

WILL KNOWS NO REASON

by Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein

Hashem, the G-d of your forefathers has appeared to me...saying, "I have surely remembered [pakod pakadeti] you and what is done to you in Egypt."^[2]

Why us? Why did G-d pick the Jews? Any attempt to answer that question will diminish the actual importance of *Klal Yisrael*. The election of *Klal Yisrael* has nothing to do with reason!

This is not to say that it was "unreasonable" or contrary to reason for Hashem to choose us. Quite the contrary. Something much higher and more profound than reason was responsible.

People are confused by this. In most human affairs, the most attractive arguments are the ones that can explain the reasons, the causes for things. Upon reflection, however, the very opposite is true when it comes to HKBH. When you ask "why," you look for a chain of causes. Any decision for which there is a good response to the "why" is not completely a freely arrived at decision. Whatever it is that makes the decision so logical makes it less freely-willed! That "why" makes it compelling to act in a certain way!

Decisions, however, can come from a different place – from pure will. Will often has no reason. It is just there, as something that wells up in the core of a person's being.

The same is true, *kivayachol*, in regard to Hashem. Some of His actions appear to us to have no reason. They are reflections of a different function within Him, namely His Will. That is where the election of *Klal Yisrael* comes from. He selected us not for any reason, but because that choice was consistent with His Will. This makes our selection more profound, not less.

Even the *avos* are not the "reason" why He chose us. The *avos* are important because from them emerged a special people. Those people – that nation – are the reasons for the greatness. It was not the greatness of the *avos* that mandated the selection of the people, but the reverse.

This hidden, inscrutable greatness powers the phrase that the enslaved *Bnei Yisrael* knew signaled their redemption: *pakod pakadeti eschem*^[3] / I have surely remembered you. The doubled verb *pkd* refers to the merit of the forefathers and the hidden dimension of greatness; *eschem* refers to the manifest *Bnei Yisrael* that stood in plain sight. They were buoyed up in the worst of times by a tradition that a redeemer would come one day, bearing this phrase. Essentially that means that they would only trust a would-be redeemer who was able to reveal this hidden specialness to himself, and grasp their core greatness.

Moshe had encountered it at the burning bush. It signified to him the mystery of the Jewish people. What was it about them that no matter what the rest of the world would throw at them, they would not be destroyed? He endeavored to find out. "Hashem saw that he turned aside to see."^[4] Moshe, who later would ask of Hashem to "see" His glory^[5] – i.e. to grasp more of what Hashem is - now wanted to comprehend more of the essence of the Jewish people. Hashem would later tell Moshe that "you will see My back, but My face may not be seen." Here, Hashem tells Moshe, "Do not come closer to here."^[6] You have come as close as you will get. To fully understand the specialness of Am Yisrael is impossible.

This was behind Moshe's query of Hashem as the dialogue between them opened up. Moshe wished to ascertain the cause of the upcoming *geulah*. Did Hashem start the process of redemption because of the merit of the *avos*, or because of the loyalty of the Jews who stood before him? Or was it because of their hidden greatness that resides in every Jew?

Hashem's answer was, "This is your sign...When you take the people out of Egypt, you will serve G-d on this mountain."^[7] In other words, the redemption, when it would come, would look ahead, not back. Moshe, however, presses on. "I will come to the *Bnei Yisrael*, and I will tell them, 'The G-d of your fathers sent me.'"^[8] Moshe realizes that the conversation is a non-starter unless he invokes the *mesorah* from the founding generations. If so, he argues, people will be confused. They have been taught that they will be redeemed because of their intrinsic worth, not just their link to the past.

Hashem responds, "I will be what I will be."^[9] He calls upon the future. The *geulah* would be powered not by the past, and not by a contemporaneous display of their hidden worth. Rather, it would occur as an investment in the future, the time that their hidden selves would become potentiated and revealed for their true mettle.

1. Based on Mei Marom, Shemos, Maamar 6
2. Shemos 3:16
3. Ibid.
4. Shemos 3:4
5. Shemos 33:18
6. Shemos 3:5
7. Shemos 3:1
8. Shemos 3:13
9. Shemos 3:14