

# CLASS 46 - THE FOUR PARSHIOS

*by Rabbi Heshy Grossman*

The four Parshios read during the month of Adar exist independently of the weekly Torah portion.

These readings have an order of their own:

"The four Parshios are parallel to the four letters of the Divine name. The two before Purim, when the Name is yet incomplete, before Amalek is wiped out, correspond to the first two letters, with which was created two worlds [Olam HaZeh and Olam HaBa]..... (Rabbeinu Tzaddok HaKohen, Machsheves Charutz, pg. 29)

The month of Adar is the concluding stage of an inner process of maturation, culminating in the revelation of the Divine plan concealed at the onset of life. Each of the four Parshios that we read alludes to a different stage of man's achievement, as he develops, together with the world, a deeper understanding of creation.

Let us explain.

1

"The foundation of righteousness and the root of pure service is that it be clear and true to a man his obligation in his world, and towards what should be his outlook and aim, in all that he toils, all the days of his life."

With these well-known words, Ramchal opens the Mesilas Yesharim.

And what is this purpose for which man should devote his attention?

"What our Sages have taught us is that man was created only to find pleasure in G-d, and to benefit from the shine of His presence, for this is the true enjoyment and greatest pleasure of all the pleasures that can possibly be found. And the true place of this pleasure is in Olam HaBa, for it was created with the necessary preparation for this matter. But, the means to achieve this object of our desires is this world, as our Sages said: This world is a corridor before the world-to-come. And the means by which man arrives at this goal are the Mitzvos that G-d charged us with. The place for the performance of these Mitzvos is only this world, therefore, man was placed in this world first, so that through these means that are his opportunities here, he can reach the place that is prepared for him, which is the next world, to enjoy the good that he has acquired with these means..."

On one level, then, life is understood as a means towards an end, an opportunity to fulfill the

commands that grant him a place in Olam HaBa.

But, on a deeper level, life is much more:

"And, when you look further into the matter, you will see that true perfection is only cleaving to G-d.... for only this is the good, and everything else that people consider as good are only vanities, and foolish nothingness. However, in order for man to merit this good, it is appropriate that he toil first, and attempt, with his efforts, to acquire it...."

The simple man sees life as an amusement park: Do good, gather points, and collect your prize.

An insightful man understands things more clearly: Reward is worthwhile only when it is earned. This world is a test, with varied interests pulling man in different directions. The gallant man survives the battle of life, remaining faithful to G-d as he conquers the evil within and without.

Yet, the Ramchal continues, with a still deeper perspective:

"And, if you delve further into the matter you will see that this world is created for man's use. However, it stands upon a great balance. For, if man is drawn after the world, and becomes distant from his Creator, he becomes ruined, and he ruins the world with him. If he controls himself, and cleaves to his Creator, using the world only as an aid in the service of G-d, he becomes elevated, and the world itself is elevated with him. For it is a great elevation for all of creation to be serving the perfect man, who is sanctified with His holiness...."

Here, we see a third level. Olam HaZeh goes beyond a place where man can gain his reward, and is more than an opportunity to earn a spot in eternity, it exists to reveal the unity of G-d as One.

Together, man and his world are the vehicle that expresses this truth.

## 2

In Mesilas Yesharim, the Ramchal explores this world from the perspective of man, describing a ladder of growth that reaches from earth up to heaven.

Elsewhere, he teaches of the very same stages of revelation, but from the opposite direction, the intent of G-d in the act of creation.

"There are three varied knowledges in Chachmas HaEmes, one within the other, and they flow from knowing the intent of creation."

"The superficial knowledge is that G-d created His world in order to give a place for His names....that he be referred to as Rachum, Chanun, Erech Appayim, and the like...."

"The second knowledge of His intent is that creation is an act of perfect and complete good, that the creations should receive [this good] with merit, and not charity. Therefore, was arranged all this order, for ultimately, after evil will come the good....at times, evil will dominate, or the nations of the

world, until Israel is purified....and one who has not grasped this concept doesn't understand a thing."

"The third knowledge of His intent, which is an awesome idea, is that G-d wants to reveal His unity, to demonstrate 'Ani Rishon, V'Ani Acharon...' and all curse will revert to blessing, and all evil to good....Truthfully, this is the essential faith of Israel, to know the unity of G-d. To reach this knowledge requires great effort..." (Igros Pischei Chachmah V'Da'as)

These three ideas correspond precisely to the different levels of the Mesilas Yescharim.

At first, man relates to this world as an opportunity to gain reward, or, perhaps, an ordeal that might lead to punishment. He learns the varied names of His creator, both kindness and Din.

But, this alone would not suffice, for it does not explain why G-d creates this world, rather than place us directly in the next. Hence, a more mature understanding of life senses that this world is a mere test, an assessment of man's fidelity, where man does battle with temptation and earns his just desert.

And still, many questions are unanswered. Why, for instance, has G-d commanded these particular laws, and not others? Why six hundred and thirteen, and not more? Or less?

A deeper outlook shows this: All the universe is one. The Mitzvos parallel the different limbs of primordial man, whose essence encompasses all creation. They correspond to the days of the year, for the Torah itself is creation in different form.

The man who actualizes G-d's word elevates all of life, and the world achieves its purpose. Even evil and sin are transformed into vessels that ultimately reveal one truth - all of life is One.

### 3

At the onset of Chodesh Adar, we read Parshas Shekalim, an acceptance of a new set of values, an opportunity to earn reward.

From there, we turn to Zachor, the battle against evil, and our attempt to defeat the dark side of existence.

As the month wears on, we continue with Parshas Parah, the purification of all sin, and the cessation of death and impropriety.

The red heifer purifies because it has reduced all of life to ash, submerging every foreign element into the overarching unity of G- d's all-powerful word.

All this is mere preparation, for it is with the final Parsha that Israel achieves its goal, the realization of a new and entirely different entity, the otherworldly dimension of HaChodesh HaZeh Lachem.

The first three levels of existence are defined by the Mesilas Yescharim as man's climb up a spiritual ladder, toiling to achieve a small measure of growth.

At the end of this climb, man reaches the top, Kedushah - more of a heavenly award, rather than actual compensation.

"The idea of Kedushah is dual, that is, it begins with toil, and ends with reward, it originates with effort and closes with a gift. Meaning: at the start, man sanctifies himself, and ultimately, he is himself sanctified. As [the Sages] said: 'Man sanctifies himself a bit, he is sanctified greatly; [he sanctifies himself] below, he is sanctified from above' (Yoma 39a)." (Mesilas Yesharim, Ch. 26)

In this world, man is encouraged to work towards a goal, to be faithful to G-d and observe His law, to climb the ladder of spirituality and overcome the forces of evil.

Once done, man is ready for the world that is destined to be, a different time and place, one not of his own making.

This is the message of Chodesh Adar, the month that is transformed from mourning to holiday, from suffering to rejoicing.

In the meantime, we need only remember the ladder:

"...Torah brings to watchfulness, and watchfulness to zeal, zeal brings to cleanliness, and cleanliness brings to separation. Separation brings to purity, and purity brings to righteousness, righteousness brings to humility, and humility brings to fear of sin. Fear of sin brings to holiness, and holiness brings to prophecy. Prophecy brings to Techiyas HaMeisim."

"HaYom Le'Asosam, U'Machar L'Kabbel Scharam"

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