

Fables from the Jewish Tradition

By Rabbi Manes Kogan

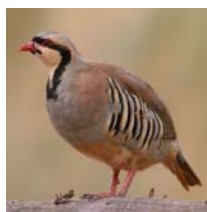
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The Partridge and the Hawk

Aggadat Bereshit 58.2 (Buber Ed., p. 116)



Background to the Fable "The Partridge and the Hawk"



Partridge



Hawk

The Partridge and the Hawk

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אגדת בראשית פרק נח

[ב] ד"א מעונה אלהי קדם א"ר אחא אמר הקב"ה לא בראתי מעונה אלא כדי שתהיו עושין רצוני, ומתיראין ממני בתנאין הללו, וכן הוא אומר אמרתי אך תראי אותי תקחי מוסר ולא יכרת מעונה (צפני' ג ז). ויגרש מפניך אויב ויאמר השמד (דברים לג כז). אותה שעה וישכון ישראל בטח בדד (שם שם דברים ל"ג כח). כל זמן שמ"ה בשלוחה אין ישראל בשלוחה, משל לקורא (דגר) שהיה מזמר בביתו של אדניו, היה יושב וסועד וקורא מזמר, אחר זמן הביא אדוניו לבן הנץ, כיון שראה אותו הקורא ברח תחת המטה, והטמין עצמו, ולא פתח עוד את פיו, נכנס המלך לסעוד [אמר] לבן ביתו, א"ל למה אינו מזמר הקורא. אמר לו מפני שהכנסת עליו בן נץ, והוא רואה אותו ומתירא ואינו מזמר, אלא הוציא את הנץ והוא מזמר, כך ישראל בעולם הזה נתונין בחוצה לארץ ישראל, ומ"ה יושבות בארצם, שנאמר אשר אמרו להן יושבי ירושלים רחקו מעל ה' לנו היא נתנה הארץ למורשה (יתזקאל יא טו). והקב"ה אומר לישראל למה אין אתם מקלסין אותי, שנאמר יונתי בחגוי הסלע וגומר השמיעני את קולך (שה"ש שיר השירים ב יד), אמר לו משה רבש"ע כל זמן שמ"ה בארצך אין ישראל נראין בעולם, אלא העבר אותן, והן נראין,

A partridge always sang in its master's house. While the master sat and ate, the partridge would sing. A short time later, the master brought home a small hawk.

When the partridge saw the hawk, it escaped and hid under the bed and never opened its mouth again.

One day the master came in to eat and asked a member of his family, "Why isn't the partridge singing today?"

"Because you brought home a small hawk, and the partridge is afraid. That is why it does not sing. Get rid of the hawk and it will sing again."

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Comprehension and Analysis Questions

? According to our fable, who is the one to be blamed for the partridge not singing?

? Why do you think the man in our fable brought home a small hawk?

Marcelo Ferder's Drawing

? How does the man look in Marcel Ferder's drawing?

Note on "The Partridge and the Hawk"

In this fable, the partridge symbolizes Israel, while the hawk symbolizes the nations of the world that oppress the Jewish people and usurp their land. In the text that serves as the context of our fable, God complains because the people of Israel do not praise him while they are in exile, to which they respond: "As long as the evil nations have peace and harmony, there will be no peace and harmony for us. If You want us to praise You as we did in the past, remove the hawk that oppresses us, help us to return to our land (our place), and everything will be as before." The cruelty and bitterness of exile were frequent themes in the compositions of our sages and of the Jewish philosophers of the Middle Ages. Here we can also note the combination of love and audacity that characterize a son who depends on his father for his needs. Only a strong feeling of closeness to God could permit such boldness, which is part of a profound desire for redemption.

The Bitterness of the Exile

- **Psalms Chapter 137**

1. *By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, we also wept, when we remembered Zion.*

2. *We hung our lyres on the willows in its midst.*

3. *For there those who carried us away captive required of us a song; and those who tormented us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.*

4. *How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?*

5. *If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.*

6. *If I do not remember you, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy.*

7. *Remember, O Lord, against the Edomites, the day of Jerusalem; who said, Raze it, raze it, to its foundation.*

8. *O daughter of Babylon, you are to be destroyed! Happy shall he be, who repays you for what you have done to us!*

9. *Happy shall he be, who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rock!*

? What are the elements present in the song of the Jewish captives in Babylon?

- *"May the Temple be rebuilt, the City of Zion replenished; there we shall sing a new song, with joyous singing ascend" (From: Tzur Mi-Shelo)*

? Why will there be a new song when the Temple will be rebuilt and the city of Jerusalem replenished?

Wrapping Up

? Do you think that there is room for artistic creativity (like song, music, art) in a situation of oppression? If yes, what kind of artistic creativity (like song, music, art) can we expect? Which kind of artistic creativity can't we expect?

! The song the oppressors will never hear...

Discussion Ideas from Rabbi Dorit Edut

K-3rd GRADES:

1)

Why was the partridge afraid of the hawk?

2)

What did the master of the house miss? What did he not realize happened when he brought the hawk home?

3)

Is there something you think that your parents may not understand about you or about your brother/sister? What would you tell them to help them understand?

4th-6th GRADES:

1)

The master of the house has created a problem for the partridge. How and why did he do this?

2)

What do you think the master of the house will do next? How do you understand the illustration of this fable?

3)

Describe a situation where two things or two people don't mix well, and the only solution is for one to leave or not be together with the other. What do you think about this?

7th-12th GRADES:

1)

What do you understand the main message of this fable to be?

2)

Judaism teaches us to reach out to the less fortunate or less able in our world and not allow them to be taken advantage of. See, for example, Ex. 22:21-26. How can we apply this in our lives today?

3)

What other examples do we have in the Torah of someone being oppressed by others or fearful of them—and only when this oppression is removed are they able to fully function again? Looking at Jewish history, how have the Jewish people been able to praise God despite difficult times? Do you think this is the key to Jewish survival or not? What else might there be?

Language Arts Strategies from Dr. M. Patricia Cavanaugh

Pre-Reading Strategy: Provide Background Information and Discuss

- Provide information on birds—specifically partridges and hawks.
- The teacher should tell students about something or someone he/she fears. Discuss the fear and the response to the fear.
- Journal Entry: write about a fear and your response
- Ask students if anyone can also share a fear and how they respond.
- Read the fable and discuss it.

Post Reading:

- Creative Writing: Ask students to attempt to write a fable in a similar style to that of "The Partridge and the Hawk," using the fear and response they wrote about in their journal.
- Connecting to Outside World: Discuss with students the history of the "nations of the world and their oppression of the Jewish people" and bring it to the situation of today's world re: Israel and its neighboring nations.