

THE HEALING OF THE HEEL

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

FRIDAY NIGHT:

Now, Israel, what does G-d your G-d ask of you? Only to fear G-d, your G-d, to go in all His ways and to love Him, and to serve G-d, your G-d, with all your heart and with all your soul . . . (Devarim 10:12)

I have something to reveal. You know how you always thought that three plus two equals five? I have bad news for you: it is not true. You probably think that I am just pulling your leg to make a point, but I just want to tell you that I was told that three plus two actually equals six, and that for over five thousand years we have been lied to, being told that it actually equals five.

I know: it is hard to believe. I too was convinced for the longest time that three plus two equals five and never questioned what seemed to be an immutable fact. However, it was explained to me, thousands of years ago it seems that someone made an honest mistake, mis-taught this simple calculation, and the rest is history, or conspiracy, which ever one you think best explains one of the best kept secrets of all time.

Still not convinced? Why not?

I'll tell you why not. For the simple reason that three plus two is not an independent reality, but an inter-dependent reality. If three plus two actually equaled six, and mankind took it to equal five, do you know how many things would go wrong in life, in the entire world? Even the building you are sitting in wouldn't be able to stand, and the computer that printed out this parshah sheet would be able to exist, let alone work. It would be like turning on the light without the wires being attached, or switching on a flashlight that doesn't have a light bulb.

It is the inter-connectivity of things in Creation that demands precision. For example, if I need to be at work by 9:00 in the morning and I take a lift with my neighbor to get there each day on time, and work is thirty minutes away by car, my neighbor can't come by to pick me up at 8:45 am. My employer's dependence upon me for my work, and my dependence on my neighbor to get there on time means my neighbor also has to watch the clock in the morning and leave for work on time.

Likewise, things such as buildings are dependent upon built-in laws within Creation to be able to stand, and safely. Before the contractor puts shovel to dirt the structural engineer has already worked out the building details of the planned construction, taking into account the effect of the laws of Nature on the building and its components. To do this, he has used mathematical equations

that demand to know if three plus two equals five or six, for a mistake results in faulty construction and has, in the past, led to tragic deaths.

However, humans are not perfect. As the expression goes, "To err is human, to forgive is Divine." Nevertheless, not all errors can be rectified through forgiveness. The parents of a child that was killed by a drunk driver, G-d forbid, can choose to forgive the negligent driver but it won't bring their child back or mitigate the fact that the driver is guilty of manslaughter. But, a driver who kills or injures someone through no negligence of his own, though he did make a mistake, can be forgiven because there was nothing more he could have done to avoid the tragedy.

Thus, human beings are stuck between what we might call forgivable error and non-forgivable error, the former being of the nature of that which a human being cannot be assumed to have worked out in advance, and the latter being a function of human negligence. And, of course, there are umpteen degrees in-between these two points, and depending upon how close one's mistake is to one extreme or the other, that is the extent to which we can hope to be forgiven for the miscalculations for which we have become responsible.

Hence, the Torah classifies sin in two ways: accidental and pre-meditative, what we often call innocent mistakes and intended errors, shogeg and meizid in Hebrew. However, there is a third category that is called shogeg karov l'meizid - accidental that is like pre-meditative - which means, as the name sounds, an accidental sin due to negligence. We should have known better, and could have known better had we simply been a little more caring, a little more respectful of life and others around us.

A person who errs in this way may not be called one who rebels against G-d, but he can still find himself obligated to pay the damages that his mistake caused. Ignorance is only an excuse when it is imposed upon us by circumstances we cannot control. And this is why Moshe Rabbeinu implores people with the words:

Now, Israel, what does G-d your G-d ask of you? Only to fear G-d, your G-d, to go in all His ways and to love Him, and to serve G-d, your G-d, with all your heart and with all your soul, to observe the commandments of G-d and His decrees, which I command you today for your benefit. (Devarim 10:12-13)

He might as well have said: to be precise in your service of G-d, and if Torah has come to teach us anything, it is this. For, as one moves from the realm of Pshat to that of Remez, and from Remez to Drush, and then ultimately to Sod, his appreciation of the interdependency of the components of Creation becomes greatly enhanced, especially when he sees and understands how they are ALL dependent upon him. He or she cannot, anymore, afford to be sloppy in the way he or she lives his or her life.

SHABBOS DAY:

Moshe told [Pharaoh], "G-d said, 'About midnight I will go out into the midst of Egypt, and all the first-born in Egypt will die, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sits upon his throne, to the first-born of the handmaid behind the millstones, and all the first-born animals.' " (Shemos 11:4-5)

Thus, to err is human, but to be precise is G-dly. Creation is precise. History is precise. You know what it takes to make good things happen, how complicated things can get. But, did you know how difficult it is to make things go wrong, just enough to have the desired effect without letting mankind destroy Creation completely, or to allow Creation to destroy itself?

No, G-d is perfect and He is precise; He is perfectly precise, as the following discussion in the Talmud makes clear:

Rebi Zera said: Moshe for sure knew [when midnight was exactly] and Dovid knew as well. If Dovid knew, then why did he use his harp [that miraculously played precisely at midnight each night]? To awake him from sleep. If Moshe knew, why did he saw "around midnight"? Because he thought that maybe Pharaoh's astrologers would err and say that Moshe was liar. (Brochos 4a)

And, if Moshe and Dovid HaMelech knew how calculate midnight precisely, then certainly G-d Himself could.

This is why, the commentators explain, G-d could still create things Erev Shabbos at twilight. As human beings, it is easy to miscalculate the time and wind up breaking Shabbos by mistake. Thus, we have to allow ourselves time to transition from Day Six to Shabbos, from weekday to holiness and therefore abstain from forbidden creative activities early than the precise moment, or fraction of a moment, or fraction of a fraction of a moment, etc., when Day Six ends and Day Seven begins.

We, of course, must try and be as precise about halachah as we can be, while at the same time building fences to protect us from our limitations in precision. Being infinite, He is infinitely precise. Thus, not only can He cause Day Six to become Day Seven, but He can be precisely aware of when that moment of transition occurs. And His infinite precision was built into the Sefiros as well.

What is sefirah? There are many ways to describe the reality of sefirah. To begin with they are spherical (and hence the Hebrew origin of the English word sphere), and completely spiritual. There is nothing really physical about them, in spite of all the physical terminology used to describe them. From that point onward, the definition becomes more pristine and the terms found in our Kabbalah are increasingly ephemeral.

In short, the Sefiros are the various areas of information that convey the express Will of G-d. The same way that everything on your computer screen is just a visual representation of information written in the program for the computer, even the things that appear 3-dimensional, everything in Creation is also just a physical/tangible representation of the information of a particular sefirah that governs everything that exists all along the time/space continuum.

Importantly, in our modern post-quantum physics era, the most important theory regarding the

nature of our 3-dimensional reality is called Super-String Theory. This theory essentially advances the concept that all of space and time derive from infinitesimally small units of information that then translate to our physical realm. This is very exciting, because our knowledge is beginning to catch up with what Kabbalah has described is the true reality behind both the spiritual and physical realms

And, the information is precise. If some of the information is lacking from the computer program, it cannot appear on the screen. Likewise, if something appears on the screen, it is the product of a potential that was written into the computer program by the programmer, in order to create a desired and anticipated result.

Thus it is with Creation. When G-d willed that the sefirah of Chesed should come into existence, it did so with a specific set of Divine instructions that would produce all that existed and occurred during the first millennium of history. Gevurah, which followed Chesed into existence, came into existence with all of the potential necessary to allow whatever came into being, or whatever continued being from the first millennium, during the second millennium of history. And so on and so forth for each subsequent sefirah and its corresponding millennium.

This is what the following means:

The six sefiros of Chesed through Yesod are the roots of all that will happen from the six days of Creation until the Final Rectification. (Drushei Olam HaTohu 2:151b)

Each day of Creation alludes to a thousand years of our existence, and every little detail that occurred on these days will have its corresponding event happen at the proportionate time during its millennium. (Safra D'Tzniusa, Chapter Five)

It's all very mathematical; it's all very precise, as in Divine precision. And more importantly and paradoxically, it all has already happened, in terms of the potential that is to be found in the information of each of the Sefiros.

SEUDOS SHLISHIS:

G-d said to me, saying, "I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people." (Devarim 9:13)

Stiff-necked, as in stubborn. But what are we being stubborn about? What are we resisting against Divine logic? This:

And if after these [negative occurrences] you will not be chastised toward Me, and you behave casually (kerry) with Me, then I too will behave toward you with casualness (b'kerry); and I will strike you, even I, seven ways for your sins. (Vayikra 26:23-24)

We like to live our lives as if they are randomly unfolding on a momentary basis, as if history has little rhyme or reason to it, so that we can ignore it and not take the criticism it offers us. We tend to look at history as an as-of-yet-to-be-written-script, one that we write as we want when we want to, and

ignore the consequences of this gravely mistaken attitude. We just don't want to get with the program.

When we watch a play for the first time, one whose script we have not previously read, we are under the impression that, like life itself, the plot is being made as it goes on. Even the actors who are already well aware of where the play is heading perform as if they too have yet to read the end of the script and are merely victims of randomly unfolding events. We willingly suspend our true understanding that the plot has already been written from the beginning until the end, in order to be entertained.

However, if we chose to, we could read the script and find out in advance what is going to happen next, because it already has happened, at least in script form. And, assuming that the actors are loyal to the script, we can anticipate precisely what they are going to do next, because they HAVE to do it, and anything else that has not been scripted is beyond the potential of the actors.

In our play that we call life, we are both the audience and the actors and, for the most part, do not know the entire script. I say for the most part, because there are Kabbalists who do and can find out this information by reading the Sefiros, so-to-speak, something that is part of the Kabbalistic tradition. For, even though we may only be in the year 5764 from Creation, and that 236 years of unacted history still remains only as potential, it has already been written into the sefirah of Yesod - which was programmed by the greatest programmer of all time, G-d Himself, back at the first moment of Creation - to govern this sixth and last millennium of history as we know it.

Thus, even though we are told that we must believe Moshiach can come any day, when he finally does come, may it be in our time (which would make him, perhaps, some elderly Torah scholar sitting in some Bais Midrash today), it will become clear why it was at THAT moment, and at no other. For, certain potentials can exist in every millennium, scripted into each of the six sefiros, but in the end, each potential reality is probably more closely related to one sefirah over another, and to one portion of that sefirah as opposed to other portions of it. This would explain how great rabbis made calculations for the arrival of Moshiach, and yet he did not come in the end at that time.

An analogy might be that of a student who takes an exam. He has the potential to pass the exam on any day of the week, but he finds that his concentration level is better at the start of a week than at the end of a week. If he writes the exam at the beginning of the week, it takes less effort for him to concentrate and therefore his chances of success are better than if he writes the exam at the end of the week, which requires a much greater effort on his part to concentrate on what he is answering, increasing his chances of failure.

Thus, Moshiach could have come many times already throughout history, if not any time during the last 5,764 years. However, since his arrival, as we shall soon see, is more closely related to the sefirah of Yesod, it would have meant that other conditions would have had to be fulfilled to support his coming "early," to make up for what was lacking from the potential of the moment itself. The

calculation of the potential early moment for Moshiach to arrive may have been correct, but the conditions to support such an early arrival more than likely were not met, and thus the moment, like so many others before it and after it, came and went leaving the Jewish people still in exile.

MELAVE MALKAH:

Tzaddik Yesod olam - the righteous person is the foundation of the world. (Mishlei 10:25)

The word yesod, as we see in the posuk just mentioned, means "foundation." It is also the sefirah associated with Yosef, whose appellation was Tzaddik, for having resisted the advances of his master's wife, Potiphar. The Midrash elaborates and says:

This is the foundation upon which The Holy One, Blessed is He, created His world and it is called "Light." (Zohar Chadash, Bereishis 11b)

The Talmud adds to this explanation by teaching:

The light which The Holy One, Blessed is He, created on the first day allowed Adam to see from one end of the world to the other end. (Chagigah 12a)

However, explains the Talmud, when G-d saw into the future that evil people would exist and abuse this holy light, He hid it for the righteous people, as it says,

"And G-d saw that the light was good" (Bereishis 1:4), and there is no good but the tzaddik, as it says, "Say of the tzaddik: 'Good!' " (Yeshayahu 3:10). (Chagigah 12a)

However, yesod is spelled: Yud-Samech-Vav-Dalet, and can be divided into two parts: Yud and Sod (Sefer Atzilus), whereas the Yud always alludes to the sefirah of Chochmah - Wisdom - and sod is the resulting esoteric meaning that emerges from it. Thus, explains the Vilna Gaon, one of the prime purposes of Moshiach Ben Yosef is to reveal Sod to the world, just as his original ancestor did in his time:

Pharaoh said to Yosef, "I am Pharaoh, and without your consent no man may lift his hand or his foot in all the land of Egypt." Pharaoh called Yosef "Tzafnas Pa'nayach . . ." (Bereishis 41:44-45)

TZAFNAS PA'NAYACH: He explains the hidden . . . (Rashi)

A man through him the hidden is revealed. (Onkeles)

That is, a man through whom the script of history can be learned, a righteous person who is privy to that which has been written but which has yet to unfold. In man in tune with the Sefiros, and therefore someone who is capable of being a partner with G-d in bringing about their actualization. That is the pure definition of a tzaddik, which is why he is called the foundation of the world.

Thus, it was Yosef HaTzaddik who in his position as Viceroy of Egypt had all the Egyptians perform Bris Milah - circumcision - which is none other than the revelation of that which was previously

hidden. Therefore, an integral part of the concept behind Bris Milah is the commitment of the Jew to reveal hidden holiness into the world, and particularly just in advance of the end of history, at the End-of-Days.

Indeed, the period of time referred to as Yemos HaMoshiach, which incorporates the moment of time that Moshiach finally arrives until the year 6000 (thereby also including Techiyas HaMeisim - Resurrection of the Dead) is referred to in Kabbalah by the very same name to where Bris Milah occurs: Atarah HaYesod - Crown of Yesod:

The [ninth sefirah, when we also include Keser, Chochmah and Binah, called] Yesod divided into two "kings" (i.e., into two independent sefiros called) "Yesod" and "Atarah" (crown). The Atarah is relevant to Malchus (the tenth and final sefirah), since it is her crown, which is why it is called Atarah. Therefore, the Yesod and the Atarah became two [independent sections of the overall sefirah referred to as Yesod]; however, after the tikun (i.e., Creation itself), the Yesod and the Atarah became one [once again] in order to join together Zehr Anpin (i.e., Chesed, Gevurah, Tifferes, Netzach, Hod, and Yesod) and the Nukveh (i.e., Malchus) forever. This is the reason why Yemos HaMoshiach - Period of Moshiach - is at the end of the sixth millennium, when the Atarah governs and gives off light for Yemos HaMoshiach, whereas Yesod itself governs the time of exile until Yemos HaMoshiach. Since . . . the Yesod divided into two, the sixth millennium, which corresponds to Yesod, divides into two. During the time that corresponds to the Yesod there will still be destruction and exile. However, the time that corresponds to the Atarah will be Yemos HaMoshiach. (Hakdamos v'Sha'arim, p. 172)

It's a mathematical thing, like three plus two equals five and not six. It's a foundation of Creation and why even though Moshiach could have potentially come at any time of history until today, he has not and will come towards the end of this millennium. It is also what the Zohar knew (among other concepts and sphere information) that allowed it to say that Techiyas HaMeisim begins no earlier than 5786 (22 years from now) and no later than 5790 (twenty-six years from now), because the information for this reality already occurred back at the beginning of time, when Yesod was created and set in place to govern this sixth and final millennium of history.

I suppose you can still ask while groping in the darkness and uncertainty of 5764, "What if it just isn't true as the Zohar says?"

However, if you do, you might as well ask what if three plus two actually DOES equals six, and then head for cover, because the building you are presently in is going to come down on top of you, G-d forbid, having been build upon such an "unrighteous" FOUNDATION. It is not a prediction, but a mathematical fact of reality, which is also why it is called the "heels of Moshiach," because it is the foundation of what all of history, and this parshah for that matter, ultimately, stands upon.

Have a great Shabbos,
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Text

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