

BESHEGAM HU MOSHE?

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

This week's parshah sheet has been dedicated in memory of Perel Rena bat Simcha Asher, A"H. Some people acquire their "world" after many years, and some acquire it in a moment (Avodah Zarah 17a). Perel Rena accomplished in her short life what many do not accomplish after an entire lifetime. May her excellent example be an inspiration for others, and may the merit of those who learn this week's parshah sheet be an ilui Neshamah for her.

FRIDAY NIGHT:

In the 600th year of Noah's life, in the second month on the seventeenth day of the month, all the fountains of the depths burst open; the windows of the skies opened up. It rained on the land for 40 days and 40 nights. (Bereishit 7:11)

This parshah sheet is a little bit more technical than usual, and the reason will be apparent as you read on.

One of the biggest disasters in the history of mankind was the Great Flood of 1656/2005 BCE. For 40 days and nights it rained while underground sources of water surged for 150 days, until all of mankind at that time was literally washed away, save for Noach and his family. It all started on the 17th day of Cheshvav of that year.

As you may recall, the idea of 40 days and 40 nights sounds familiar as it was the amount of time Moshe Rabbeinu was up on Mt. Sinai receiving the Torah. However, because of the incident of the golden calf he had to spend an additional two sets of 40 days, first to beg for forgiveness on behalf of the Jewish people, and the second time to achieve atonement and receive the second set of tablets.

This is no coincidence, and if anything the correlation reveals a different side to the flood, or at least what could have happened had things gone right instead of going wrong. In fact, the Rav Tzadok HaKohen finds the key to understanding the true potential of the time in a single word that the Talmud chooses as the "hint" to Moshe in the Torah - in a Torah in which his name is mentioned countless times and which is even named after him!

First in the Talmud:

Where is Moshe alluded to in the Torah? (Rashi: before he came, that he will come.) As it says [before the Flood], "inasmuch as he is flesh" (Bereishit 6:3). (Rashi: the Hebrew word for "inasmuch" is beshegam, which is numerically equivalent to Moshe (345), and the rest of the posuk says, "and his days shall be 120 years" - the exact life-span of Moshe.) (Chullin 139b)

To ask for a hint to Haman, Mordechai, and Esther in the Torah, as the same Talmud does, is understandable. They lived after the close of the Torah and therefore the best that we could expect to find regarding their names in the Torah is some allusion, and nothing more. But, as the Pri Tzaddik points out, not only is the Torah called "Torat Moshe", but his name appears specifically umpteen times throughout the last four books! "So," says Rav Tzadok, "who needs a hint to his name?!"

Even more eyebrow-raising is the Talmud's answer: beshegam. The Talmud totally ignored the countless references to Moshe's name in the last four books and used a word that none of us would have ever thought had anything to do with Moshe Rabbeinu, especially since it is dealing with a curse meant to shorten the life span of mankind to only 120 years. And though it is true that 120 is the age to which Moshe lived, in actual fact, so did many other people after him.

Therefore, says the Pri Tzaddik the Talmud can't be asking what we previously thought it was with respect to the other three, because the question and answer do not make sense with respect to Moshe. What is the Talmud asking then? Answers the Pri Tzaddik: Where do we see in the Torah that Moshe Rabbeinu is the root of Torah, and the word "beshegam", which equals the gematria of "Moshe", is the answer because it is telling us that Noach was supposed to have been the Moshe Rabbeinu of his time.

This, of course, requires some background information.

SHABBAT DAY:

G-d said, "My Spirit will not struggle with man forever. He is but flesh, and his days will be only 120 years." (Bereishit 6:3)

Everything in physical Creation can be represented by some equation or another. Whatever it is, if you break it down far enough to its most basic components it will eventually be discussed in terms of some kind of number, or a combination of numbers. It seems that on a sub-atomic level, the entire physical universe is just a massive collection and arrangement of numbers and equations.

But that is only as far as the physical human eye can see, and now with theoretical physics, the non-religious mind's eye can also see. However, where Physics may end, Kabbalah begins, describing all of existence, including the spiritual realm in terms of Hebrew letters, specifically combinations of such letters that form one or more of the various Names of G-d. If something exists, on some level it can be represented by a Name or Names of G-d.

Whereas modern Physics may only describe the events of history in terms of mathematics, but not in the actual time frame in which they occurred, Kabbalah actually reveals the potential of a moment

based upon the Name of G-d to which it relates or from which it emanates.

So, for example, when G-d decided to actually begin the process of creating a physical world, He emanated a light "downward" that corresponds to an expanded Yud-Heh-Vav-Heh whose gematria is equal to 72. This means that when the letters are written as they sound - Yud-Vav-Dalet, Heh-Yud, Vav-Yud-Vav, Heh-Yud, and their gematria is equal to: $10+6+4+5+10+6+10+6+5+10=72$. Writing out the hidden part of the letters like this is a way of expressing the revelation of certain levels of light in the Creation process.

However, this number represents more than a simple gematria; it also represents 72 units of time that the light traveled downwards in order to continue the process of Creation. We can't use the term "days" yet since we are talking about the time before the first day of Creation as described in the Torah, and before any sun existed by which to measure time.

According to Kabbalah, the light of 72 - the gematria of "chesed", began to emanate on what would have been the 25th day of Adar in the year prior to Creation. It continued to emanate downward for 72 "days" ending on what would have been the 6th day of Sivan, the year before Creation. This is what gave the 6th day of Sivan its spiritual potential to eventually be the day on which Moshe Rabbeinu would receive Torah atop of Mt. Sinai.

At that point, a different light kicked in, one that corresponds to an expanded version of G-d's Name whose gematria is 63. However, unlike the first light, this one is more of a constricting light, making it as if the original light was pulled back. Thus, it was the basis of Moshe Rabbeinu's ascending the mountain and leaving the camp, which resulted in the golden calf on the 17th of Tammuz some 40 days later, Rosh Chodesh Av another 14 days later, and the 9th of Av - Tisha B'Av, on the 63rd day. To take spiritual risks during this time period, like spying the land in Moshe's time would simply not have been advisable.

When this light finished the next light was one of tikun like the first one, except that its gematria is 45. It emanated downward until what was the 25th day of Elul - the first day of Creation in the Torah, or what is otherwise called "Tikun Ma'aseh Bereishit" - the rectification of Creation. This is pretty much where Kabbalah ends and the story of physical Creation begins, except that there is still one more Name to emanate.

The final Name in this process of emanation and creation has the gematria of 52, and now the units can actually be referred to as "days". So, if you count 52 days from the 25th of Elul, you arrive at none other than the 17th of Cheshvan, the day on which the Flood began (and this year's U.S. Congressional Elections occur) Š apparently by no coincidence.

Thus, we only know the 17th of MarCheshvan in terms of its destructive potential. But, if so much destruction could begin on such a day then it means that so much constructive power was also inherent on that day, and that is what the Talmud and the Pri Tzaddik is trying to explain.

SEUDAT SHLISHIT:

It rained on the land for 40 days and 40 nights. (Bereishit 7:12)

Torah is called either an "Elixir of Life" or an "Elixir of Death". As to which it is called depends upon the person, whether or not he or she decides to accept it and live by it, or reject it and break it. As history has proven time-and-time-again, mankind cannot live a morally reckless existence for too long before some corrective device sets things back on track, on a Torah track.

Since G-d founded Creation upon a system of ten, represented by the letter Yud and which represents the perfection of Eternity, the tenth generation (and likewise every tenth generation onward) has a special spiritual quality to it that makes it propitious to receive an influx of Divine light of chesed, or one of Gevurah and the judgment it brings, depending on the spiritual quality of that particular tenth generation.

The generation of Noach was the tenth one from Adam HaRishon and therefore fitting to receive an influx of Divine light - Torah Itself. Had Noach been a better teacher, and had his generation been more fitting, then he would have spend 40 days and 40 nights bringing Torah down from Heaven for the people living in his time. Likewise, they would have gained access to the Oral Law which comes through our Neshamah, Ruach, and Nefesh, each of which have their own set of the Nun Sha'arei Bina (50 Gates of Understanding), as mentioned above.

Torah would have been for that generation as it was for us 792 years later, an Elixir of Life.

However, as the Torah reports, that had not been the case. Noach only did outreach on those who came to him and wanted to learn, which was not many since his generation rejected everything about Noach and his Torah way of life. The "water" that should have saved their lives became water that actually drowned them in the end. The word "beshegam", an allusion to Moshe Rabbeinu and therefore, Torat Moshe, was a hint to the spiritual potential of that generation to go in either direction.

Therefore, it was Noach who lived in the tenth generation that made him fitting to be the Moshe Rabbeinu of his generation. However, it was the 17th of Cheshvan that had the potential to be the 6th of Sivan at that time of year since it is rooted in last day of the tikun process that began before Creation and continued on after it. There is something special about that day that gives it the potential for great things (or at least big things) to happen or at least be initiated into happening.

This year that very day falls out on the night of November 7th and the day of November 8th: a potentially big day on which potentially big things can happen in a world leaning towards potentially dramatic events and showdowns.

MELAVE MALKAH:

Nefesh HaChaim, Chapter 6

The matter still requires further clarification. Rav Chaim Vital spoke tersely in all his holy and mystical writings; he said in his introduction that he would reveal a "tefach" while concealing two thousand amos.

Can it be as Rav Chaim Vital says, that man, with respect to the worlds, is actually like the soul that is enveloped within the body? After all, all that the soul does is through the body and with immediate results; this is not so with respect to man and the worlds.

The essence of the idea is as follows. In creating the worlds, G-d made man last. He was a wondrous creation, "rear of all the camps" within whom are all the splendorous and awesome lights, as well as all the Worlds and Courtyards that preceded him in Creation. The glorious upper structure included in the parts of the Merkavah, and all the specific powers found in any of the worlds above and below, all contributed energy and part of their essence to his fabrication, and are included within his specific powers.

This is just as the Zohar says: When G-d created man, He arranged within him all the various essential aspects from the world above, and all the essential aspects of the world below; all of them are "carved" within man who exists in the image of G-d.

...This is the way it is very for every person. Each aspect of his being corresponds to a specific world and force within the structure of forces and worlds, which were arranged to resemble the way a man is built, so to speak, as we will explain...

In the same vein, all the mitzvos are connected to and dependent upon their own source and root within the order of the Merkavah and the structure of the worlds. This is because every specific mitzvah at its root includes countless forces and lights from within the structure itself.

This is as the Zohar says:

All the mitzvos of the Torah are unified in the Holy King above; there are some in the head of the King, some in the body, some in the hands, and some in the feet. (Yitro 85b)

This concept is further explained in Tikunim (70, 129b, and 130a), and elsewhere, the Zohar states:

All the mitzvos of the Torah are limbs of all that is hidden in the upper world; when they are unified as one, then they are elevated to the essential oneness. (Terumah 165b)

Later it continues:

In this Name are included all of the 613 mitzvot of the Torah which are the principles of the secrets above and below, and all are sections and limbs so that through them can be seen the hidden essence of emunah. Anyone who does not pay attention to and look into the hidden essence of the mitzvot will not see how to rectify the limbs in the upper hidden world; the limbs of the body are rectified through the hidden essence of the mitzvot.

...Therefore, when a person does the will of G-d and uses a particular limb and strength within it to perform one of the mitzvot of G-d, the rectification reaches the specific world and force above intended to receive it for the sake of its rectification, its elevation, or to increase its light and its holiness.

This is the desire and will of G-d, and it will be based upon the way the mitzvah was performed, and the level of purity and holiness of thought are the time of execution, all of which is considered part of that mitzvah itself. It will also depend upon the level of the particular world and force above. All of this in turn causes a flow of holiness and life to the corresponding force in man that was used to perform the mitzvah of his Creator.

Thus, when all the mitzvot are performed perfectly, according to all their details and nuances and in addition, in purity and holiness of thought, then all the worlds and the Supernal Order are perfected, and the person with all his strengths and limbs becomes a "chariot" for them. They become sanctified with the Upper Holiness, and the Glory of G-d will continuously hover over him.

The Zohar teaches:

"All who are called by My Name, I have created for My glory." (Yeshayahu 43:7) - for My glory, literally, and this secret ...teaches us that this is the glory ...Everything above is only perfected through men when they are righteous and pious, and know how to affect rectification... (Terumah 155a)

...The reverse can also be true, G-d forbid. If a person sins, thereby abusing one of his strengths and limbs, that too will reach and impact the root within the corresponding world and force above, within the order of the structure, so-to-speak, to devastate and destroy it. It can cause it to descend, to become blemished, to darken and to reduce the splendor of its light, as well as to weaken and reduce the strength of its pure holiness, G-d forbid, according to the extent of and way the sin was performed.

It will also depend upon the importance and level of that world. This is because not every world is equal in terms of the destructive effect man can have within it. In the lowest world, man can devastate and destroy, G-d should save us. However, above that level it is more an issue of an obstruction of light, and above that, of a reduction in the emanation of light; above that, the effect is to reduce the splendor of the light and its level of purity and holiness. There are many such levels.

This is what the rabbis refer to in many places as the blemish caused by sin to the "person" of the King. In the Zohar it says:

Because of this, one who is negligent in performing the mitzvot of the Torah is as one who is negligent with the body of the King, as it says, "...The people who transgress against (literally, "in") Me" (Yeshayahu 66:24); literally, in Me. Woe to the people who violate the Torah and do not know what they do! (Yitro, 85b)

Likewise, in the Tikunim it says:

The one who is negligent in mitzvot is as one who is negligent with the personage of the King.
(70:129b)

And so, as we said before, the damage done reaches the sections and order of the structure of forces and worlds, since they all originate from them, and each gave from their essence in the construction of man.

[PW: The upshot is that Creation is one massive inter-active reality in which everything in all the spiritual worlds has been set up to respond to the mitzvot or sins of a person, the effect of which is determined by the nature of each, the limbs used to perform either, as well as the root of the soul of the person. We live our lives as if we are disconnected from the spiritual realms above when in fact we are completely tied to them, like a puppet whose limbs are attached by a string to the world form above. Except, in our case, it is the puppet who pulls the strings and the world above that is affected.]

Have a great Shabbat,
PW

Text

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