

DEVELOPING OUR SIXTH SENSE

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

Friday Night:

The Rock! Perfect is His work, for all his paths are justice; a G-d of faith without with sin, righteous and fair He is. (Devarim 32:4)

After that earth-stopping attack on the United States of America, in which so many innocent people were ruthlessly and brutally murdered by terrorists who have absolutely no value for human life, the above posuk is more difficult to read. I say "earth-stopping" because it is startling how in such a short time the perpetrators of this grossly evil attack were able to paralyze and humble the mightiest nation on earth, and send shock waves around the entire civilized world. Talking about hitting an "Achilles' heel!"

To make matters even more difficult, the attack was one big black miracle. According to all accounts, if the attack should have been "successful" at all, it should only have been in a limited way. Too many things could have and should have gone wrong. Too many things went RIGHT for the terrorists, which were WRONG for civilization.

For the U.S. government, the implication may be that it was an "inside job," meaning that the conspirators had contacts in key places that helped them to carry out their affront against humanity. However, for a believing Jew, an "inside job" has a different connotation: they had help from Heaven. G-d had a role in all of this, and even though He always does, in this case, His hand was so incredibly obvious.

It always feels very uncomfortable saying such a thing. G-d helps terrorists?! G-d forbid!

G-d does NOT help evil to perform evil, NEVER! Then what do we mean, and where was the justice, if there was any at all, in any attack against seemingly innocent people?

The answer is that success or failure is not measured from Heaven's point of view, by short-term gains or losses, as we often measure success and failure. When it comes to Heaven, our idea of the end of something is often, no usually, only the beginning of something else, something BIGGER, the effect of which we may not notice for some time to come.

In other words, the attack on the Twin Towers in New York and the Pentagon in Washington was not only an effect, but a cause as well, and knowing that changes everything. For, though it may be very

difficult to find a reason in the PAST for what just happened, it may be easier to find a reason in the FUTURE for the event in question. Hard as that may seem to be to grasp at this time, it was even harder to imagine the events of two weeks ago happening - even five minutes before they occurred.

All events of history must be viewed in the context of the goal of history - the purpose of creation. Like a person who needs to travel from Point A to Point B, his decision about when to travel and how to travel will depend upon where he is going, and by when he has to arrive at his destination, and how. History works the same way.

What happened two weeks ago happened when it did and how it did because history is not stationary, as people would like to believe, but in motion and on the road to a certain destination to arrive by a certain time. What happened is leading to something very big and very important, and I say "leading" as opposed to the past tense "led," because it is not over yet, and won't be for some time to come.

Unable to fully understand the events of two weeks ago, how it happened and why it happened because they were so out of the context of everyday life as we have become accustomed to it, there will be a great longing and effort on the part of millions to return to "normal." There will be a desire to emotionally deny what happened, though intellectually we will be unable to, and when that happens, people will just stop asking questions and let time heal their wounds.

While that is a healthy approach to some things in life, this time it is not. What happened in New York and Washington two weeks ago represents a paradigm shift. The world changed then and it cannot go back to the way things once were, and to try to go back is to live with an illusion, a VERY dangerous illusion.

All explanations and excuses aside, the King is coming, and I don't just mean this Rosh Hashanah. Two weeks ago G-d stepped directly into history, and I don't think He plans to leave again.

The Rock! -- perfect is His work, for all His paths are justice...

We are about to find out just how true this really is.

Shabbos Day:

Remember the days of the world, understand the years of generation after generation. (Devarim 32:7)

It is not a coincidence that this posuk follows the previous ones. It is both a lesson and a warning. If people were truly shocked by the fact that such a calamity COULD occur in the heart of the United States of America and to two of its most prominent symbols - the World TRADE Center and the Pentagon, the symbol of American financial prowess and the symbol of American military might -

then they are not students of history.

This week's parshah commands us to BE students of history. It changes your whole perspective of the present and the future when you are aware of the past. You can't believe how blind and naive we become when we ignore history, and do not know it in detail.

I found it particularly interesting that even the president of the United States came to view this attack on the American public as one that stepped up the war between the forces of good and the forces of evil, the side of light against the side of darkness. He is 100% correct, though he might be quite mistaken about exactly what that means.

What I mean is brought out in this week's parshah, and Rashi's explanation of the above posuk:

REMEMBER THE DAYS OF THE WORLD: What the earlier generations did and how they angered Him. UNDERSTAND THE YEARS OF GENERATION AFTER GENERATION: The Generation of Enosh, and how G-d brought the Mediterranean waters upon them, and the Generation of the Flood and how they were washed away. (Rashi)

And, why should we do that:

UNDERSTAND THE YEARS OF GENERATION AFTER GENERATION: To recognize for the FUTURE that you have the ability to do better for yourselves, to inherit the Days of Moshiach and the World-to-Come. (Ibid.)

In other words, the Torah is explaining that, in order to live safely in G-d's creation, one must constantly distinguish between causes and effects. Was the terrorist attack a cause or an effect? I'm sure there were many people in Enosh's time, and the time of the Great Flood who were shocked by what was happening to them, just as we have been by the "punishments" of our days.

To many of us, what happened in the States was a cause, and not an effect. After all, what could possibly have been so wrong with American society for G-d to allow that kind of thing to happen in the first place? G-d doesn't help evil be successful, He just doesn't interfere with it when the merit to do so doesn't exist on behalf of the potential victims. I'm not talking about individuals; I'm talking about society as a whole.

It says in Tehillim:

Praise G-d, all peoples; praise Him, all the nations! (Tehillim 117:1)

Someone once asked the Vilna Gaon why King David wrote this posuk? What praise can the nations of the world offer to G-d that the Jewish people cannot? He answered: Only they will know how many times they had wanted to inflict suffering on the Jewish people, but were prevented from doing so by G-d!

I strongly disagree with Bin Laden and his partners-in-crime. We have not been exposed to such

brutality because of crimes against Allah and the Islamic people. We have simply tasted what it means when it says, "Those who forget are doomed to repeat."

Enosh's generation was guilty of idol worship, even though, in the beginning, they may have meant well. Idol worship means placing your trust in false gods, be they made of stone or metal, be they made of green paper, be they men of flesh-and-blood. What was the source of our perception of American invincibility? Money and military might.

"It could never happen in America! They're too... well... too big... and too smart... and too rich... and too well-equipped..." So was the generation of Enosh, in their own way in their own time.

The Generation of the Flood was guilty of a different violation of creation. As Rashi points out at the beginning of Parashas Noach, the people of Noach's time knew no boundaries when it came to enjoying the physical world. "To each his own" and "do as you please" correctly described the theme of that sorry period of mankind.

To many in the Western world, that is the meaning of "America, land of the free..." that is, free to do as you please, no matter how offensive your actions might be to the Master of the Universe.

"In G-d we trust" on American money, I am sure, has been the source of much of America's success. However, when this remains only to be lip service to the Creator of the world, then it ceases to impress the Power Above. And, when Jews learn to mimic this way of the non-Jews, to the point that they feel safer and more secure in a society built on these values, then they add insult to injury, even if they are Torah-observant.

As I write this very essay, the nations are forming into a coalition that could easily evolve into Gog and Magog. They don't have to know it, and they don't have to even get together, IN THE BEGINNING, to go to war against the Jewish people. They only have to be willing to go to war, and that they are... that they are.

If you think that I am just waving my finger at the Americans and saying, "You see! You had it coming to you!" and that I am gleeful that "justice" has been done, you are VERY wrong. An awful lot of good people suffered, and are still suffering as a result of the horrific attack. Furthermore, I have heard stories of heroism even by Torah standards that I cannot, personally, imagine performing in similar circumstances. I do not find it difficult at all, two weeks later, to still cry for the people who were unfortunate to have been involved one way or another in what happened.

Something terrible has happened, something that my mind still has difficulty understanding and my heart still has trouble accepting. On the other hand, we have this week's parshah, and others like it. The Torah was given to help us draw conclusions about the past, so that we can improve in the present, and protect our future.

We would be wise to return to the classroom of history, and start learning in earnest. Now, at this late and unstable time of history, it is not only a mitzvah, but the basis of the security of the Jewish

people, present and future.

SEUDAH SHLISHI:

As part of an effort to read Biblical and historical significance into the events of the last two weeks, some people turned to Nostradamus and came up with a prediction that was never written by him. Some people even felt poetic license to alter an already false quote to make it "fit" the events a little tighter.

What a waste of time. All they had to do was open a Tanach and read, among other prophets, Yeshayahu and Daniel (Chapter 8). Yeshayahu wrote:

The prophecy that Yeshayahu son of Amotz saw, concerning Judah and Jerusalem: It will happen in the end of days... Its land became full of silver and gold with no end to its treasures; its land became full of horses with no end to its chariots. Then its land became full of false gods; each one of them bows to his own handiwork, to what his fingers have made. Humankind will have bowed and man will have humbled himself; yet, You will not forgive them. Humankind's haughty eyes will be brought low and men's arrogance will be humbled; and G-d alone will be exalted on that day. For G-d, Master of Legions, has a day against every proud and arrogant person and against every exalted person -- and he will be brought low; and against all the lofty mountains, and against all the exalted hills; and against every TALL TOWER and against every FORTIFIED WALL . . . (Yeshayahu 2:1, 7-15)

The Zohar is also laced with passages, many quite obscure but clearly about the "End-of-Days" and Yemos HaMoshiach. After the attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, this section of Zohar immediately began making the rounds. I wonder who remembers or finds these things?

Says the Zohar HaKodesh.

I will show you, but not for now, for these things will only come to be at that time, some after time and some in the Days of King Moshiach. "A star has gone forth from Ya'akov ..." (Bamidbar 24:17). This teaches us that in the future, The Holy One, Blessed is He, will build Jerusalem and one star will spark within seventy pillars of fire and seventy sparks will receive light from it in the middle of the sky. The other seventy stars will be swallowed within it. It will give off light and blaze for seventy days. At the end of the sixth day it will become visible at the beginning of the twenty-fifth day of the sixth month. It will be gathered in at the end of seventy complete days and be visible in the city of Rome, and on that day, three great walls will fall and great hall will fall, and the power of that city will die. Then this star will become visible in the world, and it will instigate a great war from all four sides ... When Moshiach becomes revealed the people of the world will be suffering trouble after trouble, and the enemies of the Jewish people will be prevailing. Then the spirit of Moshiach will be aroused and the evil Edom will be destroyed and the Land of Seir will be burned with fire ... (Zohar, Balak, 212b)

Nothing 100% conclusive, but certainly interesting in light of what did happen. One could see an allusion to the Twin Towers and the Pentagon without looking too hard. However, what is also interesting is the emphasis on the "sixth" - the sixth day of the week (Friday) in the sixth month (Elul).

The only problem, of course, is history itself: the hijackings and attacks took place on a Tuesday, the third day of the week, and not the sixth day. And besides, as the "Nitzutzei Oros" points out, the twenty-fifth day of Elul - the first day of creation - never occurs on a Friday.

However, it DID take place in the sixth month of the Jewish year (months are counted from Nissan and not Tishrei), in Elul, in the SIXTH millennium, Yosef HaTzaddik's millennium. According to the Talmud, one of Yosef's prime roles in Egypt was to collect all the money into one single location: Egypt (Pesachim 119a). And, interestingly enough, that money has relevance to the end of history as well:

Rami Chama son of Chanina said: Three treasures Yosef hid in Egypt. One was revealed to Korach, one was revealed to Antoninus son of Asviros, and one is hidden away for the righteous in the Time-to-Come. (Pesachim 119a)

As well, the number six has added meaning, and that is that it alludes to the sixth day of Sivan in the future when the Jewish people would accept Torah at Mt. Sinai in the year 2448/1313 BCE.

Says the Talmud:

And it was evening and it was morning, the sixth day (ha-shishi). (Bereishis 1:31) - the letter "heh" (preceding the word "shishi") is extra... to say that (G-d) made a condition with them (all of creation): If the Jewish people accept the Five (represented by the letter "heh") Books of the Torah, then you can remain stable; if not, then you will resort back to 'null' and 'void'. (Shabbos 88a)

The reference is to the second verse of creation:

The earth was null (tohu) and void (vohu), and there was darkness upon the face of the deep, and the spirit of G-d hovered above the water. (Bereishis 1:2)

In other words, the only reason why G-d saw fit to end the chaos of the first day of creation was for the sake of a people which would one day accept and live by Torah. So important was this to the Creator that He built His world upon this condition, and built this condition into His world. It is a "law" of creation.

Far fetched as it may seem at first, what happened in New York and Washington was a function of the original null and void of primordial creation, in a major way. All chaos anywhere in creation is a function of the original "tohu" that the Five Books of Moshe are meant to vanquish. In light of this, can we call it purely coincidental and incidental that the Pentagon has five sides, or that the Twin Towers looked like two big Hebrew "vavs," the letter which represents the number SIX?

And by the way, the Vilna Gaon's version of the Zohar says that the twenty-fifth day should read,

"twenty-third day," which, this year was the Tuesday of infamy. The Vilna Gaon also wrote:

The time for this revelation is not known, though, it is known that it cannot be in the fifth millennium... It can only be in the SIXTH millennium... What this means is that there is one year during which redemption can come, and that is the year after the Sh'mittah year, for that is when the Chesed is revealed in the "mouth" of Yesod, and that is when Moshiach comes... (Safrat d'Tzniusa, Chapter 1)

Forget the Kabbalistic jargon for the moment. The point is that finding Biblical significance for the events of history, especially when they shake the very foundations upon which we have built our lives is not only possible, but necessary. For, what we are finding out and will continue to find out is the opposite of what we have come to believe, and that is, not only is the past not only the past, it is the present as well.

For, you can change your clothes and even become more advanced. But G-d will always be G-d, man will always be man, and the purpose of creation will never change, ignore it as we might.

MELAVE MALKAH: Changes That Last Forever, Installment 1

I have been asked on many occasions regarding the book I wrote years ago called, "Changes That Last Forever." It was a small pocket-size book meant to act as companion on Yom Kippur to help a sincere individual making positive and lasting changes, but in truth, it is relevant all year round.

However, it is presently out of print, though I noticed that Feldheim Publishers has been selling some remaining copies through Amazon.com. Since I have no plans at present time to re-print the book, I have decided instead to serialize here, and present sections on a weekly basis, edited and updated somewhat. It's the right time of year to start, for, judgment will continue until the end of Chanukah, G-d willing.

INTRODUCTION

"There I stood again, the same pose, the same words, the same sense of remorse. It was also the same sin I claimed against myself last year on Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), and the year before that, and each year back as far as I can recall. It's getting to the point where I feel silly asking for forgiveness, knowing full well that next Yom Kippur I'll probably experience another *deja vu*. When will I ever change?"

For many people, these words hit home, and some of the tears shed on Yom Kippur, and at other times of the year, are tears of frustration.

"How could I make the same mistake again when I promised myself I wouldn't?"

The answer to this question is not as simple as it may appear to be, especially when considering the

Talmud's explanation for sin:

No person sins unless a spirit of insanity enters them. (Sotah 3a)

Who in their right mind would want to do the wrong thing, asks the Talmud, and answers, no one. You have to be out of your mind to turn against G-d! Well, if that is the case, asks the Maharsha, a sixteenth century Talmudic commentator, then why are we held responsible for our sins? Why do we even require a Yom Kippur, if according to the Torah, a mentally unfit person is not punishable for his sins?

However, there IS a Yom Kippur, and we ARE held accountable for our sins, at least the ones we could have avoided. In many cases, we have to atone for the accidental ones as well! If so, then what does the Talmud mean by its statement, and how does it apply to daily life?

The answer to this question, it turns out, leads not only to an understanding of the nature of sin, but to a profound understanding of mankind in general, and the unique and wonderful purpose for which we were created.

CHAPTER ONE: The Issue of Image

The first chapters of the Torah describe the beginning of existence. Briefly, the opening verses take the reader from a state of absolute nothingness, to a world in chaos, to a neatly designed paradise that was to be the back-drop for the history of mankind.

For whom is this accounting of creation? Even Rashi, the great Torah commentator (1040-1105 CE), questioned the need for the creation story:

The Torah could have begun from [the verse], "This month will be to you" (Exodus 12:2), because it was the first commandment... (Rashi, Bereishis 1:1)

As Rashi implied by his question, the Torah is a book about morality, whose sole purpose is to teach mankind, and specifically the Jewish people, about proper conduct as per the Creator's version of it. Shouldn't every piece of information, especially the opening verses of the Torah reflect this?

Nevertheless, Rashi had an answer to his query: the Torah wished to proclaim G-d the owner of creation, and therefore taught us that He was its Maker. This answer differs from one given by the earlier rabbis:

With ten utterances was the world created. What does the Torah teach us? Couldn't the world have been made with a single utterance? Rather, it is to pay the evil who destroy a world that was made with ten utterances, and to reward the righteous who uphold a world made with ten utterances. (Pirkei Avos 5:1)

Both answers, however, speak little of the intrinsic value of the words themselves, which can be better appreciated in light of another question.

Later, the Torah states that man was created b'tzelem Elokim, that is, "in the image of G-d" (Bereishis 1:26). However, the Torah itself does not clearly spell out what this means, and hence, one is left with the question, what does it mean to be created in the "image" of G-d?

For evolutionists, this is an exceedingly difficult question to ask, let alone answer:

No single, essential difference separates human beings from other animals - but that hasn't stopped the phrasemakers from trying to find one. They have described humans as the animals who make tools, or reason, or use fire, or laugh, or any one of a dozen other appealing over-simplifications. Here's one more description for the list, as good as any other: Humans are the animals who wonder, intensely and endlessly, about their origin (TIME, March 14, 1994, How Man Began, p. 41).

Perhaps this is precisely the reason for the opening verses of the Torah, and the entire creation story (and up until the commandment to sanctify the moon, to which Rashi referred). The Torah knew that as man traveled far from the Garden of Eden, and grew less clear about the purpose of creation, he would also become less clear about what he is.

Thus, the story of creation is more than a step-by-step account of existence. It is a revelation of G-d, at least the aspect of G-d called Elokim, in which we are made in His image. Therefore, if we can understand something about Elokim, we can understand something about ourselves, being b'tzelem Elokim.

Thus, in the first verses of the Torah is everything we need to know about our potential and our purpose in the grand scheme of things. It remains only for the individual to look into and analyze the words, and the thoughts behind them. They are:

VERSE 1: *In the beginning, Elokim created the heaven and earth.*

VERSE 2: *The earth was null and void, with darkness upon the face of the deep; the spirit of Elokim hovered over the water surface.*

VERSE 3: *Elokim said, "Let there be light!" and there was light.*

VERSE 4: *Elokim saw that the light was good, and Elokim separated between the light and the dark.* (Bereishis 1:1-4)

In the above account, it is Elokim who methodically transformed the "natural" chaos of creation into an "unnatural" ordered reality; it is Elokim who brought light to a dark world, the light for which creation was conceived and realized:

Elokim saw that the light was good, and Elokim separated between the light and the dark. (Bereishis 1:3)

For, whenever something is called "good," essentially what is being said is, it fits into his or her understanding of what life is about. For example, "That was a good purchase," means that since life is for pleasure, and the purchase increases pleasure, it is purposeful and therefore good.

Whatever that light is, the most important thing is that we too are able to create it, when we fulfill the purpose of creation - not necessarily exactly in the same way G-d did and does, but in our own significant way. For, like for Elokim Himself in whose image we were cast, being able to do so is a matter of bringing order to chaos.

Summary:

The initial verses of creation teach us more than the essential fact that G-d is the Creator and Owner of creation. They also teach us about who we are, and what we are capable of achieving as beings made in the image of G-d. Success means bringing order to chaos, which results in a revelation of the supernal light of creation.

Part Two, Next Week, G-d willing.

Have a great Shabbos,
Pinchas Winston
