

CLASS 60 - VAYECHI

by Rabbi Heshy Grossman

"Why is this Parsha closed?....because Ya'akov wanted to reveal the Ketz to his children, but it was closed to him." (Rashi, Breishis 47:28)

This Parsha is like no other. We know of a Parsha Pesucha, a Torah selection that begins with an open line, and a Parsha Stumah, a section that opens on the same line as the prior chapter, albeit with a small separation. But between Parshas VaYigash and Parshas VaYechi there is no break at all.

Chazal are teaching us that the closed book of Parshas VaYechi is an area of life that will remain concealed, and even Yaakov Avinu learns that mortal man is unable to crack its secret code.

The Geula will stay hidden until the day it arrives.

1

"I believe with perfect faith in the arrival of Moshiach, and though he may tarry, still, I wait for his coming each day."

Of the thirteen principles of faith recited daily after the morning prayers, this is the only one that contains a question, encouraging a belief in redemption despite the apparent difficulty. But, this raises a troubling issue. The imminent arrival of Moshiach is not the only article of faith that has yet to be fulfilled. We wait as well for the resurrection of the dead, and we acknowledge the unity of G-d despite appearances to the contrary, why then are unfulfilled circumstances mentioned only here?

It seems that Moshiach's delay, along with the many factors in life that indicate a contrary objective, are themselves critical for an understanding of the Geulah.

Let us explain.

The Ashrei prayer recited thrice daily (Tehillim 84) is an acrostic, each sentence following the order of the Hebrew alphabet. Every letter is represented, except for 'Nun'. Chazal explain that since the downfall of Israel is hinted to by the 'Nun', as in 'Nefilah', we are best served without a direct reference. And still, Dovid HaMelech does allude to this misfortune in the succeeding verse - 'Somech Hashem L'Chol HaNoflim - G-d supports all the fallen.'

The Maharal expounds upon this idea:

"...on their own the Jewish people are likely to fall, and in any case, it is G-d, who supports all of

existence, who will sustain them specifically, and were it not thus, they would all be fallen." (Netzach Yisrael, Chapter 13)

The forces of nature do not contribute to the continued existence of the Jewish people, indeed, were the world to be left on its own, Klal Yisrael would never survive.

It follows then that redemption is a concept with no earthly support, and the procedure of Geulah is designed in a heavenly realm, directed by an internal process known to G-d alone.

This is a very significant point. In recent times, there have been numerous attempts to consider worldly developments as indication that the Geulah is on its way. All too often, when events didn't quite proceed as planned these false hopes have been shattered, and the faith of the righteous has been tested by the failure of the Messiah to appear.

An unfortunate misconception underlines these efforts to interpret world events in a messianic light. The location of the redemption is not on this world, nor will it originate by any earthly process. Mortal man will never be able to point to a specific place and say: 'from here the Geulah will arrive.'

The Galus may be approaching its end, but the redemption will always be elsewhere.

2

When the brothers of Yosef appear before him pleading for Binyamin's release, the emotions of Yosef can no longer be contained - "V'Lo Yachol L'Hisapek" - and he suddenly reveals himself as the brother they had sold long ago.

The text indicates that Yosef had planned for a different conclusion, and indeed, commentaries attribute the slaughter of the ten martyrs, who were sacrificed at the hands of the Roman emperor, to the unsatisfactory finale of the brothers' dramatic reunion.

What else did Yosef have in mind?

"And Yosef could not endure".... - "until all those who stood before him would leave, so he needed to call out that they be removed" (Ibn Ezra, Breishis 45:1)

Yosef's objective is clear. Were he to have achieved his goal, the Egyptians would have believed it appropriate to exit on their own in anticipation of the coming revelation, with no need to force their departure.

Yosef is disclosing a hidden secret, and the brothers see for the first time that the man they believed to be the source of their troubles represents instead their longed-for salvation. This poignant scene mirrors the redemption itself, when Klal Yisrael will discover an inner truth, recognizing suddenly that life is not as it seems.

"U'Pitom Yavo El Heichalo HaAdon Asher Atem Mevakshim" - "and suddenly the Lord, whom you

seek, will come to His temple." (Malachi 3:1)

The secrets of the world are for Jewish eyes only.

"Said Rebbe Yehuda bar Shalom:.....Moshe wanted for the Mishna to be written, but G-d foresaw that the nations were destined to translate the Torah and read it in Greek, and to say 'we are Israel.'.....Hashem said to the nations: 'You say that you are my children. I know only that those who have my hidden secrets in their possession: they are my children'....." (Midrash Tanchuma, Ki Tisa 34)

While the nations of the world have their own place in civilization, Klal Yisrael remains connected to an inner dimension, a world where the Divine plan is eminently clear. This locale is G-d's hidden place, where physical entities are all falling, their existence untenable without the help of G-d's supporting Hand.

For this reason, were the process of redemption truly complete, at the moment that Yosef revealed his identity, the Egyptians would have surely departed, for those who represent "Ervav HaAretz - the bare opening of the earth" (Breishis 42:9) - have no place in the Kingdom of G-d.

"Sod Hashem L'Yire'av - the secret of G-d is for those who fear Him" (Tehillim 25:14)

3

"And he said: go your way, Daniel, for the words are closed and sealed till the end of time. The matter will be purified and clarified.....yet they will not understand." (Daniel 12:10)

".....V'Hamaskilim Yavinu - but the wise will understand" - "they will understand when the end of time comes." (Rashi, ad. loc.)

Ya'akov Avinu wants to reveal to his children the secret of their redemption, but finds that he is unable to do so. Is it a date that he planned to disclose? What happened? Did he suffer a sudden memory loss?

Perhaps we can best understand by studying the following:

"Why is permission given to... [Gog] to murder Moshiach ben Yosef? In order to break the heart of those who caused a breach in Israel; who have no faith, and will say 'this is the man whom we had hoped for, he has come and been killed, and there will no longer be any salvation', and they will leave the covenant of Israel....while those that remain in Yerushalayim will be purified and perfected." (Teshuvav Rav Hai Gaon)

It is not the calendar that Ya'akov hopes to illuminate. Rather, it is the process of redemption that he hopes to transmit. He discovers that this is impossible, and cries out instead: "L'Yeshuascha Kivisi Hashem" (Breishis 49:18) - for only faith remains.

He recognizes that redemption has no process, but is simply a question, one that cannot be

answered by mere mortals. The many difficulties and doubts of our long exile are tangible signs of this question, and the trials and tribulations we endure filter out the unfaithful souls from the body of Klal Yisrael.

Faith in the Messiah demands separation from our worldly perspective, and the ability to perceive life as seen from Above. This is the secret that cannot be revealed.

The Torah has four different levels of understanding - Pshat is the surface explanation of Drush, and Remez alludes to a hidden Sod. Drush is a message that the verse demands [Doresh], while Sod is merely hinted at, but never expressed. Drashos can be understood by those who learn to read between the lines, but secrets are precisely those messages that Hashem has not transmitted to this world.

They are open questions - "and though he may tarry, still, I wait for his coming each day."

In order to find the Messiah, Klal Yisrael is required to wait - to negate all the values and mores of a physical world, and to recognize that a solution to the Jewish problem will never be found.

In this case, man's question is his best answer.

Have a good Shabbos.

The author takes this opportunity to wish a hearty Mazel Tov to his dear nephew, Uri Feldman, on the occasion of his Bar Mitzvah this coming Shabbos in Baltimore, Maryland. Mazel Tov and best wishes to his parents as well, Mr. and Mrs. Yonasan Feldman.

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