

SOUL REDEMPTION

by Shlomo Katz

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Today's Learning:

Shabbat 14:1-2

Orach Chaim 224:1-3

Daf Yomi (Bavli): Yevamot 46

Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Sotah 8

We read in the Pesach Haggadah: "The more that one tells about the Exodus, the more praiseworthy he is." Why?

R' Yaakov Yisrael Berger z"l (see page 4) wrote in 1944: Bnei Yisrael were supposed to be in Egypt for 400 years, but Hashem took them out 190 years early. Yet we have now been in exile for thousands of years. The Jews probably suffer more in Europe now than our ancestors did in Egypt. In the western nations, where our brethren have found rest for their bodies, there is no rest for the soul. The foundations of the Torah in these countries are collapsing. Shabbat and family purity laws are almost forgotten. Why then does Hashem not redeem us?

He adds: This is the meaning of the Haggadah's statement, "The more that one tells about the

Exodus, the more praiseworthy he is." The more that one explores the reasons that brought about the early redemption from Egypt, the more praiseworthy he is, for such a person hastens our own redemption. This is also the meaning of Rabban Gamliel's statement: "Whoever does not explain the following three things at the Pesach festival has not fulfilled his obligation - the Korban Pesach, matzah and maror." It is not enough to eat these three things. One must learn their lessons; for example, one must feel the bitterness of our own exile, and do what we can to be redeemed as our ancestors were. (Kol Yisrael Chaveirim p. 87)

"This month shall be for you the beginning of the months, rishon hu lachem / the first of the months of the year it shall be for you." (12:2)

The yotzer / additional prayer that some congregations recite on Shabbat Parashat Hachodesh (the Shabbat before the month of Nissan) says:

"rishon hu lachem / The first it shall be for you, for G-d to pass over you, to be sanctified among you- the Holy One!

lachem hu rishon / for you it shall be the first, you who are guarded like the apple of the eye . . ."

Why does the first stanza say, "rishon hu lachem / The first it shall be for you," while the second reverses the order of the words and says, "lachem hu rishon / for you it shall be the first"? R' Shalom Elchanan Halevi Jaffe z"l (see page 4) explains:

In the verse quoted above, Hashem taught Moshe the mitzvah of sanctifying the new moon to begin each month. That first month was sanctified by Hashem Himself; He showed Moshe what the new moon looks like. Thereafter, Hashem turned over this responsibility to man. From that time on, even if the bet din were to err in its declaration of the new moon, Hashem will observe the holidays on the day when the bet din says they will fall. [For example, Hashem will judge man on the day which the bet din says is Yom Kippur, even if Yom Kippur really should have fallen on the following day. (See Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 2:9)]

This explains the change between the two stanzas: Hashem sanctified the first month - "rishon hu lachem / The first it shall be for you." It was "first" before it was "for you." Thereafter, "lachem hu rishon / for you it shall be the first." It is "yours" to make the "first."

Why did Hashem sanctify that first month Himself? R' Jaffe explains:

The Torah states (Vayikra 20:7-8): "You shall sanctify yourselves and you will be holy, for I am Hashem, your G-d. You shall observe My decrees and perform them - I am Hashem, Who sanctifies you." These verses teach us that Hashem has previously sanctified us, and only because He did so can we sanctify ourselves further. Why did He sanctify us? Because He knows that we will follow His initiative and continue to sanctify ourselves.

Similarly, the gemara (Shabbat 88a) teaches that Hashem forced Bnei Yisrael at Har Sinai to accept the Torah. Why did He force them, whereas he did not force the descendants of Esav and Yishmael? Because He knew that Bnei Yisrael would later reaccept the Torah willingly.

In the same vein, Hashem sanctified the first rosh chodesh because all sanctity must begin with Him. However, He then turned this responsibility over to us because He knew that we would continue to sanctify the months. (Sichah Sheleimah p.190)

"And he left Pharaoh's presence in a burning anger."

(11:8)

Rashi writes: Moshe was angry because Pharaoh said (10:28), "Do not see my face anymore."

R' Chaim Aryeh Lerner z"l (see page 4) asks three questions:

(1) Why would Moshe be angered by those words rather than the words in the same sentence: "For on the day you see my face you shall die"?

(2) Why did Moshe become angry now more so than on other occasions when Pharaoh was disrespectful to him (e.g., in verse 10:11)?

(3) Why was Moshe upset at all? He should be happy to never see Pharaoh again since one is not supposed to look at the face of a wicked person!

R' Lerner answers: The Ba'al Haturim writes that the phrase "al tosef" / "Do not . . . anymore" appears twice in the Torah - once in the verse quoted by Rashi and once in the verse (Devarim 3:26), "Do not speak to Me anymore about this matter." (The "matter" referred to there was Moshe's desire to enter Eretz Yisrael and Hashem's decree that Moshe would not enter the Land.) Why is the same phrase used in both of these verses? The Ba'al Haturim explains that this illustrates that one should not take lightly a curse uttered by any person, even a wicked person. The fact that Pharaoh threatened Moshe with the phrase, "al tosef" / "Do not . . . anymore," had an effect and led Hashem to speak the same words to Moshe many years later.

The gemara (Megillah 3a) teaches that when a person is frightened and he doesn't know why, it is because his "mazel" (loosely translated: his soul) has seen something that the person himself has not seen. Here, too, Rashi informs us, Moshe was frightened and angered by the words "al tosef" / "Do not . . . anymore" more so than by Pharaoh's other threats, although Moshe himself did not know why. (Imrei Chaim)

"And it shall be when your son will ask you at some future time, 'What is this?' (13:14)

This is the question that the Haggadah associates with the simple-minded son. Why, asks R' Moshe

Feinstein z"l, is this question presented in the Torah before the question of the wise son (Devarim 6:20): "What are the testimonies and the decrees and the ordinances that Hashem, our G-d, commanded you?"

He answers: This is how one should approach Torah study. Before one can start inquiring into the Torah on a deep level, he must ask: "What is this?" Only after one knows the entire Torah, writes R' Feinstein, can one ask the deeper questions. (Darash Moshe)

Rabbis of the New World

The following are biographical notes on some of the sages who appear in this week's issue:

R' Yaakov Yisrael Berger z"l was a longtime rabbi in Cleveland in the period before World War II. His works include Ahavat Yisrael and Kol Yisrael Chaveirim. His descendants include the well-known writer R' Zelig Pliskin. (Source: R' Gedaliah Anemer)

R' Shalom Elchanan Halevi Jaffe z"l was the son of R' Shimon Peretz Jaffe. The younger R' Jaffe served in several Lithuanian towns. Beginning in 1890, he was rabbi in St. Louis, Missouri. He wrote several works; the one quoted in this issue is a commentary on the selichot, hoshanot and yotzrot, and was published in Yerushalayim in 1896. (Source: Otzar Ha'rabbanim No. 18220)

R' Chaim Aryeh Lerner z"l was born in Leordina, Hungary (now Rumania) on 18 Tamuz 5653/1893. Among his teachers were R' Akiva Schreiber in Pressburg and the Sigheter Rebbe, R' Chaim Zvi Teitelbaum (the "Atzei Chaim"). About the latter, R' Lerner writes: "I was a member of his household day and night." R' Lerner settled in the United States in 1929 and served as rabbi to several congregations in New York. He died in 1977.

The two volumes of R' Lerner's work, Imrei Chaim, were published in 1958 and 1972, respectively. In addition to R' Lerner's own writings on chumash, Talmud and halachah, the volumes contain previously unpublished writings of the Atzei Chaim and correspondence with the Atzai Chaim's son, the current Satmar Rebbe. (Source: Imrei Chaim)

Sponsored by Martin and Michelle Swartz in memory of Martin's grandmother, Elise Hofmann a"h

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The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ("lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah"), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at [Project Genesis](#) start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page. Text archives from 1990

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