

# NOT FREE YET

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

## FRIDAY NIGHT:

*G-d spoke to Moshe, saying: Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them: G-d's appointed festivals that you are to designate as holy convocations - these are My appointed festivals. (Vayikra 23:1-2)*

Every year, as I leave shul after the conclusion of Yom Kippur, I always think to myself, "If I only read the viduy (confessional prayer) each day of the year and not just on Yom Kippur, I'd have less to atone for on Yom Kippur itself!"

I'm not referring to the shorter version that many Sephardim and Chassidim do say on a regular basis, but to the longer version that we say throughout Yom Kippur. It reminds us in explicit detail just how careful we have to be to avoid that which is forbidden to us, and how careful we have to be with that which is permitted to us. I am always amazed at how desensitized I become over the year to what Hashem expects from me, only to be abruptly "woken" up on the holiest day of the year. (I am also grateful that He waited until Yom Kippur for me until I did wake up.)

This year, rather than shut my Haggadah after Seder Night and simply enjoy the rest of the chag, I kept it open the entire week, figuratively speaking. I made a point, for the first time, of extending the messages of the Seder throughout the entire seven days of the holiday (in Israel), and hope to keep it up, on some level, the rest of the year.

For example, the Haggadah says:

And sojourned there (Devarim 26:5): This teaches that our father Ya'akov did not go down to settle in Egypt permanently, but to [temporarily] sojourn there.

From this the Chofetz Chaim drew an analogy:

Just as our father Ya'akov considered himself a stranger in Egypt, so too a person must always bear in mind that the proper place for a man's soul is actually in the upper realms, under G-d's Throne of Glory. It is sent to earth and attached to a physical body for a relatively short time in order that it should be able to earn the right to bask in the glory of G-d in the next world. Imagine that a merchant travels to a faraway country to attend a business fair. While he is there, in the midst of intense dealing and bargaining, a friend of his comes over to him with a magazine and tells him, "Here, have a look at this! I'm sure you will enjoy it and have a fine time relaxing while reading it." The merchant would certainly reject the offer and admonish him, saying, "Go away from me now! Don't

you know how far I have traveled just to attend this fair, in order to make enough money in these few days to support myself for the months to come? Every second that you stand here and chat with me I am losing precious time and money! And you want me to stop my business to read a magazine?" The same situation may be said to apply to a man's soul. It has traveled far from its natural habitat, and has only a short time to spend in its foreign environment, during which to accomplish whatever mitzvos it can, in order to take the merit thus achieved back to the world of souls, where it can serve an eternal benefit. Yet the yetzer hara comes along and says to him, "Here, have a look at this magazine! There are so many to choose from! Involve yourself in this or that form of entertainment!" These diversions are nothing more than various ways of spending valuable time in frivolities, that could be better applied to serious achievements, which is, after all, the only reason the soul has come here in the first place. A person must find the willpower and strength of character to reject the myriad forms of time wasting with which he is constantly tempted, and to allow his soul to spend its short stay on earth accomplishing its purpose. He must never forget that the soul is no more than a temporary sojourner in this world. (Haggadah Berurah, p. 74)

Sigh. A simple, but excellent analogy, and yet a tall order to fill when the entire world around you believes just the opposite. And, it was difficult enough to remain focused on this immutable truth while living on the land; how much more difficult is it for the Jew to remained focused on this idea when being immersed in the gentile world?

The Torah's answer to this query:

G-d spoke to Moshe, saying: Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them: G-d's appointed festivals that you are to designate as holy convocations - these are My appointed festivals. (Vayikra 23:1-2)

- as we will now explain, b'ezras Hashem.

## **SHABBOS DAY:**

*For six days labor may be done, and the seventh day is a day of complete rest, a holy convocation, you shall not do any work; it is a Sabbath for G-d an all your dwelling places. (Vayikra 23:3)*

Even though the Torah started talking about the chagim, it quickly inserted a posuk about Shabbos before continuing on with the actual. festivals. This lets us know that even though the Torah is more lenient regarding what is forbidden and permissible on most holidays, still one should not treat them any less seriously than Shabbos itself. Indeed, the Talmud warns:

Anyone who disgraces the festivals is like one who worships idols. (Pesachim 118a)

Regarding Shabbos, the Talmud reveals:

Five things are considered one-sixtieth [of something] . . . Shabbos is one-sixtieth of the World-to-Come . . . (Brochos 57b)

True, 1:60 is usually a ratio at which the "one" becomes non-discernable in the mixture. However, in this case, we can assume that the "one" is what infuses the seventh day of the week with its phenomenal sense of spirituality that transforms it from being merely "Saturday" into SHABBOS. Another one-sixtieth would be more than our bodies could handle and probably blow our minds, because the World-to-Come is far "larger" than anything we can even imagine.

The holidays are no different in this respect, each one representing its own unique portal to a far more supernatural reality that better matches the reality of the place from which our souls have come - "upper realms, under G-d's Throne of Glory" - than it does in the place to where they have been sent: HERE. In fact, the Leshem writes:

When it says that in the future, all . . . holidays will no longer exist except for Purim and Yom HaKippurim, it is referring to the time of resurrection (Techiyas HaMeisim), after the forty years of Kibbutz Golios until the end of the 210 years. At that time, the righteous and the meritorious will be on a higher level than angels . . . as mentioned in the Zohar HaKodesh (Toldos, 141a). Then, a great change will occur to the entire world, even to those still in existence from this world, though they remain quite physical. For, at the present time, the world consists of three categories: impure, pure, and holy, and even the "pure" of today is still quite profane, lacking holiness. However, at that time, everything will be on the level of pure and holy only. It is with respect to this time that they say all the holidays will not longer apply, for ALL days [of the week] will have the holiness of the holidays; profane days will no longer exist. It may be that the days will divide into appointed times relevant to them: Sunday, which is the level of Chesed, would have the holiness of Pesach; Monday would be Rosh Hashanah; Tuesday, Shavuos; Wednesday, Rosh Chodesh, because it is also called "Moed," as the Talmud says (Shavuos 10a); Thursday, Succos, because, it is also from the side of Gevuros, as it says in the Holy Zohar (Emor 96a; see there, and the emendations of Rabbi Chaim Vital). Thursday corresponds to Hod, which is from the side of Gevuros that will transform into "Flames of Mercy," and this will be the "Time of our Joy." Friday, which is Day Six, would be Shemini Atzeres, because, Day Six corresponds to Yesod . . . And this is what it means that all holidays will be annulled in the future: they will divide up into the days of the week, each of which will then have the holiness of the holidays. (Sha'arei Leshem, p. 491)

Thus, the Leshem is explaining, the holidays themselves are really different levels of reality, channels to higher spiritual realms, even though they fall on regular days of the week and last for finite periods of time. The important thing is that while they are in effect and being experienced, it is as if they are not part of the regular week and infinite in time, providing a powerful taste and acute reminder of what the Chofetz Chaim told us above.

The Leshem continues:

. . . Shabbos, Yom HaKippurim, and Purim, allude to periods after "Yemos HaMoshiach" [including Techiyas HaMeisim] - periods of the World-to-Come - and to eternal lights, and therefore will still

remain [until that time] in order to allow access to their lights and revelations of the future. However, the rest of the holidays allude only to lights of rectification of Yemos HaMoshiach, after which begins the period of Techiyas HaMeisim until the end of the six thousand years. See the GR"A in Safra D'Tzniusa, Chapter Five, on the words, "Let there be firmament" until the end. Therefore, [in the period of the resurrection] all the holidays will be annulled, since the entire period will constantly have the holiness of those holidays. Then, the light that the holidays only hint to now at that time will actually be revealed [continuously]. Therefore, just as they say regarding the seventh millennium that it will be "a day that is completely Shabbos," so too in Yemos HaMoshiach after Techiyas HaMeisim [begins] and onward, it will be a "time that is completely festival (moed)." For, there are six different types of holy light of the holidays, and they are: Pesach, Shavuos, Succos, Shemini Atzeres, Rosh Hashanah and Rosh Chodesh - the sod of the root of the six days of the week. When, eventually, their essential lights are actually revealed, they will radiate downward continuously, each day with the holy light of the holiday that is relevant to it. Thus, the entire time will be on the level of the holiness of the holidays. (Ibid. p. 492)

### **SEUDOS SHILSHIS:**

*G-d spoke to Moshe, saying: Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them: When you shall enter the Land that I give you and you reap its harvest, you shall bring an Omer before G-d to gain favor for you . . . You shall count for yourselves - from the day after the rest day, from the day when you bring the Omer of the waving - seven weeks, they shall be complete. (Vayikra 23:9, 15)*

Thus, the point of the chagim is to create a spiritual environment that resembles, as much as possible, the reality of being under the Throne of Glory, each chag in its own particular way. This way there really is never a large amount of time that passes before a Jew is able to reach a spiritual safe haven - REDEMPTION - once again and re-orient himself with his true task in life.

However, the period between Pesach and Shavuos represents a special opportunity to not only recharge our spiritual batteries, but to continually draw on that special spiritual energy to achieve lasting growth, culminating in oneness with Torah itself and its ideal reality. This is why the Leshem says, as we quoted in previous weeks:

The depth of the matter regarding the Omer-Offering that is performed each year is for the sake of building the Malchus and completing it, from the day after the first day of Pesach until its completion at the time of Shavuos, as it is known from the Arizal. Through this, the Jewish people rectify the world making it holy to G-d, free of any mixture of the Sitra Achra. For, the rectification of the Malchus and the Jewish people is one process, because they are its structure and "limbs," since it emanates within each Jew. (Sha'arei Leshem, p. 86)

What does he mean by this? The "Malchus" to which the Leshem refers is the kingdom of G-d on earth, a reality in which no human being ever denies the reality of G-d again, and all evil is banished from creation. This is precisely what Yemos HaMoshiach is supposed to begin, and it is synonymous

with the complete and final redemption of the Jewish people.

Another name for this time is "Keitz HaYamim" - the "End of Days." However, the word "keitz" is a special word for "end," for in everyday Hebrew we would have used the word "sof" (i.e., Sof HaYamim), which means the same thing but is more common. However, as the Talmud mentions (Sanhedrin 97b), "keitz" is a special word used primarily to describe THE end, as in the Divinely designated time for the Final Redemption.

Furthermore, it would have been perfectly fine to say "yamim," which would have meant, "End of Days," as opposed to "HA-Yamim," which means, "End of THE Days." Why the emphasis? Which days, if not just history in general, come to an end when Moshiach arrives and the kingdom of G-d finally results? And, what connection does this have to the Omer-period that makes it so special a time for redemption:

The main period of time for this rectification [of the Omer] will be in the future, at the time of the End[*of-Days*], because the redemption begins on Pesach and ends on Shavuot . . . (Sha'arei Leshem, p. 87)

The answer was in the Haggadah you may have already put away for next year.

### **MELAVE MALKAH:**

*[G-d] said to Avram, "Know that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and [the host nation] will enslave them, and afflict them for 400 years."* (Bereishis 15:13)

Well, not exactly. The truth is, we were strangers in a few places during the course of the 400 years that G-d spoke to Avraham about, and oppressed for only 116 years of them by the last nation that "hosted" us for only 210 years.

Good thing too, because, as tradition teaches us, had G-d not begun the redemption process when He did, then we would have assimilated into Egyptian society beyond spiritual return. Fortunately for us, G-d counted the 400 years of homelessness from the time of Yitzchak's birth, and not from the time when we first arrived in Egypt in Ya'akov's time.

The truth is, the posuk seems to imply that the same nation destined to oppress the Jewish people is the same nation that will host the Jewish people for ALL 400 years. And, tradition supports that point of view, which means we left Egypt early - 190 years early - to save us from spiritual oblivion.

So what happened to the remaining 190 years of oppression? Did G-d simply look the other way and forgive the debt? No, instead, G-d took the remaining 190 years of oppression and divided them up amongst the years to come from the time we left Egypt until the day Moshiach arrives.

The most important implication of this idea is that we never fully left Egypt in Moshe's time, like we tend to believe. Rather, we are part of an ongoing and dynamic process of "leaving" of Egypt that will only come to an end with the arrival of Moshiach. Everything that we have undergone and will

undergo until then, is part of the oppression we avoided back then.

Thus, when the Haggadah Shel Pesach tells us that "each Jew must look at himself as if he too left Egypt," it is not simply being proverbial. Indeed, it is informing us that we are the next generation in the chain of generations struggling to become free of "Mitzrayim," any nation, according to Sod, that drags the Jewish people down to the 49 levels of spiritual impurity.

What do we call that final and eternal moment when we leave Mitzrayim altogether: Keitz HaYamim - End of THE Days? Which days? THOSE days, the ones left unfinished when Moshe came to redeem us from Egypt 190 years early. And, lest you still find yourself confused about precisely which days we are talking about here, the gematria of the word "keitz" - kuf-tzaddi - conveniently, is 190.

You may recall, the Arizal revealed an amazing insight into the souls that will be around at that dramatic time of history:

In the future, Moshe himself will reincarnate and return in the last generation, as it says, "you will die with your fathers and rise up." However, in the final generation, the "Dor HaMidbar" (Generation of the Desert) will also reincarnate with the Erev Rav, and this is what the posuk also says, "this people will rise up" . . . Thus, the Generation of the Desert along with the Erev Rav reincarnate in the final generation, "like in the days of leaving Egypt" (Michah 7:15). As well, Moshe will arise among them . . . (Sha'ar HaGilgulim, Chapter 20)

Talk about historical circles! Then again, cycles are what the chagim are all about, allowing us to return to the same place once again the following year, but on a higher spiritual plane, hopefully. And, like the ladder in Ya'akov's dream that connects Earth to Heaven, the Omer-period joins together Pesach and Shavuot, the former festival representing the destination from which we start, and the latter festival representing the ultimate destination of the soul. And, like the angels on the ladder, the self-perfection we work on at this time represents that very ongoing and dynamic process of redemption.

Have a great Shabbos,  
Pinchas Winston

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