

NAME THAT REDEMPTION

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

Friday Night:

These are the names of the Children of Israel who came to Egypt with Ya'akov -- each man and his household. (Shemos 1:1)

Sefer Shemos is about geulah -- redemption -- which is why, in English, it is called "Exodus." We call it the "Book of Names" because the first parshah begins, "These are the names =8A" But, as we shall soon see, b"H, there is a very strong connection between the concept of a name and redemption

For example, take the Hebrew name "adam," which means "man." It is composed of three Hebrew letters, aleph, dalet, and mem. The last two letters -- dalet-mem -- spell a word of their own: blood. The aleph, on the other hand, though it does not spell a word symbolizes the most important concept known to mankind: G-d, since it represents the number one.

Furthermore, when the letter "aleph" is written the way it is pronounced (aleph-lamed-peh), it is like the Hebrew word "aluph," which means "chief," another allusion to THE Chief, G-d Himself. As well, if you add up the numerical value of each letter the total becomes (1+30+80) 1-1-1, another allusion to G-d three times.

The total numerical value of "adam" is (1+4+40) forty-five, the exact same numerical value of the word "geulah" (gimmel-aleph-vav-lamed-heh: 3+1+6+30+5). If you take away the letter aleph from each word, "Adam" becomes "dumm," the word for "blood," the symbol of physicality, and, without the aleph, without the godliness, ONLY physicality. Likewise, "geulah" -- redemption -- without its aleph becomes "golah" -- "exile," as in, one in exile.

(For those Kabbalistically-inclined, the expanded Name of G-d, spelled: Yud-vav-dalet, Heh-aleph, Vav-aleph-vav, Heh-aleph, which represents the light with which G-d made creation, gave the Torah, and will bring the Final Redemption also has the gematria of forty-five.)

This was not a message for the First Man only, Adam HaRishon, who, incidentally, named himself. All of mankind, no matter what our personal names may be, and, no matter how many of them we may have, is a "branch" off that First Man, and therefore, the message applies to all of us equally: abandon godliness and live in exile.

Furthermore, according to the Arizal, everyone has two official names, a "holy" one, and, an "impure" one. The holy one is the name that your parents named you at birth, or, whomever named you whenever they did, and, however "they" came to name you it. According to the Arizal, there is a Jewish name assigned to every Jewish soul, and, one way or another, Heaven finds a way to get that name to that person during his or her lifetime.

The "impure name" is really the name of one's personal weakness with which he has been born, for the sake of overcoming in This World. As an adult, it is not that hard to figure out that name providing that one knows the difference between right and wrong, and, understands why it is a moral imperative to do the right thing.

However, dealing with that weakness is another story -- a life's challenge to be exact, as it was meant to be. But, deal with it we must, for, it is expected of us. In fact, according to the Arizal, that is the FIRST question "they" will ask us before we even get a chance to leave the grave. They will ask us, and, those of us who know it well, that is, we worked on overcoming our spiritual weaknesses during our lifetimes, will be allowed to ascend with minimal amount of suffering.

On the other hand, those who develop a quizzical look on their face (whatever that means after death) and answers, "What name?" will not be so fortunate. They will undergo what is called "Chavut HaKever" -- "Beating in the Grave" -- which I spoke about briefly in last week's parshah. In other words, the exile of their previous life will continue somewhat, even after death. until they are truly free of the shackles of life in this physical world of ours and ready for redemption.

As real and as non-allegorical the story of slavery in and redemption from Egypt is, it is also a parable for the life of an individual in This World, and therefore, within it lies the keys for redemption from personal exile as well, in This World, and, the one to come.

Shabbos Day:

He (Paroah) said to his people, "Behold the people (umm) B'nei Yisroel ..." (Shemos 1:9) =8A "They (the Egyptians) were aggravated by B'nei Yisroel." (Shemos 1:12)

The switch is so subtle that everyone misses it, everyone, that is, except for the Arizal. It is a very good example how the mind can skip over subtle differences, dissimilarities which can make all the difference in the world, as we shall now discuss.

However, the story does not begin in this week's parshah, but, way back in time, all the way back in time to Adam and Chava in the Garden of Eden, just after they were expelled for eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. And, it will answer why there is a difference between "people B'nei Yisroel" of the first posuk, and, "B'nei Yisroel" only in the second posuk quoted above.

Says the Arizal:

All the "Shiddin" and "Ruchin" that they created during the 130 years that Adam separated from Chava, as it is known, were all elevated and holy souls from the level of Da'as. However, they became mixed together with the Klipos (Negative Forces), and, as a result, require many gilgulim (reincarnations) to "refine" and "whiten" them. (Sha'ar HaKevanos 1b)

We will now explain in a few lines what requires a book unto itself.

The result of Adam's interaction with the snake was far more than his eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. The First Snake was unlike any snake that has ever existed, and one of the differences was the way it was able to impart a permanent spiritual impurity to mankind, called "zuhama" by the Talmud (Shabbos 146a), one which can only be removed through death and resurrection, thus becoming the reason for our mortality.

However, aspects of this spiritual impurity, apparently, could be removed, at least by Adam HaRishon -- but, as the Talmud explains (Eiruvim 18b), not without a price.

RULE OF CREATION: Spiritual energies, or, "sparks" or "souls," not used for holiness are "stolen" and used for impurity.

As a result, what Adam surrendered to become spiritually "cleaner" did not disappear into thin air, but, into spiritual sparks that were taken by the forces of spiritual impurity -- the K'lipos -- strengthening them. And, because the First Man was so spiritually great (even after the sin), the source of those sparks/souls came from high up -- from the sefirah of "Da'as."

RULE OF CREATION: All sparks must be returned, eventually, to the side of holiness, one way or another, at some time or another, but, in advance of Moshiach's arrival.

Hence, those sparks, ever since they were spiritually expunged from Adam have been on a path to tikun -- rectification -- and, WHAT a path it has been! The Arizal continues:

This is why the Jewish nation did not come into existence until Ya'akov's time, because, until that time, most of the souls were intermingled with the Klipos, and were in a process of refinement and reincarnation from generation to generation. They didn't begin their tikun (rectification) until Ya'akov, the "chosen" of the Forefathers, who rectified Adam HaRishon, and that is when his sons also began their tikun -- throughout the Egyptian exile. This is the underlying meaning of the verse, "Could any other god come and take a nation out from within a nation ...?" (Devarim 4:34). Chazal teach, it does not say "a people within a nation," rather, "a nation from within a nation," because it was really this, since they were well within the midst of the Klipos, and were a "nation" like them. They were then refined, purified, and taken from the midst of that "nation" literally.

All pshat aside, the "nation" that is being referred to as being "removed" were the SOULS of the sons of Ya'akov who were removed from another "nation," that is, the K'lipos with which they had been

intermingled. Hence, once again, we see how the exile and redemption from Egypt occurred on different levels, and that, it was not the beginning of the story, but, the middle of the story, as we will soon see, b"H.

SEUDAH SHLISHI:

Why was Golus Mitzrayim only the "middle" of the story, and not the beginning it seemed to be? The Arizal explained:

The beginning of their gilgulim was in the Generation of the Flood ... And this is the deeper meaning of the verse, "G-d regretted that He made THE MAN on the land ..." (Bereishis 6:7) with respect to the Generation of the Flood, to hint that they were on the level of Adam HaRishon himself, emanating out from him from those 130 years ... The next time, they reincarnated as the Generation of the Dispersion, and were evil like their fathers ... This is what is written, "G-d went down to see the city and the tower that mankind (literally, "son of THE MAN") built" (Bereishis 11:5), as the Zohar elucidates (Bereishis 75a): Literally, son of "THE MAN," that is, Adam HaRishon, to hint at the fact that they were literally his sons ... The third reincarnation was as the people S'dom, and therefore it says, "The people of S'dom were evil and sinned greatly against G-d" (Bereishis 13:13), to hint that their evil was the result of Adam ... After these three gilgulim over three generations ... then they returned a fourth time in Egypt, in B'nei Yisroel, born into the generation of that exile, at which time the tikun finally began ...

Hence, on the surface of the story, exile in Egypt was about a family that came to Egypt only to sojourn, but, over time became too comfortable, too attached, and too assimilated. However, below that surface was a crucial sub-theme, perhaps the MAIN theme:

You must know that there were two levels to these souls, those that were completely rectified, born as B'nei Yisroel after their arrival in Egypt, and those still lacking rectification, which were born as Egyptians. It was they whom Yosef had circumcised (Rashi, Bereishis 41:55) ... This is the deeper meaning of, "He (Paroah) said to his people, 'Behold the people B'nei Yisroel ...'" (Shemos 1:9); at first he calls them, "the people B'nei Yisroel," and later it says, "they were aggravated by B'nei Yisroel," not mentioning the term "people" (as if referring to two different groups of "B'nei Yisroel." This, in fact, was the case, the first group being those Egyptians who converted to Judaism, and, the second group being those born as Jews.

Hence, Paroah instructed that the Egyptians deal "wisely" with the first group, the "people B'nei Yisroel, for, perhaps, he thought, there was a way to bring them back into the Egyptian fold. However, with respect to the second group, Ya'akov's direct descendants, to Paroah they were nothing but a source of aggravation and perfect slave material.

The Arizal repeats the following point, which, as we have mentioned before, answers an important

question:

This is why Yosef decreed that these Egyptians should be circumcised.

In order to receive food during the years of famine. It is not clear why Yosef made Bris Milah a prerequisite for receiving a food ration -- until now. Yosef cleverly used his position and the Egyptian crisis to spiritually free the sparks that he knew were there in Egypt, the ones that were the result of Adam HaRishon's 130-year purge, which, as the Arizal adds, is why:

Ya'akov his father (who came down to Egypt in his 130th year! Bereishis 46:8), also made many converts in Egypt ...

And, because we left Egypt early, and did not finish the tikun of these sparks, the rest of Jewish history has been about finishing the job, and finishing the job, and, finishing the job.

MELAVE MALKAH:

A Maskil by Dovid, when he was in the cave -- a prayer. (Tehillim 142:1)

Recently, because of the seriousness of the current situation in Eretz Yisroel, the rabbis asked that people say three specific chapters of Tehillim, 83, 130, and the one we are about to discuss, 142. Psalm 83 mentions the nations that usually cause the Jewish people trouble, Psalm 130 we have already discussed as being one of the main ones we say in times of trouble, and, according to tradition, this psalm is also for times of acute distress, when all seems lost and when is completely at the mercy of G-d.

That had been Dovid HaMelech's predicament. While fleeing from Shaul HaMelech, he took refuge in a cave only to find out that Shaul and his army discovered the same cave. And, as is the case with most caves, this one only had one way in and one way out, and that was being blocked by Shaul's army. Dovid HaMelech was the proverbial "sitting duck," in a seemingly no-win situation, like the Jewish people are today regarding the direction of peace-negotiations.

With my voice I cry out to G-d, with my voice I plead with G-d. I pour out my plaint before Him. When my spirit faints within me-for You know my path; on this road that I walk they have laid a snare for me. Look to the right and see that I have no friend; every escape is lost to me, no one seeks to save my life. (3-5)

That there are no friends on the "left" comes as no surprise. What is new here and what has made the situation so extreme is that, even on the "right," there are no friends. Even the people we have counted on in the past to understand our position and to support our vision have capitulated. The Torah, history, and the facts support our claim; economics and fear of angry reprisal support their position. We can't even trust our own people Where can we turn?

I have cried out to You, G-d; I have said, "You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living." (6)

Let's face it: it took a lot of Divine Providence to land Shaul at the same cave that Dovid took refuge in, WHILE he took refuge there. Yes, Dovid was saved, in the end, by a great miracle -- but he was put into peril by a great miracle as well. Don't miraculously put him into danger, G-d, and You won't need to miraculously save him either!

True, G-d will say, but there was a purpose in doing both. And that purpose applies not just to Dovid's own personal predicament, but, to all predicaments of all Jews throughout history, and that is to teach us that, no matter how it appears, we, the Jewish people, can rely upon no one except our Father in Heaven.

In other words, if there is no place to hide in the physical world, no avenue of escape in the material world, well, then, there are always an unlimited amount of places to hide with G-d, and, an infinite number of paths by which to flee with G-d. Our history is filled with such examples of this truth, and, our own personal lives confirm it, if only in their small personal way.

Attend my cry, for I have been brought very low, rescue me from my pursuers, for they are stronger than I. Release my soul from confinement to acknowledge Your Name; the righteous will crown themselves with me, when You do kindness for me. (7-8)

For, then, the world will clearly see the "hand" of G-d, and that there IS a G-d within Yisroel. Through the miracles You will wrought for me today, and Israel in the future, Divine Providence will become indisputable -- the goal of creation. The worth of trusting in G-d will become recognizable, and, if for that reason alone, we should trust only in G-d, so that for that reason alone, G-d will bring the redemption.

Then we will all become "maskilim" -- understanding of G-d's will and its manifestation within creation and history, as the holy Zohar says:

[Then] the Maskilim (Scholars) will understand, because they are from the side of Binah (eighth sefirah), which is the Aitz HaChaim (Tree of Life). Of them it says, 'The Maskilim will emanate light like the light of the sky ...' (Daniel 12:3) ... with this sefer of yours, Sefer HaZohar, which is from the light of Binah, which is called teshuvah ... In the future Yisroel will taste from the Aitz HaChaim, which is this Sefer HaZohar, they will leave exile in mercy, and "Hashem alone will lead them, and they will have no foreign god" (Devarim 32:12). (Zohar 124b)

Okay, well, all Kabbalah aside, we see that redemption is about understanding that there is no god but G-d Himself, the G-d of Avraham, Yitzchak, Ya'akov, and of Jewish destiny, which, just like Dovid HaMelech, will out run all those who have tried to keep pace, and overcome it.

Have a great Shabbos,
Pinchas

