

## *Pride Goes Before Destruction*

Drash on parashah 9; Vayeshev

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I've been focusing a lot on sin lately. This week, I want to focus in on one in particular. Pride. When Yoseph received a special coat which set him apart from his older brothers, he seemed to bring even more problems upon himself in the way he treated this favor. As Godly a man as Yoseph shows himself to be throughout the rest of B' resheet/Genesis, I think he could have approached his special favor with a bit more humility and possibly avoided some problems for himself. Of course, we are able to see in hindsight that all that happened was part of God's plan, but I think, as we use this story to springboard into other areas of Scripture, there are lessons to be learned in how we deal with others when we are given blessing by God.

*Yes, Adonai-Tzva'ot has a day in store for all who are proud and lofty, for all who are lifted high to be humiliated; for all cedars of the L'vanon that are high and lifted up, for all the oaks of the Bashan; for all the high mountains, for all the hills that are lifted up; for every high tower, for every fortified wall; for every "Tarshish" ship, for every luxurious vessel. The pride of man will be bowed down, the arrogance of men will be humiliated, and when that day comes, Adonai alone will be exalted. The idols will be completely abolished. People will enter cracks in the rocks and holes in the ground to escape the terror of Adonai and his glorious majesty, when he sets out to convulse the earth. On that day a man will take hold of his idols of silver and idols of gold, which they made for themselves to worship, and fling them away to the moles and bats! Then they will enter the cracks in the rocks and the crevices in the cliffs to escape the terror of Adonai and his glorious majesty, when he sets out to convulse the earth. Stop relying on man, in whose nostrils is a mere breath – after all, he doesn't count for much, does he?*

*[Yesha'yahu/Isaiah 2:12-22]*

Success and prosperity, when they come from the hand of God, are good things. They are God's way of clothing us in a coat of many colors to be objects of glory and honor to our King. We should not avoid prosperity, but we are cautioned in Scripture not to let it go to our head, if God decides to grant it to us. Our purpose is to always bring Him glory and to do all we can to build His Kingdom. Whatever grace He grants us is only to enable us to better do what He has called us to do in His world.

The majority of the Hebrew words, translated as pride or arrogance, such as *ga'on*, *ga'avah*, and *ga'ah*, start with the letter *gimel*. The word picture for this letter was originally a camel. Notice the similarity between the words. The imagery is that of something which lifts up, thus the letter itself points to pride. Not only does a camel lift up, but it typically only one person can ride a camel at a time.

*The crimes of your sister S'dom were pride and gluttony; she and her daughters were careless and complacent, so that they did nothing to help the poor and needy. [Yezech'kel/Ezekiel 16:49]*

It is typically only the wealthy and privileged who are able to ride a camel, which lifts a person up above all those walking below. It has been calculated that 90% of the world's wealth

is in the hands of 10% of the world's population. This is a travesty of justice. Those riding the camel of pride have forgotten the vast desert of humanity that suffers below them. In reality the only thing which separates the two is the prosperity that the wealthy of the world sits on.

*Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such-and-such a city, stay there a year trading and make a profit"! You don't even know if you will be alive tomorrow! For all you are is a mist that appears for a little while and then disappears. Instead, you ought to say, "If Adonai wants it to happen, we will live" to do this or that. But as it is, in your arrogance you boast. All such boasting is evil. So then, anyone who knows the right thing to do and fails to do it is committing a sin.*

*[Ya'akov/James 4:13-17]*

Not only do we get pride in our prosperity, but we get pride in our intellectual and creative capacities. We make plans and dreams for our future as if we are in control of our lives. Then at times we have the audacity to pray that God makes our plans succeed. We get frustrated when things don't go our way, assuming that we know what is best.

Of course this is caused in part by a culture that makes each person in control of his or her own life. We disrespect authority, and do not want anyone telling us how to live our lives. This is why those of us who are Torah pursuant run into so many problems with people who at time literally freak out at the idea that there is a divine Law they must follow. If they have to follow any moral code at all, they prefer the vagueness of loving God and loving others as prescribed by Yeshua. In their pride, however, they assume that they actually know how to love. Do you honestly think that a person who has come out of a broken home knows what unconditional love is? Do you really think that a person who grew up with fairy tales where everyone lives happily ever after, knows true Biblical love? If you say you love God and yet willfully refuse to do what He says, what exactly do you mean by that?

*If anyone teaches differently and does not agree to the sound precepts of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah and to the doctrine that is in keeping with godliness, he is swollen with conceit and understands nothing. Instead, he has a morbid desire for controversies and word-battles, out of which come jealousy, dissension, insults, evil suspicions, and constant wrangling among people whose minds no longer function properly and who have been deprived of the truth, so that they imagine that religion is a road to riches. Now true religion does bring great riches, but only to those who are content with what they have. For we have brought nothing into the world; and we can take nothing out of it; so if we have food and clothing, we will be satisfied with these. Furthermore, those whose goal is to be rich fall into temptation; they get trapped in many foolish and hurtful ambitions which plunge them into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all the evils; because of this craving, some people have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves to the heart with many pains. But you, as a man of God, flee from these things; and **pursue** righteousness, godliness, faithfulness, love, steadfastness, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith, take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you testified so well to your faith before many witnesses. [Timothy 6:3-12]*

Our pride causes us to build walls between ourselves and other people. We do our studies, form our beliefs, and at that point assume that everyone else is wrong. Anyone who does not agree with me hasn't put in the study that I have, and doesn't understand things the way I do.

They refuse to accept the truth that I have. Such arrogance creates isolation, not unity. This is exactly what the Adversary wants to do. A divided military cannot succeed. Yeshua works in the world through community. Where two or three are gathered in His name, there He is in the midst of them. By breaking us apart by our own prideful doctrines, ideals, and traditions, the Body of Messiah is weakened. Our resources are less, and we are not as able to impact the world. Our credibility is shot by our lack of consensus. Granted, we do not have to agree on everything to have unity, but we have to know that we are each pursuing truth and righteousness. None of us possess full truth and righteousness. This is a work the God alone does in each person. We need to be able to come together because of our similarities and not build walls because of our differences.

We must always keep in mind that if we are successful, if we are mighty, if we are smart, if we are beautiful, if we have wealth, anything of merit that we have, we have through the hand of God. If He made us great, He can bring us down just as easy. This is true whether we are talking about individuals, communities, or nations. The Egyptians, Babylonians, people of the city of Jericho with their great walls, and the Romans of Yeshua's day all thought themselves invincible. They prided themselves in their might, their intelligence, their culture, their gods, and their land. Where are they now? These and many other nations have come and gone by the hand of God. Any person, community, or nation which forgets God and lives by their own ways, may have their day in the sun, but they will eventually be brought to ruin to show them and everyone else the truth and power of God. This is a historical guarantee.

*Let them hate us so long as they fear us. ~ Caligula, Roman Emperor*

*We must not underrate the gravity of the task which lies before us or the temerity of the ordeal, to which we shall not be found unequal. We must expect many disappointments, and many unpleasant surprises, but we may be sure that the task which we have freely accepted is one not beyond the compass and the strength of the British Empire and the French Republic. The Prime Minister said it was a sad day, and that is indeed true, but at the present time there is another note which may be present, and that is a feeling of thankfulness that, if these great trials were to come upon our Island, there is a generation of Britons here now ready to prove itself not unworthy of the days of yore and not unworthy of those great men, the fathers of our land, who laid the foundations of our laws and shaped the greatness of our country. ~ Winston Churchill, House of Commons, September 3, 1939.*

*Great harm has been done to us. We have suffered great loss. And in our grief and anger we have found our mission and our moment. Freedom and fear are at war. The advance of human freedom -- the great achievement of our time, and the great hope of every time -- now depends on us. Our nation -- this generation -- will lift a dark threat of violence from our people and our future. We will rally the world to this cause by our efforts, by our courage. We will not tire, we will not falter, and we will not fail. ~ President George W. Bush, Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People, September 20, 2001.*

*"The bricks have fallen, but we will rebuild with cut stone; the sycamore-fig trees have been chopped down, but we will replace them with cedars." [Yesha'yahu/Isaiah 9:9]*

God has made America a great nation. It has not been our power, or our ingenuity, or our democratic process, or economic prowess. Our prosperity has made us the most prideful nation in the world. Other nations look at us not too unlike Yoseph's brothers looked at him. Most just want us dead, others would be content with us sold into slavery.

Perhaps our present economic problems is God's way of giving us a healthy dose of humble pie as an attempt to bring us back to the God who made us great in the first place. It most likely will not happen, because as Americans, we are tough enough and smart enough to get through anything, right? Wrong.

*Why do you take such pride in the valleys, your well-watered valleys, rebellious daughter? You trusted in your riches and thought, 'Who can attack me?' [Yirme'yahu/Jeremiah 49:4]*

*They will spread out their hands in Mo'av, like a swimmer using his hands to tread water; but their pride will be humbled and sunk, no matter how clever the strokes of their hands. [Yesha'yahu/Isaiah 25:11]*

*Thus Bavel, that jewel of kingdoms, the pride and glory of the Kasdim, will be like S' dom and `Amora when overthrown by God. [Yesha'yahu 13:19]*

Our nation may not learn the destruction of its pride until it is too late, but the church must show the rest of the country, and the world, whom we put our trust. We must be the ones to put aside our pride and our differences to be the body of Messiah we need to be to combat the wiles of the Adversary and endure the difficult times ahead.

*Moreover, understand this: in the acharit-hayamim will come trying times. People will be self-loving, money-loving, proud, arrogant, insulting, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, uncontrolled, brutal, hateful of good, traitorous, headstrong, swollen with conceit, loving pleasure rather than God, as they retain the outer form of religion but deny its power. Stay away from these people! [2Timothy 3:1-5]*

At the heart of virtually every sin is pride. We can either put our trust in God, or rely on our own self-made kingship. If we do, we will be setting ourselves up for destruction when God proves Himself to be the true King of the Universe and our lives.