

A FUNDAMENTAL OF "FOUNDATION"

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

FRIDAY NIGHT:

Now Yosef could not restrain himself . . . (Bereishis 45:1)

It is certainly one of the all-time, most dramatic moments in the entire Torah. There was Yosef, in the eyes of his brothers he was the Viceroy of Egypt and second-in-command to Pharaoh, and he watched them squirm in humiliation and frustration - and for their own good. Thus, seeing their confusion and suffering, he could no longer continue the charade without bursting into tears himself, and he felt compelled to reveal his true identity, which he did promptly.

Regarding the posuk above, the Holy Zohar says the following:

COULD NOT RESTRAIN HIMSELF: Rebi Chiya began and said, "He distributed widely to the destitute . . ." (Tehillim 112:9). Come and see: The Holy One, Blessed is He, created the world and gave man dominion over it, making him king over everything. There are many types of people spread out around the world: righteous people, evil people, fools, and wise people; and amongst them there are wealthy and poor people, in order that they should benefit each other. The righteous benefit the evil [by helping them to repent], and the wise benefit the fools [by teaching them]. The rich help the poor [by filling their needs], and in this way a person merits eternal life, and he becomes bound up with the Tree of Life. Not to mention, the tzedakah he gives lasts forever, as it says, "His righteousness (tzidkaso) endures forever". (Tehillim 111:3, Zohar 208a)

As is often the case with the Zohar, it is not clear at first what prompted such an "explanation" of the verse. However, the answer is usually forthcoming as the Zohar continues its journey on the way to teaching a fundamental, albeit a more Kabbalistic one, of creation.

HE DISTRIBUTED WIDELY TO THE DESTITUTE: Rebi Elazar said: When The Holy One, Blessed is He, created the world, He stood it up on one column (i.e., principle), and 'Tzaddik' is its name, and it is this tzaddik that is the basis of the world's continued existence. He is the source of its "drink" and "food," as the verse says, "And a river went out from Aiden to water the garden, and from there it branched out." (Bereishis 2:10)

What did this add to clarify the original statement and its connection to the parshah? To begin with, most references to the concept of 'tzaddik' are usually made with Yosef HaTzaddik in mind, who, according to Kabbalah, is affiliated with the sixth sefirah, Yesod, which means "Foundation," as it

says, "V'tzaddik YESOD olam - And the righteous person is the foundation of the world" (Mishlei 10:25). This is why Yosef was destined for such a primary position, from which he was able to sustain the world, spiritually and physically.

Furthermore, Kabbalah teaches, another name for the sefirah, Yesod is "river." Thus, the Zohar learns that the river that watered the Garden of Eden back at the beginning of creation, on the level of the Sefiros, was in fact this sefirah. And, like this primordial river, tzaddikim such as Yosef have continued to be the source of the world's nourishment in every generation since that time.

The Zohar continues:

AND FROM THERE IT BRANCHED OUT: What branched out? The "food" and "drink" of the river was completely received by the garden, and then it was distributed to all four directions of the world. Many are there who look to "drink" and "eat" from there, as it says, "The eyes of all look to You with hope, and You give them their food in its proper time" (Tehillim 145:15). Therefore, when it says, "He distributed widely to the destitute" (Tehillim 112:9), it refers to the Tzaddik (who is the level of Yesod, which completely distributes its blessing with wisdom and kindness, fulfilling all the destitute of the world).

Thus, the Zohar's references are to Yosef HaTzaddik, who, like the sefirah and the type of person he represents, is the source of bounty for the entire world. That is fine and makes perfect sense. However, the Zohar still has not revealed to us why it chose THIS posuk specifically as the reason to reveal this sod.

SHABBOS DAY:

Now Yosef could not restrain himself in the presence of all who stood before him, so he called out, "Remove everyone from before me!" (Bereishis 45:1)

From what we have said so far, we can see how the physical reality is a projection of the spiritual one. In other words, what happens "Down Here" does so exactly as it does because that is the way things are happening "Up There," that is, on a spiritual plane. And, though the words of a posuk can be, and are meant to be read and understood on their most basic level, we can see how they also describe the most profound of spiritual realities.

Thus, the Zohar continues regarding the posuk above:

Come and see: "Could not restrain himself in the presence of all who stood before him." They were all those who came to eat and drink from him. (Zohar 208a)

In other words, the Zohar is revealing the posuk, on a sod-level, and is not talking about Yosef the person, but "Yosef" the sefirah, Yesod. And, since it is the nature of Yesod to distribute the spiritual nourishment to the entire world, it is difficult for Yesod to hold back from doing so, just as a tzaddik himself has difficulty NOT doing chesed.

This is important to know, because another name for the sefirah of Yesod is "Goel," which means "Redeemer" (Ziv HaZohar). In other words, if redemption is a function of the sixth sefirah - and it is:

The Yesod divided into two kings, the Yesod and the Atarah. The Atarah is relevant to "malchus" since it is her (Yesod's) crown, which is why it is called "Atarah". . . Therefore, the Yesod and the Atarah became two, but after the tikun the Yesod and the Atarah became one in order to join together Zehr Anpin and Nukveh, forever . . . This is the sod of "Yemos HaMoshiach" being at the end of the sixth millennium . . . (Hakdamos v'Sha'arim, page 172) - and Yesod, by definition, cannot hold back its blessing. Redemption is then bound to spill out early just as the revelation of Yosef's true identity.

Furthermore, just as the "redemption" of that time came when the brother's had hit rock bottom and were suffering defeat, then, perhaps, that is when it will come for us. Given the situation of the Jewish people, therefore, Moshiach is probably not too far off.

Perhaps this is another reason why Moshiach himself is referred to as Moshiach 'Tzidkainu' - the "Righteous;" not just because he will be righteous himself, but because of his connection to the sefirah of Yesod, and Yosef himself, the prototypical tzaddik.

SEUDOS SHILSHIS:

So Ya'akov arose from Be'er Sheva; the sons of Yisroel transported Ya'akov their father, as well as their young children and wives, in the wagons which Pharaoh had sent to transport them. They took their livestock and their wealth which they had amassed in the land of Canaan and they came to Egypt . . .
(Bereishis 46:5-6)

And so the exile began. Twenty-two years earlier Ya'akov had returned home to Be'er Sheva and his family from the house of Lavan in Padan Aram, with the hope of living out the rest of his life there. Could he have known then that the remaining seventeen years of his life would transpire in a country even more foreign than the one to which he had escaped to avoid his furious brother, Eisav?

For a Torah-Jew, Egypt was a frightening place, even for the great Ya'akov Avinu. Everything about Egypt ran contrary to the Torah's point of view about life. Yet, that was where G-d had sent the Torah nation of that time, into the heart of spiritual impurity, of all places, in order to become a nation, which we did, but at a tremendous cost.

The rate of assimilation had been tremendous, and even from those family lines which did last the full 210 years, four-fifths of them died in the Plague of Darkness, not wanting to leave Egypt for Eretz Yisroel.

Why was it necessary?

The truth is, not all the answers have been given to us, and we'll understand a lot more once Moshiach arrives; it should be in our time. However, a lot of times the end reflects back on the

beginning, which provides insight into an unclear situation.

The Torah makes the following comment regarding the night that the exodus from Egypt actually began:

But against the Children of Israel, no dog shall whet its tongue, against neither man nor beast, so that you shall know that G-d will have differentiated between Egypt and Israel. (Shemos 11:7)

Curious. We know that Pesach is called "Passover" because G-d differentiated between the Jewish people and the Egyptians by "skipping" over the homes of the former to plague the latter. What role did the dogs play in this all-important theme of the Egyptian exile and redemption?

As we have mentioned on so many occasions, even though dogs, traditionally, are considered to be "man's best friend," which they certainly can be, Kabbalistically, they represent one of the worst nations the world has ever known . . . the antithesis of the Jewish people - Amalek:

Then came Amalek and warred with Israel in Refidim. (Shemos 17:5)

THEN CAME AMALEK: The Torah placed this section close to this verse to say, "I am always amongst you and ready to take care of your needs, and you ask, 'Is God amongst us or not?' (Shemos 17:4). By your life! The dog (Amalek) will come and bite you and make you call out to Me, and then you will know where I am!" (Rashi)

In fact, the Zohar warns:

If they [Israel] do not merit it, then a dog will descend. What is the name of that dog? Biladan is its name. (Zohar, Introduction, 6b)

In other words, from the Zohar, the concept of the dog does not have a positive connotation.

On the other hand, we also know that most concepts have two sides to them, and therefore, even the idea of a dog can represent either good OR bad. Thus, a hero of the Jewish people was Kaleiv ben Yehuneh - one of the twelve spies who spied Eretz Yisroel, but only one of two who came back with a favorable report - his name is spelled the same as "kelev," though pronounced differently.

The question is, what does the reference to the dogs in Parashas Bo mean in light of all of this?

MELAVE MALKAH

Then came Amalek and warred with Israel in Refidim. (Shemos 17:5)

. . . Another question I (Rebi Chanina) asked him (Rebi Eliezer) was, "What does Refidim mean?" He answered me that it was merely the name of the place . . . Rebi Yehoshua said, "They weakened (rifu) themselves with respect to Torah." (Bechoros 5b)

In other words, often the names of the locations at which the Jewish people camped during their

forty years in the desert were not what the places were previously called, if they had previously been called anything at all. Rather, the Torah named them what they are called now, because the names themselves revealed what occurred to the Jewish people there, whether for good or bad.

Since the battle against Amalek had been such a significant event, Rebi Chanina had assumed the name of the place at which the battle had occurred, "Refidim," must somehow reflect why it had occurred. Rebi Eliezer had not seen anything in the name to be of any significance. However, Rebi Yehoshua had, and his explanation fit perfectly with the entire concept of Amalek, whose goal it is to sever the Jewish people from Torah.

For, the gematria of Amalek is "doubt" (suffek: samech-peh-kuf), indicating that it is Amalek's main goal to create doubt in the minds of the Jewish people, specifically with regard to their uniqueness, and particularly with regard to Divine Providence. It doesn't bother them that they die in the process; just as long as they are able to hurt the Jewish people and give the impression that G-d does not protect His "own" people.

Since Egypt in Hebrew is made up of two parts, "meitzer" and "yumm," the rabbis teach that Egypt was a place that constricted ("meitzer") and Divine knowledge ("yumm" which equals 50 in gematria), that is, the Fifty Gates of Understanding that make the reality of G-d crystal clear. In this respect, Mitzrayim was an extension of Amalek, leaving the Jew with a sense of despair, and little belief in his uniqueness.

However, those who had fallen for this and had been lost in the Plague of Darkness had left the "show" too early. All of the plagues had been part of a build-up to a level of clarity that would completely and utterly neutralize Amalek, leaving him no room whatsoever to cause any fermentation of doubt in the minds of the remaining Jews. This was symbolized by the fact that the "dogs" of Egypt had cooperated fully by abstaining from what they do so naturally and best: bark and whet their tongues.

The same clarity, however, did not come to the Egyptians, who, in spite of all they had seen and witnessed, still pursued the fleeing Jewish people to re-enslave them. In this, there was a great differentiation between the Jewish people and the Egyptians themselves, once reminiscent of the following distinction, which in itself is connected to the Chanukah message:

He [God] made a separation in the illumination of the Light, that it should not flow or give off light except for the righteous, whose actions draw it down and make It give off light. However, the actions of the evil block it, leaving them in darkness, and this itself was the hiding of the Light. (Sha'arei Leshem, p. 133)

It is this light that Kaleiv ben Yefuneh accessed to see the value of Eretz Yisroel, while the rest of the spies, other than Yehoshua himself, remained in doubt about the importance and wisdom of entering the land. In short, it is the light that forces away the doubt of Amalek and "silences the dogs," so-to-speak. In short, it is what turns the "kelev" into a "Kaleiv," and in a very real sense, that is precisely

what Ya'akov's family went down to Egypt to achieve.

Have a great Shabbos,
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