



TEACHING BY EXAMPLE

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הַיְיָ יִשְׂכֵן בְּבֵיתְךָ יְיָ וְיִשְׂכֵן בְּבֵיתְךָ יְיָ (בלק כג:ט)

In this week's *parsha* we see a confluence of two major themes which flow through the whole commentary of the Netziv in his Haamek Davar.

The first major theme is that *Am Yisrael* was chosen by the Almighty to be a light unto the nations, as spelt out by the *Navi* Yeshaya.

אֲתִנַּךְ לְבְרִית עִם לְאוֹר גּוֹיִם (ישעיה מב:ו)

I will set you for a covenant of the people for a light unto the nations.

וְנִתְּתִיךָ לְאוֹר גּוֹיִם לְהִיּוֹת יְשׁוּעָתִי עַד קֵצָה הָאָרֶץ:
(ישעיה מט:ו)

I will make you for a light unto the nations so that my salvation may extend to the ends of the earth.

In *parshas* Noach, the Netziv this refers to the role of the descendants of Shem to influence other peoples.

יִפְתֵּן אֱלֹהִים לְיִשְׁכָן בְּאֶהְלֵי-שֵׁם.
(נח ט:כז)

May G-d beautify Yefes, and he should dwell in the tents of Shem. The Netziv qualifies this task.

הנה בריתי אתך והיית לאב המון גוים. (לך לך יז:ד)

Behold my covenant is with you, and you should become a father to a multitude of nations.

Explains the Netziv, it was never the intention of G-d that all nations should be included in *Israel* but at least they should have knowledge of Hashem and reject idolatry.

In his introduction to *Shemos* he writes that this book is a sequel to the book of *Bereishis*. After setting out the origin of the creation of mankind, there follows *Shemos*, which continues to address, G-d's design. To further the plan for the world, one nation is chosen to be a light unto all the other nations of the world. *Am Yisrael* is formed only after *yetzias*

mitzrayim and can start to fulfil its *raison d'etre* and complete the objective of creation, which is that all populations of the universe know the existence of the Al-mighty.

וַיְהִי בַעֲצָם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה הוֹצִיא ה' אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם עַל צְבָאֲתָם: (שמות יב:נא).

He has an original understanding of the words *על צבאתם*. This refers to the specific goal of the nation, for every nation is created for its own unique role, *על צבאתם*.

In the beginning of *Vayechi*, we are introduced to the idea that the descendants of Yaakov are going to spend many years in exile, the purpose of which is to realise their chosen role as a light unto the nations. *Golus* is not only a punishment but has a positive role to play in achieving the master plan of the creation.

After the sin of the spies, says the Netziv in *parshas* Shelach, whilst the objective remained the same, to change the attitude and behaviour of the nations of the world, the method of attaining this end changed. A new mission plan was required. The influence of *Am Yisrael* could only be completed by being scattered throughout the world in *golus*. When the nations perceive that through Divine providence the lamb (Israel) survives the onslaught of seventy wolves (seventy nations), only then will they acknowledge the divine Kingship. Thus G-d says to Moshe, after the sin,

וְאוֹלָם חִי אֲנִי וְיִמְלֵא כְבוֹד ה' אֶת כָּל הָאָרֶץ
(שלה לך יד:כא)

But as I live, and the Glory of Hashem shall fill the entire world.

I cannot fully grant your request to pardon your people, they must endure a bitter *golus* and through their survival, the Glory of Hashem will fill the earth.

If the purpose of *golus* is to influence the nations of the world to reject idolatry and immorality, it could be thought that Israel should therefore assimilate to be able to accomplish the maximum effect. Quite the contrary, Israel even in *golus* must dwell alone. This is the second major theme of the Netziv, which is essential for the success of the first.

הַיְיָ יִשְׂכֵן בְּבֵיתְךָ יְיָ וְיִשְׂכֵן בְּבֵיתְךָ יְיָ

Israel, in exile, is warned to keep apart from the other nations. Normally, when a nation is exiled they integrate into the native population, resulting in a greater amity. This is not so with *Am Yisrael* - יִשְׁכֵן. When they remain alone, they may dwell in peace with the indigenous population. However, *יבגוים לא יתחשב*, if they attempt to become as one with their gentile neighbours, then they will not be respected. They will only be esteemed if they remain separate and alone. The precedent for this phenomenon was the experience of the Jews in Egypt the more they infiltrated into Egyptian society the greater the anti-Semitism.

The ultimate success of this policy plan is revealed to us in the *brachos* of *parshas* *Ki Savo*.

וְרָאוּ כָל עַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ כִּי שָׁם ה' נִקְרָא עֲלֵיו וִירָאוּ מִמֶּךָ
(כי תבא כח:י)

And all the peoples of the world will see that the Name of Hashem is called upon you, and they will fear you.

I would suggest an alternative translation for *ויראו ממך*, they will derive their fear (of heaven) from you, i.e. from your inspiration.

From your example, your faith, your conduct, your endurance and survival the nations of the world will ultimately be inspired to see the Glory of Hashem and accept that there is one Divine authority.

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