

AT THE END

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

Friday Night:

Yosef recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him. Yosef remembered the dreams he dreamed of them, and said to them, "You are spies who come to see the weakness of the land!" (Bereishis 42:8-9)

The truth is, the posuk does not make sense. The way the posuk reads, it seems as if Yosef's recalling of his dreams is the cause of his upcoming actions. However, Yosef's dreams did not include psychological torture and punishment, just his ruling over them and their bowing down to him, both of which had already been fulfilled.

Obviously, Yosef wanted something more from his brothers, and assuming that he was not the vengeful, sadistic type, we will have to assume that it must have been for their own good, and part of their teshuvah process.

According to the "Brisi Shalom," the word "meraglim" (spies) itself hints at this, for it is spelled: mem-raish-gimmel-lamed-yud-mem, and stands for: M'immi Rachel Ginavtem, L'Midyanim, Yishmaelim Mechartem - from my mother Rachel you stole me, to Midianites and Ishmaelites you sold me. Somehow, had the brothers truly been "on the ball," then they would have taken Yosef's clue and realized on their own who was standing before them.

This, of course, was something they could only have done had they previously taken Yosef's dreams somewhat seriously. The fact that they rushed to defend this out-of-left field accusation rather than analyze it, proved to Yosef that they were the same old brothers who had never taken him or his dreams seriously to begin with - and were in serious need of a serious lesson about not being fooled by what the eyes perceive.

Nevertheless, all of that is only on the level of Pshat, Remez, and Drush. The following is on the level of Sod:

When the ten spies went out to spy the land (in Moshe's time), the souls of ten of the tribes came into them (actual sons of Ya'akov). This is the sod of what Yosef told them, "You are spies" (Bereishis 42:9), to allude to the fact that in the future their souls would go into the spies. (Sha'ar HaGilgulim, Chapter 36)

First of all, to understand what this means, you have to first know a rule about reincarnation. Not only can a soul reincarnate into a different body later in history and be born into a person, but a soul can even go into the body of a person who is already living.

However, how, or rather why would a soul which is the life force of a person go into a body that already has one? The answer is, as the Arizal explains based upon the Zohar in Parashas Mishpatim, because though the soul you are born with is your "main" soul, you can still gain up to three "additional" souls during your lifetime at any given point in time. They will never be your main soul, and they can leave a person just as easy as they came.

For the most part, such an extra soul comes as help from Heaven, as in the case when a person wishes to accomplish a task beyond his or her present spiritual capabilities, or it can be a way for the "visiting" soul to achieve its own rectification through the actions of the "host" body. It comes to help and therefore shares in the mitzvos and good deeds, but does not participate in sins and therefore cannot be punished for them.

Furthermore, the extra soul(s) can stay as long as it likes, which is as long as the person maintains the spiritual improvement that the souls worked on together. However, should the person sin, then the Heavenly help they enjoyed will leave them, never to return again unless the circumstances are repeated that brought the extra soul in the first place.

Thus, according to Sha'ar HaGilgulim, the brothers that now stood before Yosef and who were accused of spying would one day do exactly that, sent by the future Moshe Rabbeinu on a mission in preparation for the conquering of Eretz Yisroel. In fact, continues the Arizal:

This is also the sod of what it says, "All of them were heads of the Children of Israel . . ." (Bamidbar 13:3), for they (Moshe's spies) were actually the original ancestors of the Children of Israel. Therefore, it does not call them "heads of thousands of Israel," but rather, "heads of the Children of Israel" (i.e., the ENTIRE Jewish people)."

(Continued next d'var Torah)

Shabbos Day:

They answered him, "No my master! Your servants have come to buy food. All of us are sons of one man, truthful people; your servants have never been spies." (Bereishis 42:10-11)

The question is, so what? What game was Yosef playing with his brothers by telling them information that was quite irrelevant at the time? Let us read in Sha'ar HaGilgulim:

However, after they decided to speak evil about the land and wanted to tell Moshe it was a mistake

to go to the land, the souls of the tribes left them. For as it is known, such an additional soul can leave from within the person whenever it wishes to, unlike gilgulim. This is the reason why it says, "They returned from spying the land at the end of forty days" (Bamidbar 13:25), and then it mentions that they went: "They went and they came to Moshe and Aharon . . ." (Ibid. 26); it should only have mentioned that they came. For though Chazal explain according to Pshat that their 'going' was similar to their 'coming' (Sotah 35a), according to Sod, the 'going' refers to the souls of the tribes that left them when they returned from spying the land with an evil report. (Sha'ar HaGilgulim, Chapter 36)

In other words, the word 'coming' used in reference to the spies' return from Eretz Canaan, refers only to the spies themselves who came back without the souls of the tribes. However, the Arizal explains, Caleiv and Yehoshua retained their additional souls: Ephraim ben Yosef was in Yehoshua and Yehudah was in Caleiv, since they did not sin.

This is what the Torah says, "Yehoshua bin Nun and Caleiv ben Yefuneh survived from these men who went . . ." (Bamidbar 14:38), that is: these remained alive with the level of the souls of the tribes of their fathers who were in them; they did not leave them after they returned. Just as they were with them when they had gone, so too were they with them upon returning. This is what "survived from the men who went" means.

What was it that caused the spies to err with respect to Eretz Yisroel? As the Talmud says, they spoke about things that they did not really see, and saw things that they did not speak about. In other words, they spoke about the negative qualities of the Land that were not really there upon deeper understanding, and ignored the miracles they did see and saw them as too insignificant to tell the people.

It was not different with respect to Yosef's brothers and their relationship to him. As the Torah reports, all that Yosef did was evil in their eyes, when in fact, upon deeper investigation, it was far from that. However, the miracles that happened for Yosef, including his own dreams, they saw as being childish and unimportant. Yosef's message to his brothers:

If you don't change your attitude regarding perception and understanding, it will cost our ancestors in the future - BIG TIME.

It seems from that future, that the message didn't quite get integrated, because other than Yehudah's and Yosef's descendants, the rest of the spies didn't make it. As we have seen before, even Caleiv required special help that he received by being the reincarnation of Eliezer, the trusted servant of Avraham Avinu.

The timing of this week's parshah and its message could not be better, for it is really the message of Chanukah itself, and the olive oil we light over the eight days of the holiday. It is increasingly becoming the message of our everyday lives as history becomes more turbulent and less clear for those who choose to live only on the level of Pshat.

SEUDAH SHLISHIS:

He said, "It would be a profane thing for me to do this. Rather, the person with whom the goblet was found shall be my servant, and you can go in peace to your father." (Bereishis 44:17)

Yosef made it sound so simple and so fair, and played as if he had NO idea whatsoever that Binyomin meant everything to the father he wished to have live in peace. However, he knew everything and was only working the entire episode to its crescendo of redemption, which follows in next week's parshah, G-d willing.

As we saw last week, that is Yosef's historical role - to pave the way for redemption, even at the cost of his own life. In fact, the pattern was first established in Egypt, as the Talmud states:

Why did Yosef die before his brothers? Because he acted with rabbanos. (Brochos 55a)

On this the Maharshah says, this is only true if the person usurps authority and exercises it over people who do not want him. However, Yosef was a tzaddik and that was not the case with him, for he did not want to be ruler over his brothers. More likely, this will not be his descendant's, Moshiach ben Yosef's failing either.

The true answer as to why Moshiach ben Yosef must die in the process of heralding in the redemption, says the Vilna Gaon (Kol Hatur), is that - he does NOT have to die, and it really depends upon us. In fact, says the Gaon, we are supposed to pray that he does not die in the process. If so, then what does it depend upon?

It depends upon how willing and able we are to receive the light that he is destined to draw down to earth in advance of the Final Redemption - a period which, for all we know, has already begun. The "mother" (in this case Moshiach ben Yosef himself and the situation that brings him) need not die giving birth to Moshiach ben Yosef, like Rachel did at the age of the thirty-six in Ya'akov's thirty-sixth year away from home.

In other words, the "death" of Moshiach ben Yosef may only be a way of describing the destruction that can take place in advance of the Final Redemption, vis-a-vis the War of Gog and Magog. However, if we merit it, and we certainly can, then the re-birth of the Jewish people need not come through the death of the previous existence of the nation, or even of a fraction of it. That is a choice that we, the Jewish people make for ourselves. It may be easier to do than we know:

Since Rebi Shimon bar Yochai and his students are from the level of the Chassadim . . . therefore, all the secrets of the Torah were revealed and explained to them without any suffering (unlike the Ten Martyrs). This will not occur again until the Generation of Moshiach, as mentioned in the Zohar in many places. (Sha'ar HaGilgulim, Chapter 39)

Let's just hope that enough of us will merit it in time to warrant Heaven sparing "Moshiach ben Yosef" - whoever he is, and whenever he comes, may it be speedily in our time.

MELAVE MALKAH:

Chanukah & The Wonderful World of Thirty-Six Installment #3: Chapter Three: Noach, Chayn & Yonah

G-d said, "I will wipe out man which I created from the face of the earth -- from man to beast to crawling creatures to birds of the sky, because I regret what I made." Noach found favor (chayn) in the eyes of G-d. (Bereishis 6:7-8)

Adam never answered the question "Aiyekah" sufficiently enough to be permitted to remain in the Garden, and the ten generations which followed moved even further away from the purpose of creation. This made G-d "regret" His having created them and this warranted annihilation. Only Noach merited to survive Divine retribution, because as the posuk says, he "found chayn in the eyes of G-d."

What was this merit that Noach had - what was this "chayn" that he found in G-d's eyes, so-to-speak? The Torah says regarding the birth and naming of Noach:

Lemech lived 182 years and fathered a son. He called his name "Noach," saying that he would provide relief from the work and toil of our hands caused by the ground which God cursed. (Bereishis 5:28)

Explains Rashi:

He provided relief from the toil of their hands; for until Noach was born they had been without the plowing implements which he made for them. Furthermore, the ground used to produce thorns and thistles when they sowed wheat because of the curse of Adam; in Noach's day there was relief from this. (Rashi)

Whatever Noach's merit was, it had to do with chesed, and this was enough of a fulfillment of the purpose of creation for G-d to let him survive. For this reason, Noach also became a conduit of sorts for the Hidden Light of creation, binding him conceptually to the spirit of the chayn of Chanukah, which falls out on the twenty-fifth day of Kislev, as the following reveals:

He [Noach] waited another seven days and again sent the dove from the ark. Then, toward the evening the dove returned to him carrying a plucked olive leaf in its mouth. (Bereishis 8:10)

G-d said, "The olive brought light to the world," as it says, "then, towards the evening the dove returned to him carrying a plucked olive leaf in its mouth." (Vayikra Rabbah 31:10)

"He [Noach] waited another seven days and again sent the dove . . ."

. . . into the exile of the Greeks who blackened the faces of the Jews . . .

". . . the dove returned to him carrying a plucked olive leaf in its mouth . . ."

. . . Had G-d not enlightened the wise to light the candles with the oil of olives, the remainder of Yehudah would have been lost forever . . .

"a plucked olive leaf in its mouth."

. . . From the moment the leaf was plucked off in her mouth "twenty-five" was made to dwell upon the Jewish people - the twenty-fifth of Kislev. (Tikunei Zohar 13)

Thus, we see that the entire episode of Noach and the yonah (dove) was really a prelude to events of the future - a future that was built upon a nation that had yet to exist. However, that was only physically-speaking, because conceptually-speaking, it says:

How is the Jewish people like the "dove"? When Noach was in the ark, the dove came to him with an olive branch. G-d said, "Just as the dove brought light to the world, so too will you (the Jewish people) bring olive oil and light it before Me." (Tanchuma, Tetzaveh) 5

However, the Greek exile did not occur until, the THIRTY-SIXTH century from creation - almost eighteen hundred years after Noach stepped off the ark. Yet, the midrash insists on paralleling the actions of Noach with the events that led to the redemption and a holiday celebrated by lighting thirty-six lights of olive oil.

What is the parallel, and just how profound is the connection? What does all this have to do with chesed?

From the beginning of time, when all the world stood still, Darkness pervaded, with little purpose to fulfill. But in a supreme act of will, light emerged to create day, To master the darkness, to illuminate the Way.

But for only thirty-six short hours, did its brilliance remain free, You hid it within darkness, where it remains to be. However, You also made it possible for the penetration of the mind, To pierce the awesome darkness, to open the minds of the blind.

Yet, the challenge is so great, as it was always meant to be, To look beyond the obvious, and through the mind's eye come to see. Perhaps that is the mystery, and the beauty of the light, That for only those who seek it, it becomes a brilliant sight.

Have a great and illuminating Chanukah,
And a Great Shabbos,
Pinchas Winston