

FREEDOM-SPEAK

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

Friday Night:

"Therefore say to the children of Israel, 'I am G-d, and I will bring you out (vehotzaisy) from under the burdens of the Egyptians. I will deliver you (vehitzalty) out of their service, and I will redeem you (vega'alty) with an outstretched arm, and with great judgments. I will take you (valakachty) to Me to be a people, and I will be (vehayissi) your G-d, and you will know that I am Hashem your G-d, Who brings you out from under the burdens of Egypt. I will bring you (vehaivaisy) to the land, which I swore to give to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Ya'akov. I will give (venotatti) it to you for a heritage--I am G-d.' " (Shemos 6:6-8)

We often speak about the four languages of redemption, which are:

Vehotzaisy--I will lead you out (of Egypt);

vehitzalty--I will deliver you (from any type of servitude);

vega'alty--I will redeem you;

valakachty--I will take you (as My people). (Shemos Rabbah 6:5)

each of which is mentioned in the above verses (the words in parantheses). However, the rabbis also speak about "seven terms of promise," which include the four terms of redemption and which add:

vehayissi--I will be (your G-d)

vehaivaisy--I will bring you (to the land)

venotatti--I will give (the land to you)

What's the difference? Why are there four terms for redemption and seven signifying G-d's promise to the Jewish people?

It has to do with the significance of the number seven, and its connection to the concept of an oath, which, in Hebrew is the word "shavuah," from the word "shevah" (seven).

When G-d makes a promise, it is not like when we make a promise. When a person promises something, maybe he will be able to carry out his word, and maybe he won't be able to--it depends upon many factors. After all, as powerful and as intelligent as man has become, still, we are helpless in the face of so many "natural" factors of creation. Even something as basic as the weather can

impede our path to fulfillment of promises.

Not so for G-d. G-d knows creation, and even though He can override nature, He tries to work within nature's pre-determined limitations, which is governed by the seven lower sefiros. Hence, the concept of a shavuah--an oath--is the idea of doing that which agrees with the purpose of physical creation. Therefore, G-d was promising the Jewish people that their freedom, as impossible as it seemed at the time, was imminent because creation required it.

Creation didn't come into being to allow evil nations like Egypt to rule forever; rather, it exists to allow nations like the Jewish people to live in freedom and elevate creation to spiritual perfection, then, and now, symbolized by the four terms for redemption. For, physical creation is also referred to in terms of the four directions, which the Jewish people, through Torah, can learn to control and channel to do the will of G-d.

Shabbos Day:

Moshe told it to the children of Israel, but they did not listen to Moshe because their spirit was broken, and because of the hardness of their work. G-d told Moshe, "Go and speak to Paroah, king of Egypt, in order that he should send the children of Israel out of his land." Moshe answered G-d, "But the children of Israel have not listened to me--will Paroah then listen to me, with my speech problem?" (Shemos 6:9-12)

Moshe's argument, at first, does not seem logical. It was true that the spirit of the Jewish people had been broken and that they could not find the wherewithall to hear Moshe out, let alone believe his promise of redemption. However, Paroah did not suffer from the same problem as his slaves did, and if he was about to reject Moshe's request for freedom of the Jewish people, if anything, it would be because of an inflated ego, not a broken one. So what was the basis of Moshe's argument, and what does a speech problem have to do with anything?

The answer to this question has to do with a verse from the previous parshah:

G-d said to Moshe, "Go and gather the elders of Israel together, and say to them ... They will listen to you." (Shemos 3:15-18)

>From this verse, Moshe thought that the merit necessary to cause the miracle that would lead to the redemption was the Jewish people's willingness to listen to G-d, and believe in Him. Indeed, the Mechilta writes:

The Jewish people were only redeemed because they had faith ... This is the basis of all redemptions. (Mechilta, Beshallah, 6)

However, when Moshe returned to Egypt the second time (6 months later) and approached the

broken Jewish nation, all he found was a spiritless people, a hopeless people with no sense of belief in anything anymore--especially redemption. The last time, promise of redemption led to increased slavery--so what was there left to believe in this time?

This was a problem. If belief in G-d and the redemption was the basis to be freed from Egyptian servitude, and the Jewish people had none left, then in what merit could they go out? Moshe knew the all-important principle in Torah regarding miracles and trust in G-d: Heaven responds to us--the more faith we have in G-d, the more Heaven will open up its storehouse of blessing. Hence, by definition, the opposite must also be true.

And quite frankly, Moshe was right. That's why G-d came back and commanded Moshe and Aharon: G-d spoke to Moshe and Aharon, and commanded them regarding the children of Israel, to bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt ... (Shemos 6:13)

The point of this commandment was to "inspire" the two of them to speak to the hearts of the Jewish people, and to breathe new life of hope into them. However, Moshe added, "I can't speak properly! How can I inspire these people to the point that You will be willing to perform all kinds of miracles on their behalf?!" Therefore, G-d answered him, "You will have help. Aharon your brother will help you complete this task."

Therefore, Moshe and Aharon set out to re-kindle the fire of optimism in the hearts of the Jewish people. The "fire" of Jewish hope was smoldering, and threatening to become extinguished, and G-d commanded Moshe and Aharon to blow on the "embers," to re-ignite them, until a "flame" of longing for and belief in redemption emerged, and burned on its own. That would be the flame that would melt the shackles of slavery, not just around the ankles of the Jewish people, but around their hearts as well.

History testifies to the success of their mission.

SEUDAH SHLISHI:

Aharon married Elisheva, the daughter of Aminadav, the sister of Nachshon ... (Shemos 6:23)

In the middle of the mission to redeem the Jewish people from being in Egypt for 210 years, the Torah saw fit to recount the lineage of Moshe and Aharon his brother, lest you wonder who they were. In any case, as is to be suspected, there is more to those verses than what meets the mind at first glance, and the Zohar provides a peek:

Come and see: Bas Sheva was meant for King David from the day the world was created, and Elisheva was meant for Aharon from the first day of creation. What difference is there between the two? It is really the same idea, except that this one was for judgment and this one was for mercy ...

(Zohar, Shemini 66)

What the Zohar means to say is that in each case, the wife was destined to marry her respective husband from the inception of creation, to provide an important spiritual completion for him. In the case of King David, Bas Sheva was meant to push David in the direction of judgment, providing him with the extra spiritual stamina to wage war against the enemies of the Jewish people. Apparently, the King's nature limited his ability to spill blood.

However, in the case of Aharon HaKohen, he needed to be a scion of the trait of mercy, a veritable source of love and blessing. As great as Aharon himself was, still, Elisheva provided an important element to his personality, an added dimension that became his greatest asset. And the Zohar is telling us that it was not just that two of the greatest personalities in world history required this, but that creation as whole demanded this.

We can assume the same thing to be true about Moshe and Tzipporah; we already know it about Avraham and Sarah, Yitzchak and Rivkah, and Ya'akov and Rachel and Leah (and even Bilhah and Zilpah for that matter). Perhaps that's one of the meanings behind the following:

It is as difficult to make a make a marital match as it was to split the sea. (Sotah 2a) Splitting the sea only occurred, against all the natural laws, because it led to the fulfillment of the master plan of creation. Apparently making a good shidduch can have similar ramifications as well.

Melave Malkah:

G-d told Moshe, "Early in the morning stand before Paroah and tell him that, Hashem, G-d of the Hebrews says to let His people go, so they can serve Him. [If you don't] He will send all His plagues against you, your servants, and your people, so that you will know that there is none like Him. "He could have unleashed His power and destroyed you and your people with pestilence, exterminating you from the earth. However, He has allowed you to survive just to show you His power, and so His name can be declared throughout all the earth." (Shemos 9:13-16)

According to the Rambam, the above is a lesson not just for Paroah, but for all the generations of man to be born from that time onward. The Rambam writes:

"G-d explained to him that if He had wanted to only redeem the Jewish people, He would have destroyed Paroah and his subjects, and He would have done it quickly. However, He also wanted to punish them [the Egyptians] for the slavery they imposed, as He promised He would do: Also the nation that oppressed them I will also judge, and then they will go out with many possessions. (Bereishis 15:14). However, He could not have punished them had they done teshuvah. Therefore, G-d prevented the Egyptians from doing teshuvah, by hardening their hearts. If so, then why did G-d

send Moshe to tell Paroah, 'Send them out and do teshuvah'--He already told him he won't send them out, as it says, 'I realize that you and your subjects do not fear G-d ...' (Shemos 9:30), and, "He has allowed you to survive just to show you His power ..." Rather, all of this was to teach those who will be born in the future that when The Holy One, Blessed is He, decides to prevent a person from doing teshuvah, it then becomes impossible for the person to do teshuvah! Rather, he will die evil, as he first chose to be ..." (Rambam, Hilchos Teshuvah, 6:3)

The frightening thing about this idea is what it means today for so many people who find it so very difficult to do teshuvah. In spite of all the logic, and all the evidence, to, at the very least, consider the relevance of Torah, they argue, and they fight, and they simply mock the whole Sinai experience. Some even make laws to thwart Torah's efforts to survive and thrive. And when they seem themselves as being victorious, they gleam, as if they accomplished something positive on behalf of humanity!

Paroah, and those after him, did the same, and felt the same. However, the Torah is telling us, or better yet, warning us that this is just a tragic misunderstanding of reality, call it a "Paroah-mentality." He who laughs first, laughs last, or for those who possess a Paroah-mentality, perhaps never at all. If checking our "blind-spots" is so important when driving on the road, how much more so must we do so when "driving" down the road of life.

Have a good Shabbos,

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