



# Torah Table Talk

## Have no fear, My servant Jacob

Parshat Bo

Exodus 10:1 – 13:16/ Jeremiah 46:13 - 28



*Dedicated by Frances and Buddy Brandt  
in memory of their grandson, Oren Jacob Brandt-Rauf.  
“He was the perfect child.”*

*Do you have thoughts, comments or questions on Table Torah Talk?  
Please share them with me at [Haravmark@Optonline.net](mailto:Haravmark@Optonline.net)*

Like last week’s prophetic portion from the book of Ezekiel, today’s Haftarah contains a condemnation of Egypt. Written around the time of the destruction of the Temple, the prophet Jeremiah criticizes, “Egypt, her gods and her kings.” Jeremiah taunts Egypt and predicts that she will flee before the might of Nebuccadnezer of Babylonia. At a time when many of Jeremiah’s contemporaries were counseling the nation of Judah to make a treaty with Egypt and to rebel against Babylonia, the prophet suggested that the only hope was to succumb to the great power of the Babylonian empire and accept their rule. Jeremiah was particularly incensed by the unreliability of Egypt – in the end his criticism proved correct.

Besides the obvious parallel between the condemnation of Egypt and the story of the Exodus, there are other linguistic connections that made this an appropriate passage for today’s Haftarah. The Torah portion opens as God tells Moses to come, *bo*, before Pharaoh. The word *bo* appears several times in this passage 46:13, 18, 21, and 22. Just as Moses came to judge Pharaoh, Nebuccadnezer, king of Babylonia will now come in judgment of Egypt. The God of Israel is a universal God of history who passes judgment not only on the Jewish people but upon all nations. Egypt, too, must now stand in judgment. The Haftarah ends with words of comfort for the Judeans. They will be punished but in the end they will return from captivity.

### **Jeremiah 46:27 -28**

But you, have no fear, My servant Jacob, be not dismayed, O Israel! I will deliver you from far away, Your folk from the land of captivity; and Jacob shall have calm and quiet with none to trouble him. But you have no fear, my servant Jacob – declares the Lord – for I am with you. I will make an end of all the nations among which I have banished you, but I will not make an end of you! I will not leave you unpunished but I will chastise you in measure.

### **Rashi, Rabbi Shlomo ben Yitzhak**

Have no fear: The prophet made this statement to the righteous Israelites who were forcibly exiled to Egypt

### **Radak, Rabbi David Kimchi 1160 -1235**

Have no fear: This Parshah is written about the future (messianic time). I have already explained this above in a number of places since it is repeated with small changes elsewhere.

These verses are all similar. Since he mentions the punishment of the nations, he now turns to Israel (and says) “Do not fear,” for you are not like them. Even though they returned from their exile to their land they will not be at peace and calm; in the end they will cease to be a nation and will forget their own identity. Israel will never lose its name and will stand firm forever like the heavens above the earth.

### **Mitzudat David**

Have no fear: (The Prophet) comes to comfort the people living in the Babylonian exile. He tells them not to despair of redemption. The Israelites saw that the Egyptians were exiled to a place close to their home now returning, while they were exiled far from their homeland and still haven't returned home. Rather they thought they would have to remain settled there. Therefore the prophet tells the people to “Have no fear.”

### **Around the Table**

1. Compare this chapter from the book of Jeremiah with last week's haftorah which is taken from the book of Ezekiel. How are the prophet's condemnations of Egypt similar to and different from one another?
2. Jeremiah's words are only a half-consolation. While the prophet promises to redeem the people from exile, he also tells them that “I will not leave you unpunished but I will chastise you in measure.” This seems like a disheartening way to end the prophecy. Why do you think Jeremiah ends this prophecy with these words?
3. Jeremiah tells the people not to be afraid? According to the different commentaries what are the people most fearful of? How might the reference to the Jewish people as Jacob be a way of reassuring them that God will fulfill his promise?
4. Do you think Jeremiah wrote these words before or after the destruction of the temple and the exile of the nation?
5. The prospect of exile weighed heavily upon Jeremiah. He understood this fate as a punishment for sin. How should we think about living outside the land of Israel today? Are we living in “exile?” Is there a difference between using the word Exile vs. Diaspora to describe the present circumstances of Jews living outside of the land of Israel today?

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*“All it takes to study Torah is an open heart, a curious mind  
and a desire to grow a Jewish soul.”*