

# HERE WE GO AGAIN, MAYBE

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

## Friday Night:

*G-d told Moshe, "Send men to spy out the land of Canaan which I will give to the Children of Israel. From every paternal tribe send one man; one prince from among them." (Bamidbar 13:1-2)*

Some time ago, I received a not-so-friendly letter (to put it mildly) insisting that, among other things, "Perceptions" repeats itself. Caught off guard, I defended myself (to put it mildly), because I do try to present new material each week and every year.

However, months later, I regret my response. It is true that I always try to use new material and present fresh ideas, which is not all that hard given the infiniteness of Torah and the myriad of commentators on the Chumash. However, Perceptions began around 1994, almost ten years ago, and for at least half of that time I have been presenting FOUR separate divrei Torah on a weekly basis. There is bound to be some repetition over time, but not due to any limitation of Torah, but to my own personal limitation to recall what I have written previously. One of my biggest regrets now, in hindsight, is not having indexed the topics I addressed in each weekly parshah sheet.

However, sometimes the repetition is intentional. Sometimes I feel ideas are too important and too central to Torah thought to bring up only one week in passing. And, sometimes the inter-connectedness of Torah demands that I cross-reference ideas from one parshah to another, in order to bring to the reader's attention certain subtle connections that otherwise might go unnoticed. Nevertheless, even in such cases, I make a point of adding another layer of meaning that previously I had overlooked or left out.

And then again, there are parshios like this week's that demand that we re-visit the topic because each year it becomes increasingly relevant. Often, especially in the case of this week's parshah, I come to better understand ideas I previously wrote about, and therefore I need to go back and re-explain them along deeper lines.

So, if you are one of those meticulous readers who find ideas repeated from the past in this week's parshah, I beg your forgiveness in advance. And, I ask you to read on until the end, for I believe you will find that, just like the yearly cycle of Jewish holidays themselves, we will have returned to the same point once again, but on a completely different and higher plane.

Having said that, you may recall a source that I included in previous divrei Torah and essays:

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

What does this mean? First of all, it is important to explain that, not only does Torah Judaism believe in the concept of reincarnation, but it explains that there are two types. The first type of reincarnation is the most commonly known, and that is that souls after death (of the body) can return in the body of a newly born (actually, conceived) baby. This allows the soul to complete aspects of its own personal rectification if it failed to do so in a previous lifetime.

The second type of "gilgul" occurs after the person has already been born and is alive, already living with his own personal soul. Instead, while alive, the soul of another person can enter him and join the existing soul, either to help the person achieve greater perfection, or to help itself to accomplish more, even after death. Hence, it is called "ibur," from the word "impregnation," since the "extra" soul joins the already existing soul.

The fundamental difference between the two reincarnation processes is the following: in a regular gilgul, the soul is attached to the body for the whole incarnation, the whole physical lifetime; while, in "ibur," there is a primary soul that is connected at all times to the body, and a secondary soul that is free to enter and depart from that physical body as is necessary. Its arrival may increase the spiritual energy of the person, and its departure may sometimes be a let down, as in the case of the spies in this week's parshah, who received, as iburim, the souls of the sons of Ya'akov Avinu to assist them in their holy task of preparing the path to Eretz Yisroel.

And, as the Arizal revealed, Yosef alluded to this much earlier in time when his own brothers stood before him in the Viceroy's palace in Egypt. When Yosef accused his brothers of being spies, according to Sod, he was trying to be more than simply antagonistic. Indeed, he was both hinting to his own presence before them and warning them of the supreme challenge they then faced, the results of which would affect the Jewish people hundreds of years in the future, and we'll have to understand how and why.

## **Shabbos Day:**

*All of them were heads of the Children of Israel.* (Bamidbar 13:3)

To support his explanation, the Arizal added:

This is also the sod of what it says, "All of them were heads of the Children of Israel" (Bamidbar 13:3), because they 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." (Ibid.)

In other words, normally when the Torah speaks about the leaders of the Jewish people in the desert, it refers to them as heads of certain amounts of Jews. However, in this case it calls them "heads of the Children of Israel," as to say, from them came all of the Jewish people. Being the fathers of the 12 Tribes, these extra souls were indeed that.

The Arizal continued:

After they decided to speak evil about the land and wanted to tell Moshe it was a mistake to go there, the souls of the tribes left them. As it is known, an ibur can leave from within the person whenever it wishes, unlike actual gilgulim. (Ibid.)

This is because an ibur comes to benefit either the host soul, or itself. However, if the person sins, it ceases to have a person to remain together with the other soul. Therefore, it moves on as easily as it arrived, unaffected by the sins of the person it has left behind.

One of the beautiful aspects of this pshat is that it also provides an alternative for the following posuk:

*"They went and they came to Moshe and Aharon."* (Ibid. 26)

As Rashi points out, the Torah only had to inform us of their return, since we were already told of their departure just a posuk before:

"They returned from spying the land at the end of forty days." (Bamidbar 13:25)

Explains the Arizal:

... It should only have mentioned that they came. 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. Thus, the word "coming" refers only to the spies themselves, who came without the ibur of the souls of the tribes. However, Caleiv and Yehoshua retained their ibur: Ephraim ben Yosef was in Yehoshua and Yehudah was in Caleiv, since they did not sin. This is what it says, "Yehoshua bin Nun and Caleiv ben Yefuneh survived from these men who went" (Bamidbar 14:38), that is: these remained alive from the level of the souls of the tribes of their fathers who were in them; they did not leave them after they returned. Hence, 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. Therefore, "these men" refers to Ephraim and Yehudah who were with them in their going, as it says, "who went," to indicate that these survived from those who went, unlike those whose coming was not like their going. (Ibur.)

There you have it, "Pardes" all in one story.

PSHAT: The spies left as "kosher" Jews, but somehow became corrupted along the way and came

back with an evil report.

REMEZ: Why does it mention that they left? To hint to us that, just as the spies returned with bad advice, so too had they left with bad advice.

DRUSH: At what point, therefore, did they change their status? The moment they turned their backs on Moshe Rabbeinu to spy the land, which proved how dependent they had been at that time on Moshe to maintain their high level of spirituality. That's why they had not been commanded to spy the land at that time, but had demanded it on their own.

SOD: There is a soul connection between the spies of Moshe's time, and Yosef's brothers whom he accused of being spies.

And, as if that isn't amazing enough, it turns out that, encoded in the Torah across the very possukim about the spies to which the Arizal referred, are the words "Shevatim heimah"-"they were the tribes" (+441)-a Torah code confirming the very sod the Arizal revealed!

---

### **SEUDAH SHLISHIS:**

*Yosef remem-bered his dreams concerning them, and said to them, "Spies! You have come to see where the land is vulnerable!" (Bereishis 42:9)*

In other words, the posuk is telling us, had Yosef not remembered his dreams, he would not have come up with the idea of accusing his brothers of being spies. What would have been the point? Just to aggravate his desperate brothers and take revenge? That wasn't Yosef HaTzaddik's nature. No, whatever Yosef had set in motion by making his accusation, it had been for the benefit of his brothers, and not to his own.

And now, with the help of the Arizal, we can see that Yosef had been thinking about more than just the present dilemma. In Yosef's harsh words, he had been hinting to the brothers, and perhaps to the future spies, that, unless the brothers rectified the problem that had brought about their own apparent demise, history would be doomed to repeat itself in an even bigger way in the future.

Indeed, the Midrash states:

All that happened to Yosef happened to Tzion. (Tanchuma, Vayigash 10)

In fact, the gematria of "Yosef" and "Tzion" are equal, both totaling 156. And, through Yosef's own ancestors in the time of the spies, we learn how intricately connected Yosef's being was to Eretz Yisroel:

The daughters of Tzelofchad-the son of Cheifer, the son of Gilad, the son of Machir, the son of Menashe, from the family of Menashe, the son of Yosef-approached. These are the names of his

daughters: Machlah, No'ah, Chaglah, Milkah, and Tirtzah. (Bamidbar 27:1)

FROM THE FAMILY OF MENASHE, THE SON OF YOSEF: Why did it have to mention this, since it already said "the son of Menashe"? To tell you that Yosef loved the Land, as it says, "Bring my bones up" (Bereishis 50:25), and that his 'daughters' also loved the land, as it says, "Give us our possession" (Bamidbar 27:4). (Rashi)

And, it turns out that both Yosef and Eretz Yisroel have one other historical fact in common, to which he alluded when he called his brothers "spies": both were gravely misjudged. As it says:

They brought back to the Children of Israel an evil report of the land which they had searched, saying, "The land which we investigated is a land that eats up its inhabitants." (Bamidbar 13:32)

EATS ITS INHABITANTS: "In every place we passed we found them burying their dead!" However, the truth was that The Holy One, Blessed is He, did this for their good, to involve them (the inhabitants of Canaan) in mourning to distract them from paying attention to the spies." (Rashi)

Hence, the Talmud explains:

Why does the letter ayin come before the letter peh [in the Aleph-Bais]? Because of the spies, who spoke about that which they did not see. (Sanhedrin 104b)

Just as the brothers had done when justifying their treatment of Yosef:

They saw him off in the distance, and before he approached, they con-spired to kill him. They said to one another, "The dreamer is coming. Let's kill him, and throw him into one of the pits." (Bereishis 37:18-20)

That's all Yosef appeared to them, a dreamer, someone lacking in any true substance, and as such, a danger to the future of the Jewish people. Never mind the fact that Ya'akov saw tremendous potential in Yosef-had Avraham not favored Yishmael and Yitzchak, Eisav?

This is what the posuk means, "Yosef remem-bered his dreams concerning them ..." - that is, how great substance had appeared where they had seen none; how the hand of G-d had been working with them through Yosef's dreams, while they had only been able to see the imaginings of a young and carefree lad. If they did not learn to see past the surface of things and into the essence of matters, then their descendants would fail to see the importance of Eretz Yisroel on their future mission, and cost the nation not just 40 years in the desert, but thousands of years of harsh and bitter exile.

However, hard as Yosef tried to make right the wrong, history testifies to his, and his brothers' success: we're still in exile!

## MELAVE MALKAH:

*"The sun rises and the sun sets."* (Koheles 1:5)

The Talmud makes an unusual remark:

Rava bar Mechasya said in the name of Rav Chama bar Guria, who said it in the name of Rav: A person should never treat a child differently than the rest, for because of the two coins of material that Ya'akov gave to Yosef over the rest of his sons, they became jealous of him and this triggered the events that brought our fathers down to Egypt. (Shabbos 10b)

It is unusual because, as Tosfos points out, going down to Egypt was a prophecy Avraham had received long before Yosef was even born:

[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)

Furthermore, the Midrash seems to imply that Ya'akov can't even be faulted for his actions, having been "forced" into them seemingly specifically to bring about the fulfillment of the prophecy made to Avraham:

"Go and see the works of G-d, awesome in deed toward mankind." (Tehillim 66:5); Go and see how when The Holy One, Blessed is He, created the world, from the first day He created the Angel of Death as well . . . Man was made on the sixth day, yet death was blamed on him . . . It also says the same thing with respect to Yosef . . . Rav Yudan said, "The Holy One, Blessed is He, wanted to carry out the decree of 'Know that you shall surely be strangers' and therefore set it up in such a way that Ya'akov would love Yosef and that the brothers would hate him and sell him to the Arabs, and that they would all go down to Egypt." This is what is meant by "awesome in deed." (Tanchuma, Vayaishev 4)

Awesome, meaning that G-d brings about events that fulfill His master plan for creation. all the time not interfering with free-will, though it seems as if just the opposite is true. However, the main point here is that Yosef's life and its events are directly related to the Egyptian exile, and therefore the redemption from it. Indeed, it was to rectify the faulty spiritual vision of his brothers that the Egyptian exile-all 210 years of it-occurred in the first place, as we see at the end of Sefer Bereishis.

The test of the tikun came shortly after the nation had left Egypt, not at Mt. Sinai but after they had set foot to their final destination: Eretz Yisroel. If they had arrived at Eretz Yisroel and entered as planned, not rejecting it on any level, then history would have testified to the fact that what the brothers had lacked the Jewish people had rectified after being in Egypt for 210 years.

However, the story of the spies in this week's parshah instead revealed that the word of Yosef-and

Eretz Yisroel-was not yet complete. As a result, the Jewish people were forced to wander for 40 years altogether in the desert, and for that matter, thousands of years since. In fact, we still have yet to fully enter and attain Eretz Yisroel as a complete nation, and won't, seemingly, until Moshiach comes.

Thus, all of Jewish history has been about, and is still about, completing Yosef's task of rectifying the vision of the fathers of the Jewish people, and Eretz Yisroel obviously plays a major role in this tikun, as does Moshiach Ben Yosef. In fact, according to the Vilna Gaon, one of MB"Y main tasks is to ingather the exiles in advance of the Final Redemption, or, as many will follow him back to the Land.

Now it makes even more sense that the Zohar speaks of Resurrection of the Dead occurring over a period of 210 years, but only after 40 years of "Kibbutz Golios"-"Ingathering of the Exiles" (Midrash Ne'elam, 139b-140a). Like bookends, the 210 years of Egyptian exile began Jewish history, and was followed by 40 years of wandering the desert, whereas Jewish history will end with 40 years of ingathering, followed by 210 years of resurrection and purification. It's always been about finishing what began in Moshe's days, which is strengthened by the following as well:

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" will also reincarnate with the Erev Rav, and this is what the posuk also says, "this people will rise up." Hence, there is not a single generation in which Moshe Rabbeinu does not return b'sod, "The sun rises and the sun sets" (Koheles 1:5) and, "One generation goes and another comes" (Koheles 1:4), in order to rectify that generation. 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 since they are all from the sod of Da'as: Moshe, the Generation of the Desert, and the Erev Rav, as we have explained in Parashas Shemos. (Sha'ar HaGilgulim, Chapter 20)

Thus, as the sun seems to be setting on this period of history, one can't help but wonder, are we it? Are we that final generation the Arizal spoke about? Are we now living during those 40 years of ingathering, and if so, is Eretz Yisroel once again testing us, to see if we have corrected our spiritual vision once and for all after so many millennia? Is this week's parshah and its message becoming increasingly relevant with each passing year?

Have a great Shabbos thinking about that one.  
Pinchas Winston