

VSOS HABRACHA PERCEPTIONS

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

Moshe was 120 years old when he died. His eyes had not weakened, nor had his strength dissipated. The Children of Israel cried for Moshe in the plains of Moab for 30 days, after which the days of crying and mourning for Moshe were completed. (Devarim 34:7-8)

For 3,281 years now, we've been saying good-bye to Moshe Rabbeinu, once in person, the rest of the times every time we complete this parsha. And, the truth is, each time we do, our appreciation of what he did for us should only grow. For, he didn't just lead us out of slavery and give us Torah, as he was commanded to do, he went one fantastic step further, as the Talmud explains:

Rebi Yosi the son of Rebi Chanina said: The Torah was given only to Moshe and his descendants, as it is written, "Write thee these words" (Shemos 34:27), and "Carve out" (Ibid. 34:1): just as the chips are yours, so is the writing yours. However, Moshe in his generosity gave it to the Jewish people, and with regard to him it is said, "He who has a bountiful eye will be blessed, etc." (Mishlei 22:9). Rav Chisda objected: "God commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments" (Devarim 4:14)? He commanded me, and I [passed it on] to you. "Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as God, my God commanded me" (Ibid. 5)? He commanded me, and I taught you. "Now, therefore, write this song for you" (Ibid. 31:19)" This refers to the song alone. "That this song be a witness for the against the Children of Israel" (Ibid.)? Only the pilpul — dialectics. (Nedarim 38a)

In other words, yes, the entire Torah was given to the Jewish people, and yes, Moshe Rabbeinu was the messenger for that awesome task. However, he was only commanded to give us the Torah as it is, in all of its glorious technical detail, but not the ability "to understand something from within something," which, over the generations has become such a source of life and pleasure for the Jew who has made a point of understanding the deeper meaning of Torah. That he gave to us as a function of his own generosity. The Maharal explains that only Moshe Rabbeinu had the level of mind to be able to access such information; the rest of the Jewish nation did not. However, once Moshe Rabbeinu was able to receive it because of his own mind, such understanding became accessible to the rest of the Jewish people through him as well (Chidushei Aggados).

How does that actually work? If accessing such information is a function of one's seichel, something that is, for the most part, God-given, then even if Moshe Rabbeinu wanted to share such holy insights with us, how could we receive them if our own minds aren't capable of relating to them. The answer is something that has to do not just with the pilpul of Torah, but with all of Torah itself, but especially the insights, what we called "Chidushei Torah" — Torah novella:

In Midrash Tehillim, Mizmor 12: For every word that The Holy One, Blessed is He, said to Moshe, He told him 49 facets of purity, and it is written, faces of impurity, etc. In Yerushalmi, Peah, Ch. 2, Halachah 4: Mikrah, Mishnah, Talmud, and Aggadah, and even that which a student would eventually say before his teacher, was already told to Moshe Rabbeinu at Sinai. For what reason? A person might say, "See this ... it is original!" His friend will answer him and tell him, "It was already in the world, already told to Moshe Rabbeinu, at Har Sinai." They say something similar in Sanhedrin (99a): Anyone who says, with respect to finer points from Chazal, "The entire Torah is from Heaven, except for these details" is included in "Because he despised the word of God" (Bamidbar 15:31). For, all of the finer details of Torah and finer details of the Sofrim, and all that the Sofrim would eventually originate, were already in the world, all of them given to Moshe at Sinai, as mentioned. (Drushei Olam HaTohu, Chelek 2, Drush 4, Anaf 21, Siman 4)

In other words, as the Leshem explains, Moshe Rabbeinu was, is, the conduit for all of Torah, for every person, in every generation. That is one of the reasons why it is called, "Toras Moshe" — "Moshe's Torah," because all of our Torah knowledge and understanding comes through him, though he is long gone. Thus, "pilpula d'alma" is just another conduit that opened up between him and us, thanks to his desire to share the depth of Torah with the rest of the Jewish nation.

It is a fantastic idea. A person can think of a Torah idea today, a novel Torah idea, perhaps a new approach to an old Torah concept, one that is clearly true but which has yet to be revealed by anyone to date, and Moshe Rabbeinu not only knew it already, he is the spiritual pipeline through which it "flowed" to the person, whether the person is a talmid chacham or not. If it is a Torah idea, no matter how basic or complex, it came through Moshe Rabbeinu himself.

This is especially so when one delves deeper into Torah concepts to better understand their inner meaning, which is amazing, considering that so much of yeshiva learning is based upon this entire process. The central focus of most of the advanced learning of the yeshiva world is Talmud, and the Talmud is consumed by page after page of deep analysis of verses and laws. How much of the Talmud wouldn't exist today if Moshe Rabbeinu had not passed on this aspect of Torah learning?

Even more amazing is the fact that, in order to be able to apply Torah concepts in a modern society, you have to be able to analyze them, in order to understand their underlying basis, to know if and when they are applicable, especially as technology advances and enhances our ability to function in this world. Perhaps Moshe Rabbeinu knew about light bulbs, etc., as early as Har Sinai, but he didn't teach about them in his time. Later rabbis had to decide their halachic status, vis-à-vis their usage on Shabbos.

Not only this, but for someone who was not raised in a religious family, chances are that they view Torah as being antiquated. They may have read parts of the Chumash, but many of the ideas and the language with which they are expressed seem to be quite outdated. They certainly do not see how such ideas can apply in a modern society, especially one that exists thousands of years after Torah

was actually written down.

Hence, a large part of bridging the gap between the Torah and the modern- minded secular Jew is showing how mitzvos apply even today, which often means revealing the deeper meaning of Torah concepts. For, every mitzvah is really a message, just waiting to be opened and read. Looking at the mitzvah from the "outside" only does not reveal its inner Divine wisdom.

However, knowing that inner Divine wisdom makes it quite clear why the mitzvah is eternally relevant. Therefore, where would outreach be today without that ability to penetrate the depths of Torah wisdom? Perhaps Moshe Rabbeinu foresaw this, and made a point of giving us the tools to combat assimilation in later generations in advance.

Then, of course, beyond the levels of Pshat, Remez, and Drush — the simple understanding of Torah, the hints of deeper Torah meaning, and Torah exegesis (which corresponds to Mikrah, Mishnah, and Talmud), lies Sod, or Kabbalah. This is the level of the secrets of Torah, the story behind the story, behind the story, which is behind the story. It is as sublime a peek at Divine wisdom as one can get in this world, the understanding of which allows a person to perceive Creation on an extremely clear level, beyond many of the veils that blind the average person to what the world is really all about.

Which, apparently, is the key to a merciful redemption, as Moshe Rabbeinu himself told Rebi Shimon Bar Yochai, the author of the holy Zohar: [Then] the Maskilim — Scholars — will understand, because they are from the side of Binah (the eighth sefirah), which is the Aitz HaChaim — the Tree of Life. Regarding them it says, "The Maskilim will emanate light like the light of the sky ..." (Daniel 12:3), with this sefer of yours, Sefer HaZohar, which is from the light of Binah, which is called teshuvah ... In the future the Jewish people will taste from the Aitz HaChaim, which is this Sefer HaZohar, and they will leave exile in mercy, and "God alone will lead them, and they will have no foreign god" (Devarim 32:12). (Zohar 124b)

The truth is, who ever said Moshe Rabbeinu is long gone? Died, yes, but long gone? Apparently not: Only when all of the gilgulim of Hevel are complete, which is Moshe Rabbeinu, who reincarnates into every generation to separate out the souls from amongst the spiritual waste, will Moshiach come and death will be absorbed forever. (Sha'ar HaGilgulim, Ch. 20) In other words, the Arizal is explaining, Moshe Rabbeinu's soul comes back in every generation, helping to rectify the generation, and influencing it in ways of which we may not be aware, perhaps, even to continue his role as our spiritual pipeline between Torah and us. Just like a wireless network makes the knowledge of the Internet accessible to all computers on its frequency, likewise Moshe Rabbeinu, in each generation, the soul of Moshe Rabbeinu makes Torah knowledge and insights available to all those tuned in to his spiritual wavelength.

In effect, Moshe Rabbeinu is the spiritual thread that bands together all of the generations, since the nation left Egypt, until Moshiach finally arrives, his soul being the soul of Moshiach himself. And thus,

once again, in Yemos HaMoshiach, Moshe Rabbeinu will return to his original and greatest role as teacher of all of the Jewish people:

In Rayah Mehemna it says that Aharon HaKohen was the interpreter for Moshe, the teacher of all of Israel, as it says, "he will be your mouth" (Shemos 4:16), since Moshe had difficulty speaking. In the time of Moshiach, Moshe will return in a gilgul and again teach Torah to all of Israel, and again he will be of "uncircumcised lips." However, this time his interpreter will be Eliyahu, who will live again. Actually, he is Pinchas ben Elazar ben Aharon HaKohen, the brother of Moshe Rabbeinu. (Sha'ar HaGilgulim, Ch. 38)

Now we can better appreciate the closing lines of the entire Torah: There never again arose a prophet in Israel like Moshe, with whom God spoke to face-to-face, [and who could perform] all the signs and wonders which God sent him to do in the land of Egypt, against Pharaoh, all his servants and all his land, or any of the mighty acts and awesome sights that Moshe displayed before all the eyes of Israel. (Devarim 34:10-12) After all, who needs more than one Moshe Rabbeinu, when he is always available to shepherd his people, the Children of God, in every generation. Chazak!

Text

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