) and that of the upcoming week (Parshas Shoftim) are suggestions of two different translation styles, compared to the first three weeks D'vorim thru Eikev).

Please let us know your feedback as to your preference (Parshas Reeh, Parshas Shoftim, or Parshas D'vorim thru Eikev).



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### PARSHAS RE'EI: CAN THERE BE A BENEFIT FROM GOLUS?

Throughout history the world has seen many refugees, and even most recently we have witnessed millions of people being reduced to "refugees". Some were misplaced by storms that destroyed their homes and livelihoods, while others fled their homes due to a threat on their lives. But regardless of the reason, they are all "refugees", strangers in a strange land.

We Jews should have a greater sensitivity for these refugees than any other nation. The Jewish people throughout the generations have been refugees, and not only since the Holy Temple's destruction, but much before that. We were "refugees" in Egypt, the beginning of all of our exiles was there, and even before that our forefather Jacob was a refugee in *Charan* when he fled from his brother Esau's wrath, then we got our first taste of "Exile".

In truth however, if one were to reflect upon the numerous exiles that we have endured he would find quite a phenomenon, the Jewish people have gained immensely on account of the exiles. We as refugees have accomplished what under normal circumstances we could never have achieved.

This pattern can be found beginning with our Patriarchs. Abraham and Isaac raised their children in Beer Sheba in the Holy Land, the Center of Jewish life. Jacob in contrast, who had to flee his home, and arrived in *Charan* destitute, set up his family there. But while Abraham had Ishmael



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and Isaac had Esau, who both strayed from the ways of their Fathers by the time they were Bar-Mitzvah age, Jacob succeeded in raising eleven sons and a daughter, all servants of G-d and students of his Torah.

We find that for Jacob the years he spent as a refugee outside the Land of Israel were his best and most fruitful years. Upon his return to Israel he suffers greatly, Rachel dies and Dina is violated, and then he loses Joseph... only when he again left Israel and moved to Egypt did he again find piece and happiness, and there he lived seventeen years (the numerical value of Hebrew word "Tov" *lit.* good) the best years of his life, as a stranger in a strange land.

Skimming through our history we find that many great things were added on account of exile. Prayer for example was not the regular form of worship for the Jewish people in the days of the first Holy Temple. Representatives would offer the communal sacrifices and pray on the nation's behalf, and there was no means of connection between G-d and the Jewish people on an individual basis. It was only once the Temple was destroyed and we were no longer able to offer sacrifices on the Alter in the Holy Temple did the sages establish prayer in place of the sacrifices, now each and every Jew can and must communicate with G-d regularly in a personal, man to ... G-d way.

In fact the very first *prayer* (an entreaty to G-d for personal needs) was said in exile. Jacob said it when he was in the home of his evil father in law Laban. He prayed the fifteen *Shir HaMa'alot*, (Songs of Ascents) printed in the book of Psalms. Jacob prayed for strength to carry on as a Jew even in Laban's house. Indeed the *Chida* explains that the number fifteen corresponds to the



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amount of years all three patriarchs were alive at the same time. The fifteen songs are intended to arouse the merit of our forefathers that it should help us overcome the hardships of exile.

And it was only due to exile that the great concept of prayer was revealed.

Another important addition to our tradition is the *Haftara* that we read on every Shabbos. Under the rule of the Roman Empire Jews were forbidden to read from the Torah, that is, from the five books of Moses. Fearing that the mitzvah to read from the Torah on Shabbos would be forgotten the sages chose portions from the Prophets with themes similar to those of the weekly Torah portions and these were read instead. Later when the decree was annulled this custom remained for we never detract from our customs, we can only add, so once we start a good custom we never stop keeping it. Hence, the custom of *Haftara* is also to the "credit" of exile.

Exile also added to our holidays. Jews in the Diaspora celebrate two days of Pesach for example, instead of the mandated one day of Yom Tov that is kept in Israel. Because in the Days of Yore before the advent of calendars the Jewish courts would determine when the new month would start, and according to that the people would know when to celebrate the Holidays. The Jews in Babylon however, were too far for the court's emissaries to reach so they were never sure whether a month had thirty days or twenty nine. Therefore to protect against any mistakes they established the second day of Yom Tov for Jews in the Diaspora.

(As it stands Jews in exile (living outside of Israel) have one more day of Pesach, called Acharon Shel Pesach, and we celebrate Shemini Atzeret and



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simchas Torah on two days as apposed to Jews in Israel who celebrate both on the same day.)

The Torah itself was also tremendously enhanced by the exiles. The Talmud Bavli (Babylonian Talmud) specifically a work composed by Jewish refugees is the foundation of the Oral Law. It was especially in the exiles that the greatest men in our history, our scholars, leaders, and greatest sages were produced – through the pains of golus.

This is the nature of man: It is only under tremendous pressure that people discover hidden powers that they never knew they had. Under normal circumstances people would never imagine they could do some of the outstanding things they accomplish in the toughest times. The Jewish people are like that too, it is only in the worst of times that we produced our greatest productions, as our sages said, "This olive won't give out its oil until you crush it".

This Parsha, Re'eh begins with a blessing and a curse. Chassidus asks how could G-d who is the very essence of good, issue a curse? As the Rebbe explains, in truth, it's not a curse. It's a blessing that to our physical eyes appears as curse.

Exile is the same thing – it appears as a curse, but by digging deeper, one can uncover the blessings.

But now, after we have already spent the best of our abilities finding blessings, we hope and pray for the coming of our righteous Moshiach, and may it be speedily in our days.