



## Between a Rock and a Hard Place

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<b>I. Exegesis: Torah as Predictive</b>	<b>1</b>
1. The Underdog Will Win: Babylonian Talmud Yoma 10a	1
2. The Underdog is Greece: Babylonian Talmud Yoma 10a	1
3. The Underdog is Persia: Babylonian Talmud Yoma 10a	1
<b>II. Kal v'Chomer: Predicting with Logic</b>	<b>2</b>
4. Good Guys Always Win: Babylonian Talmud Yoma 10a	2
5. Religious Legitimacy of Uncertainty: Babylonian Talmud Yoma 10a	2
6. Darkest before Dawn: Babylonian Talmud Yoma 10a	2

The rise of antisemitism on both the right and the left has the Jewish people caught on the center line of a high-stakes tennis match. On this episode of *TEXTing*, **Elana Stein Hain** and **Yonah Hain** explore a Talmudic passage from Tractate Yoma 10a, to discuss how we maintain agency during troubling times, and how we look to the future when we can't yet see the horizon.

*This source sheet is part of the June 17, 2024 episode of the podcast TEXTing with Elana Stein Hain which delves deeply into Jewish texts to guide and inspire us as we grapple with the concerns and meaning of this moment. Join Elana as she addresses the issues of our day through the lens of classical Jewish texts in conversation with Hartman scholars.*

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## I. Exegesis: Torah as Predictive

### 1. The Underdog Will Win: Babylonian Talmud Yoma 10a

R. Yehoshua ben Levi said Rebbe said: Rome is destined to fall by the hand of Persia, as it was said: "Hear, then, the plan which the Lord has devised against Edom, and what God has purposed against the inhabitants of Teman: surely the young of the flock (the shepherd boys?) shall drag them away, surely their pasture shall be aghast of them (Jer. 49:20)

אָמַר רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן לֵוִי אָמַר רַבִּי: עֲתִידָהּ רוּמֵי שְׁתַּפּוּל בְּיַד פָּרְסַי, שְׁנֵאמַר: "לָכֵן שָׁמְעוּ עֲצַת ה' אֲשֶׁר יַעַץ (עַל) אֲדוֹם וּמַחְשְׁבוֹתָיו אֲשֶׁר חָשַׁב (עַל) יוֹשְׁבֵי תֵימָן אִם לֹא יִסְחָבוּם צְעִירֵי הַצֹּאן אִם לֹא יִשִּׁים עֲלֵיהֶם נֹהֵם".

### 2. The Underdog is Greece: Babylonian Talmud Yoma 10a

Rabbah bar 'Ullah strongly objected to this: What intimation is there that "the young of the flock" refers to Persia? Is it because it is written - "The two-horned ram that you saw signifies the kings of Media and Persia (Daniel 8:20)." But says instead it is the Greeks (who will win), as it is written "and the buck, the he-goat—the king of Greece (Daniel 8:21)."

מִתְקִיף לֵהּ רַבָּה בַר עֻלָּא: מַאי מְשֻׁמַּע דְּהָאֵי "צְעִירֵי הַצֹּאן" פָּרְסַי הוּא — דְּכָתִיב: "הָאֵיל אֲשֶׁר רָאִיתָ בְּעַל הַקֶּרְנִים (הוּא) מְלָכֵי מִדְּי וּפָרְסַי. וְאִימָא יוֹן, דְּכָתִיב: "וְהַצֹּפִיר הַשָּׁעִיר מְלֹךְ יוֹן!"

### 3. The Underdog is Persia: Babylonian Talmud Yoma 10a

When R. Haviva ben Sormakei came up (to Israel), he reported this interpretation before a certain scholar. The scholar responded: One who does not understand the meaning of passages of Scripture raises a challenge against Rebbe?! What does "the young of the flock" mean? The youngest of his brothers, for Rav Yosef learned "Tiras is Persia."

כִּי סָלִיק רַב חַבִּיבָא בַר סוֹרְמַקַי, אָמַר קַמֵּיהּ דְּהָהוּא מְרַבָּנָן, אָמַר לֵיהּ: מַאן דְּלֹא יָדַע פְּרוּשֵׁי קְרָאֵי מוֹתִיב תִּיּוּבְתָא לְרַבֵּי! מַאי "צְעִירֵי הַצֹּאן" — זֹוּטְרָא דְּאַחוּהֵי. דְּתַנִּי רַב יוֹסֵף: תִּירַס — זֶה פָּרְסַי.

## II. Kal v'Chomer: Predicting with Logic

### 4. Good Guys Always Win: Babylonian Talmud Yoma 10a

Rabbah bar Hannah said that R. Yohanan said in the name of R. Judah b. Illa'i: Rome is destined to fall into the hands of Persia. That may be concluded by an a fortiori argument: If in the case of the first Temple which the sons of Shem built and the Babylonians destroyed, the Babylonians fell into the hands of the Persians; then how much more should this be so with the second Temple, which the Persians built and the Romans destroyed, that the Romans should fall into the hands of the Persians.

אמר רבה בר בר חנה אמר רבי יוחנן משום רבי יהודה ברבי אלעאי: עתידה רומי שתפול ביד פרס, קל וחומר: ומה מקדש ראשון שבנאוהו בני שם והחריבוהו בשד"ים — נפלו בשד"ים ביד פרס"ים. מקדש שני שבנאוהו פרס"ים והחריבוהו רומ"ים — אינו דין שיפלו רומ"ים ביד פרס"ים?

### 5. Religious Legitimacy of Uncertainty: Babylonian Talmud Yoma 10a

Rav said: Persia is destined to fall into the hands of Rome. Rav Kahana and Rav Asi said to Rav: The builders in the hands of the destroyers?! He responded to them: Indeed, it is a Divine decree! There are those who said, "He said to him, 'they too destroy synagogues.'"

אמר רב: עתידה פרס שתפול ביד רומי. אמרו ליה רב כהנא ורב אסי לרב: בנז"י ביד סתורי?! אמר להו: אין, גזירת מלך היא. איכא דאמרי, אמר (ליה): אינהו נמי הא קא סתרי בי כנישתא.

### 6. Darkest before Dawn: Babylonian Talmud Yoma 10a

We also learn this in a baraita: Persia is destined to fall into the hands of Rome: firstly, because they destroy synagogues; and furthermore, it is a Divine decree. As Rav Yehuda said that Rav said: the son of David will not come until the evil kingdom spreads throughout the entire world for the duration of nine months, as it is said: "Truly, God will leave them helpless until she who is to bear has borne; then the rest of his countrymen shall return to the children of Israel (Micah 5:2)."

תנאי נמי הכי: עתידה פרס שתפול ביד רומי, חדא — דסתרי בי כנישתא, ועוד: גזירת מלך הוא שיפלו בנז"י ביד סתורין. דאמר רב יהודה אמר רב: אין בן דוד בא עד שתפשוט מלכות רומי הרשעה בכל העולם כולו תשעה חדשים, שנאמר: "לכן יתנם עד עת יולדה ילדה ויתר אחיו ישובון על בני ישראל".