

SOUL OCCURENCE

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

Friday Night:

Moshe gathered together the entire assembly of the Children of Israel and said to them these things which G-d commanded them to do. (Shemos 35:1).

MOSHE GATHERED TOGETHER: The expression "the entire assembly of the Children of Israel" includes the men and women, for all donated to the work of the Mishkan. Thus, Moshe, after having commanded Aharon, and the Princes and "the entire assembly of the Children of Israel" -- the men -- "all that G-d had spoken with him at Mt. Sinai" (Shemos 34:32), following the breaking of the Tablets, and after he had put the veil on his face, again commanded that the people be assembled, whereupon the whole congregation gathered before him -- men, women, and children. (Ramban)

Normally, "the entire assembly of the Children of Israel" refers to all the Jewish people who were physically able to come at the time that Moshe called them. However, we know from elsewhere that, on a deeper level, we're also talking about ALL the souls of the Jewish people that would ever exist as well.

There are different ways of looking at this, but, according to Kabbalah, the reason is because Moshe represented the last generation of "new souls" to come into the world, after which time, everyone has been a reincarnation. For, the Talmud says:

The brisa says: Rebi Shimon the Chasid said: These are the 974 generations that were supposed to be created before G-d created the world, but, they were not created. The Holy One, Blessed is He, puts them into every generation, and they are the brazen in any particular generation. (Chagigah 13b)

The actual word the Talmud uses is "komtu," which, rather than mean "

Thus, according to Kabbalah, they did exist, though for a brief period of time. They existed just before creation, as we know it, came into being. And they had some kind of free-will, which allowed them to choose evil over good, which cost them their existence. In fact, it was their role to bring evil into creation, to make free-will possible for man.

Now, the posuk says,

Remember His covenant forever -- the word which He commanded for a thousand generations.(l

Divrei HaYomim)

Which means that, if you count the generations from Adam to Moshe Rabbeinu, which total twenty-six altogether, and you add the 974 generations to which the Talmud refers, you arrive at a total of 1,000 generations. Thus, a sort of spiritual door closed with the birth of Moshe Rabbeinu, and all souls that have come since have been here before, they have since come back in different bodies.

Thus, Moshe Rabbeinu could later say,

Not only with you do I make this covenant and this curse; but with the those who do not stand here today before G-d, our G-d, as well as those here today. (Devarim 29:13-14)

That is, PHYSICALLY they don't stand before G-d, but SPIRITUALLY, they ALL do.

This is why it was so important to include even the children in the "gathering," who, seemingly, could not comprehend what Moshe came to command them. For, though the body knows age and intellectual development, the soul does not. And, there were souls that there that had to be included that day, for the sake of the body they presently occupied, and, for the sake of all the bodies that the soul would occupy in the future.

The question arises then, in which body, during Resurrection of the Dead, does the soul actually come back?

In Sha'ar HaGilgulim, the Arizal explains that it all depends on the amount of mitzvos done in each body, and which level of soul was rectified. It can be, and it happens often, that the soul will be divided between bodies, with the amount of Soul-Sparks being divided according to those fixed up by the respective bodies.

To be sure, it will be a complicated calculation to make, but not too complicated for the Creator, Who will work it out right down to the last spark. So, if during the period called "Techiyas HaMeisim" you bump into someone you did not know, but, with whom you feel a close association from the past, it is probably true. But, then again, the same holds true for this period of history as well.

Shabbos Day:

This is the accounting of the Tabernacle -- the Tabernacle of Testimony -- which Moshe requested of the Levi'im, under the guidance of Itamar, the son of Aharon the priest. (Shemos 38:21)

This is the final accounting of the Mishkan, before the Torah moves into Sefer Vayikra and the details of the service within. And, even though, according to the Talmud, the Mishkan was more in response to the golden calf than what was absolutely necessary, still, it embodied -- every last micro-detail -- all that we are expected to achieve.

The Mishkan consisted of a rectangular-shaped building that was ten amos (1 amah = 3D 1.5 - 2 feet) wide, and, thirty amos long. It was divided into two chambers, the first one called the "Kodesh," which was twenty-amos long, and, the "Kodesh Kodashim," which was the final ten amos of the thirty. In the former the Incense-Altar, Menorah, and Showbread was placed, and, in the latter, the Holy Ark was placed. Both chambers were separated by a curtain -- the "Paroches."

Around the Mishkan itself was a larger courtyard that was an enclosure of curtains. The Courtyard, or, "Chatzer," in front of the Mishkan measured a perfect fifty amos by fifty amos. Inside this area, in front of the opening to the Kodesh was the large altar on which the animal sacrifices were brought.

At this point, one reached the opening to the Chatzer, which was twenty amos wide, and was covered by a curtain -- a veil -- that did not permit a view from the outside. Beyond this was the world outside the Mishkan, and the rest of the Jewish camp.

Now, we know from the Talmud (and a deeper discussion), that the number "twenty" represents spiritual blindness, which is why the veil over the opening to the Chatzer was twenty amos wide. Anyone who walked by this veil was reminded that the world outside the "Chatzer" was a completely "natural" one, one that "veiled" the hand of G-d, and gave us the free-will to choose to see past it.

Once a person "penetrated" this veil, he faced a courtyard that was fifty amos long, corresponding to the "Nun Sha'arei Binah" -- the "Fifty Gates of Understanding," Torah knowledge that elevates a person to the status of being "kadosh" (holy).

Traversing the length of the Kodesh, which was twenty amos long, one arrived at the curtain to the "Holy of Holies," which is where the Aron HaKodesh, the Holy Ark resided. As the Talmud points out (Megillah 10b), the Aron HaKodesh consumed more space than it physical had, which meant that it was a place of miracles.

This makes sense, since, the total amount of amos that one covered, by that point, was SEVENTY amos -- the number of years after which the miracle of Purim occurred since the exile into Babylonia, the number of verses in the Megillah that chart Haman's rise and fall, and, the number of days it took for all of it to happen.

And, the number of words of Tehillim that we recite in the daily prayer service, just before we talk about the coming of the redeemer, is seventy. Incidentally, it is Psalm TWENTY that we say.

And, Purim is a holiday of wine, which, in Hebrew, has the numerical value of seventy, as does "sod," which means "mystery," or, "secret." And, this is what the rabbis write: "m'shinichnes yai'in, yotzei sod" -- "when wine goes in, secrets come out."

What kind of secrets are we talking about?

Well, in truth, the four areas of the Mishkan correspond to the four levels of Torah learning: Pshat, Remez, Drush, and Sod -- Simple Explanation, Hints, Exegetical Teachings, and, Mystery, as follows:

Pshat: Outside Chatzer
Remez: Chatzer
Drush: Kodesh
Sod: Kodesh Kodashim

-- which, in turn, correspond to (Simple) Torah (Verse), Mishnah, Talmud, and, ultimately, Kabbalah. Thus, the progression for the simple, natural, outside, everyday world to the Kodesh Kodashim -- the ultimate goal of every Jew, for there The Holy One, Blessed is He, is also the progression from Pshat to Sod.

And therein lies the redemption of the body, the soul, and the mind.

SEUDAH SHLISHI:

Moses finished all the work. (Shemos 40:33)

Motzei Shabbos begins Rosh Chodesh Nissan, the Rosh Hashanah of the Jewish months. It is the first month that the Jewish people were commanded in Egypt to sanctify, which we have done since then until this very day.

The Talmud states:

Anyone who blesses the new moon is like one who has received the Shechinah, as it says, "HaChodesh HaZeh ..." (i.e., This month ... Shemos 12:2), and it says over there, "Zeh Keli v'Anveihu ..." (i.e., This is my G-d and I will glorify Him; Shemos 16:2) ... (Sanhedrin 42a)

In other words, the Talmud is finding a connection between Kiddush HaChodesh (New Moon Sanctification) and revelation, because of the usage of the word "zeh" in both verses. In this sense, the concept of the new month represents the goal of all of Torah and the Jewish nation as a whole.

Why? The answer to this question is alluded to in the special prayer we say each month when we bless the new moon, in the prayer called "Kiddush Levanah":

May it be Your will ... to fill the flaw of the moon, that there be no diminution in it. May the light of the moon be like the light of the sun and like the light of the seven days of creation, as it was, before it was diminished ...

According to the Talmud (Chullin 60b), the moon started off on equal footing with the sun. However, since the moon complained about being the sun's equal, it was reduced in brightness. The moon complained about that too, and was consoled by being made the light of the night. However, that wasn't enough consolation for the moon, so, the stars were added to its legion of lights. But, lo and behold, that too was not consolation enough for the moon, so, G-d said that the Jewish people, who are compared to the moon, would count the months according to the moon.

Nice little story, eh? The moral of the story? Be happy with your portion, jealousy is a naughty trait, and, the Divine Presence is in exile with the Jewish people.

Huh? You wanna run that last one by me again?

Children's stories and morals aside, the reduction of the moon's light represents one of the deepest of Kabbalistic ideas. It is an allusion to the fact that a very holy light, for the sake of creation and free-will, was forced to leave its holy abode in the Sefiros, and "descend," spiritually-speaking, to a far less godly "environment." If it complained about anything at all, it was about this, and THAT was justified.

Our job is to reverse that result. Our job, as the Jewish people, by learning Torah and performing mitzvos, is to elevate the everyday reality until it becomes "holy to G-d." Once we have achieved this, then, that less godly environment becomes more godly, until, eventually, it rises to the level that the light came from.

Thus, this is what we mean when we say:

"That there be no diminution in it. May the light of the moon be like the light of the sun and like the light of the seven days of creation, as it was, before it was diminished ..."

That is, that it be allowed to return to its original level of holiness, which means that all of creation will also have become elevated, and the Shechinah -- the Divine Presence which this light represents -- will be allowed to end its exile, as we, the Jewish people, do as well.

Thus, when we bless the new moon, we are in fact elevating creation, and, the light that the moon symbolizes a few spiritual notches up. The sacrifice that was brought on Rosh Chodesh, which the Mussaf on Rosh Chodesh replaces for now, was specifically for this purpose. This does not serve to distance the Shechinah further from us, but, to bring us closer to it. And thus, we are considered to have "received it," when performing this all-important mitzvah, especially for the month of our redemption, a time when we read Shir HaShirim -- Song of Songs -- which recounts the closeness of the "Assembly of the Children of Israel" with their Father-in-Heaven.

When we have truly done this, then we can say that we have "finished the work."

MELAVE MALKAH:

A Shigayon of Dovid, which he sang to G-d, concerning Kush ben Yemini. G-d, my G-d, in You I seek refuge, save me from all my pursuers and rescue me. (Tehillim 7:1-2)

The word "shigayon" is understood in three ways. According to Rashi, it may have been a musical instrument used by the Levi'im in Temple times. Alternatively, it may mean "an error," as in Dovid's

error. According to the Talmud, Dovid HaMelech, at first, celebrated the downfall of Shaul HaMelech. However, after being chastised by G-d for doing so, he composed this psalm to admit his mistake (Moed Katan 16b).

Alternatively again, says Rashi, it refers to the mistake Dovid HaMelech made by taking refuge in Nov, the city of priests, while fleeing Shaul HaMelech. As a result of this, says the Talmud, Doeg incited Shaul to massacre the entire city, which, eventually, led to Doeg's own death and Shaul's as well with his sons (Sanhedrin 95a).

In any case, this psalm was dedicated to Shaul HaMelech, the man who tried to kill Dovid HaMelech on many occasions. What made this enemy so difficult was that he was, for all intents and purposes, a great and righteous man. And thus, at a moment when Dovid HaMelech could have easily ended the pursuit once and for all by taking advantage of Divine Providence that gave him the chance to rightfully kill Shaul, instead, Dovid responded by saying, "how can I kill the anointed of G-d?."

Yet, still, Dovid HaMelech, as upright as he had been in his dealings with Shaul HaMelech, still, he had erred in celebrating after the downfall of so great an enemy.

This posuk also shows the greatest of Dovid HaMelech, to feel for others even when his own life is endangered by those very people:

Let the evil of the wicked vanish, but sustain the righteous.(10)

While most people would pray that evil people vanish altogether, Dovid HaMelech just prays that their evil disappear. For, Dovid HaMelech still hoped for their teshuvah, in spite of all the evil they have been doing. This is as Bruria told her husband, the great Rebi Meir, who had been praying for the demise of some evil people of his time: Let the sins cease and perish, but not the sinners (Brochos 10a)

But the classic line of this psalm comes towards the end, when it says:

He digs the pit, digs it deep, only to fall into his own trap. His mischief will recoil upon his own head, and upon his own skull will his violence descend. (16)

Sound familiar? That's right, it sounds like Haman, and this is why the rabbis designated this psalm as the Psalm of the Day for Purim itself (unlike the Vilna Gaon).

I will thank G-d according to His righteousness, and sing praises to G-d's Name, Most High. (18)

Amen.

Have a great Shabbos,
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