

We are living through and seeing first hand, the realization of countless ma'amarei Chazal. We are living in very unique times. At the end of Sefer Devorim, the posuk talks about a double level of hester ponim. There are times when we see Hashem actively running the world. Then there is one level of hester ponim where we don't see Hashem running things openly, but with our emunoh we get the feeling that Hashem is still there behind the scenes, pulling the strings. But then there is a double hester ponim at the end of days. The hester ponim is so great that it is totally unperceivable, even though our emunoh tells us He is somehow still there. This is what we experienced in the Holocaust.

What we see today is the fulfillment of what the Torah says about Yishmoel. The end of last week's parsha talks about the descendants of Yishmoel settling in various areas and ends with the phrase "על פני כל אחיו נפל". The Targum explains this as a way to describe Yishmoel's settlement, but the Baal HaTurim explains that it means Yishmoel will fall after a great battle and Moshiach will come after that:

על פני כל אחיו נפל. וסמיך ליה ואלה תולדות יצחק לומר כשיפול ישמעאל באחרית הימים אזי יצמח בן דוד שהוא מתולדות יצחק;

In this week's parsha we get a very clear description of Eisov and the historic struggle between Yaakov and Eisov. Hashem told Rivka Imeinu – through Shem and Ever – that there are two powerful nations within you. Chazal explain that history will be a battle between Eisov and Yaakov. When one ascends, the other will fall.

There will be four empires in world history. The first three will rise and then fall, but Edom will seem to go higher and higher and never come down. Chazal say Edom is like a tehom – a bottomless pit. Chazal identified Edom as Rome and then Christianity, which dominated the western world for many centuries. But all of the sudden, Christianity started to crumble. It is now in massive decline. And Klal Yisroel has been moving up through a massive amount of limud Torah.

These two nations exchange positions like a see-saw. When one is up the other is down. But who controls which nation is going up and which nation is going down?

The answer is found in Yitzchok's brocho to Yaakov. Yitzchok blesses Yaakov – while thinking he was Eisov – with material wealth and prosperity and that he will rule over his brother and his descendants. Then Yaakov leaves and Eisov immediately enters, demanding the brochos he was promised. Yitzchok became very frightened. The Beis Halevi explains that Yitzchok now realizes that he totally misunderstood the roles his sons were supposed to play. Yitzchok thought Yaakov and Eisov could forge a Yissochor-Zevulun relationship with Yaakov exclusively devoted to ruchniyus and avodas Hashem while being supported by Eisov's worldly activity. He intended on blessing Eisov with wealth and prosperity in order to fulfill his role of supporting Yaakov financially. But now he realized that if Yaakov received these brochos, it means Yaakov must be completely independent from Eisov and he must support himself. When Eisov reveals that Yaakov previously bought the bechorah status from Eisov, Yitzchok is relieved that giving the brochos to Yaakov was the right thing to do and he is not taking back those brochos.

Then Eisov pleads with Yitzchok to at least give him some kind of brocho and not leave him with nothing. Yitzchok says something that goes back to the nevuah told to Rivka. Eisov thinks he controls the see-saw, but Yitzchok says you will serve your brother until he goes down and then you can take his yoke off your neck.

ועל חרְבך תחיה ואת אחיך תעבד והיה כאִשֶׁר תריד ופרקת עלו מעל צְאָרְךָ:

When will that happen? When Yaakov will stop dedicating his life to Torah. When he will veer away from his identity as Yaakov and take on a different identity, then Eisov can ascend. This is how Rashi and Onkelos explain this posuk. Yaakov controls the see-saw.

Chazal talk about two things happening simultaneously. A huge increase in limud haTorah, and the loss of Christian dominance over the world. Our generation has seen both of these things happen. We have to understand who controls the relationship. It is Yaakov through being Yaakov and through his learning.

In next week's parsha we read about the stones Yaakov put under his head when he slept. One opinion in Chazal says Yaakov took two stones. One represented Avrohom who gave birth to Yishmoel, and the other represented Yitzchok who gave birth to Eisov. The Ramban explains that Avrohom is chessed, but chessed needs to be balanced. Chessed without boundaries is dangerous – it produces a Yishmoel. Yitzchok is gevuroh, but unlimited gevuroh produces Eisov. Yaakov said that if he is able to blend the chessed of Avrohom and the gevuroh of Yitzchok within himself and produce the perfect balance of these two middos, then he knows he can produce Klal Yisroel who can express all the right qualities of avodas Hashem. This is why Yaakov is the koach of Torah – the Torah teaches us how to balance all the drives of spirituality in their proper proportion.

There is a classic contradiction between two gemaros explaining the reason for the churbon bayis rishon. One says it came from the three aveiros of avodo zoro, gilui arayos and shefichus domim. The other gemara says it came from the aveiroh of bitul Torah. Which one was it? The Netziv answers that the root cause of the churbon came from the three severe aveiros. But the power of limud Torah is so great, that it could have stopped the devastation which those aveiros are able to cause. Because there was also bitul Torah, Klal Yisroel didn't have enough zechusim to stop the churbon from coming to fruition. Limud Torah is the most powerful weapon in the world. It can stand up to any aveiroh in the world except for sinas chinom.

We have to appreciate the massive opportunity we have in our generation to learn Torah with such ease and comfort on a scale that no previous generation enjoyed. The Rambam at the end of the fourth perek of Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah says every type of Jew can understand the entire Torah – on their level – men and women, simple and clever. The Torah is a great gift – it is the way we straighten out our minds and it gives us the zechus to earn olom haboh. The Rambam in Hilchos Teshuvoh says olom haboh primarily comes from limud Torah.

In addition, in terms of Jewish history, limud haTorah is the power that we have to stand up to the world and remain Jewish.

The battle Klal Yisroel face today is with Yishmoel – not with Eisov. Chazal tell us that when we will finally be able to deal with Eisov and they will receive their final judgment, there will be widespread Torah which brings Edom down. But then a new enemy will arise. There will be a world war that is fought between us and Yishmoel over who owns Eretz Yisroel.

Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer says, while we fight Edom with Torah, what is Yishmoel's koach and how do we counter it? We see from the posuk in Vayeiros that Yishmoel excelled in tefilloh. He davens to Hashem and Hashem listens. So too his descendants are very devoted to tefilloh

in a single-minded way. And the way we defend ourselves against Yishmoel is also through tefillah – in addition to Torah.

Another amazing thing Chazal predicted that is happening: There is a machlokes in the gemara Sanhedrin about if Moshiach comes with teshuvoh or without teshuvoh. The gemara asks, if teshuvoh is required, and Klal Yisroel have the bechiroh not to do teshuvoh, then is it possible Moshiach will never come? The gemara answers that if Klal Yisroel don't want to do teshuvoh and the time for Moshiach arrives, Hashem will send a king with decrees as cruel as Homon and will threaten Klal Yisroel with total annihilation. This will pressure Klal Yisroel into doing teshuvoh.

When we think of Klal Yisroel's enemies today, we obviously see that Hamas is completely devoted to killing as many men, women and children as they possibly can. They won't accept surrender – they want nothing less than total, global annihilation of Jews. Obviously, they can't do it all on their own. But all of the sudden, hundreds of thousands of people all over the world have risen up in support of Hamas and their genocidal agenda to massacre us. The liberal Jews who thought they were fellow-travelers with the BLM movement and the LGBT community, are now shocked to see that all their so-called liberal friends actually want them dead. They are starting to be inspired to become more Jewish and be proud of their identity. Some are starting to do teshuvoh as a result of this threat of total annihilation.

But is a mistake to think that the obligation of doing teshuvoh is only on the non-frum community. It is primarily on us to do teshuvoh. The Brisker Rav was approached by Rav Amram Blau on Yom Kippur afternoon who complained how the secular Zionists were ruining the ruchniyus of Eretz Yisroel. The Brisker Rav responded that it is you who is destroying the land. Not the non-frum! We just finished reading Maftir Yonah. We read that while all the non-Jewish sailors were worshipping their idols to be saved from the storm, in reality, it was all because of Yonah. Just one frum Jew on board wasn't doing what he was supposed to do, and the storm hits the boat. It doesn't matter that

all the non-Jews are worshipping their avodo zoro. The obligation to do teshuvoh rests on the frum community. How are we thinking about the world?

The world will never be the same. There is a process that is being played out in front of our eyes. We don't know how long this process will take – weeks, months, years. But a process has begun and things will not go back to normal. We are living in critical times and everyone has to look at himself and ask himself what he is doing in the war effort. It is not a war between Israel and Hamas. It is a war between us and the rest of the world. Hashem is shaking us up and He will continue to shake us up until we wake up and take things seriously.

When Moshe arrives to petition to Pharaoh to release the Jews, the situation gets immediately worse and Klal Yisroel are put under tremendous pressure. The midrash says that Klal Yisroel complain that it isn't fair – why did this have to happen? Hashem responds that Klal Yisroel stopped davening with the desperation they used to have and He wants to hear Klal Yisroel daven harder. When Klal Yisroel daven with all their might when they realize that there is no salvation without Hashem helping them, then Hashem sends the geuloh. We have to realize that our salvation is only in Hashem's hands. We have to make kabbolos to improve and stick by those kabbolos and make a real change.

We read about the thousands of soldiers who are putting on tzitzis and are asking for tefillin for the first time. They realize that Hashem is running the world and we have to do something! But why aren't we as inspired to turn our life around like these soldiers?

We have to take our Yiddishkeit much more seriously – not just the secular Jews in Tel Aviv and universities. Our davening and our learning have to be more serious. We are at a point of history where Hashem is trying to start a process of bringing history to an end. Who decides how fast or how slow the process will be? We do. Hashem responds accordingly. Taking our davening and our learning seriously is what it is going to take to win this war.