

MOSHE'S BLESSING

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

This is the blessing Moshe, the Man of God, gave the Children of Israel before his death. (Devarim 33:1)

Every year Parashas Zos HaBrochah gets swallowed up by the holiday of Simchas Torah. It doesn't have it's own Shabbos, like all the other weekly readings, and the Yom Tov, on which it is read, is so packed with activity that few probably pay much attention to what is going on behind the scenes in the parshah, as they might with other parshios. At the Yom Tov table, how many people actually base their dvar Torah on the parshah itself?

In a sense, you don't have to. No question it is a great idea to deliver at least one dvar Torah at a Simchas Torah seudah based upon the parshah; you can never go wrong with that. However, whereas on most Shabboses the parshah is just what you read that day, and speak about, perhaps, at the seudos, on Simchas Torah, the day itself is the very embodiment of the parshah, alluded to by the words, v'zos habrochah, as the Ba'al HaTurim points out:

V'Zos HaBrochah: This has the gematria of zu hee HaTorah — this is the Torah — because in the merit of Torah he blessed them. (Ba'al HaTurim, Devarim 33:1)

In other words, all the blessings that Moshe Rabbeinu gave to the Jewish people just prior to his death were because of Torah, and really, through Torah. Torah itself is the conduit for blessing for the Jewish people, because the very letters themselves are conduits for the Primordial Light of Creation, which is the source of all blessing from God. And, by learning Torah, and especially by fulfilling its mandate, one becomes a fitting recipient of its light and blessing, as we learned back at the beginning of the Torah with the creation of light:

"God saw the light, that it was good, and He divided ..." (Bereishis 1:4)

He saw that it was not worth letting the evil people use it and He set it aside for the righteous in the Time-to-Come. (Chagigah 12a)

God made a division in the light's shining, that it should only emanate for the righteous people whose actions draw the light down; the deeds of the evil people prevent its shining, and this was the hiding. (Sha'arei Leshem, p. 103)

Hence, the process of receiving blessing works like this. First, we require Torah to show us how to

walk in the way of God. This is the first and greatest blessing of all, without which we could never access the Ohr HaGanuz — the Hidden Light of Creation, the Kabbalistic name for the Primordial Light — and the blessing that it brings:

... For God attends the way of the righteous, while the way of the wicked will perish. (Tehillim 1:5)

By following in the path of Torah, we spiritually shape ourselves into vessels that both attracts the light of blessing, and can contain it. To the extent that we do this is the extent to which we can become such vessels, attract the light, and contain it.

For with You is the source of life — by Your light may we see light. (Tehillim 36:10)

This is the entire meaning of the parshah, a summation of all that the Torah teaches us in all of its previous parshios. It is a reminder that, no matter how difficult the rest of the Torah may appear to fulfill, it is the source of blessing and good times. And this, of course, is the entire theme of Simchas Torah, the day on which we dance with the Sifrei Torah as if they are the greatest asset we have, because, they are.

We dance with the Torah, lovingly, affectionately, as if to say, "V'Zos HaBrochah" — "this is the blessing." We hold the Torah tightly, not because we are concerned about dropping it, God forbid, but because we want to be attached to the source of blessing in this world, through which the Source of Blessing transmits His light from Heaven to earth, from God to man. On Simchas Torah, the events of the day and the reading of the day are one and the same thing.

It is true of Shemini Atzeres as well. As mentioned in the past, the fact that the number eight is a theme of the day indicates its connection to the Ohr HaGanuz, just like Chanukah, which is actually eight days long. As tradition teaches, the number eight, being one number above seven, which represents the world of nature that was created in seven days, alludes to the supernatural world, which is completely a function of the Ohr HaGanuz.

In other words, Shemini Atzeres is a unique conduit for the Hidden Light of Creation to flow from God, so-to-speak, to the Jewish people. This is why, as Rashi points out, it is a day that celebrates the unique relationship between God and His people, a relationship that is based upon the flow of the Ohr HaGanuz, which creates the sensation of Shechinah, Divine Presence, amongst the Jewish people.

Especially when learning Torah. Anyone who has sat down to learn Torah, no matter which part of it, in an intense manner, with a desire to connect to what he is learning, has felt some kind of spiritual accompaniment. The more intense the learning, the more this is the case, until it feels as if, as many will tell you, the person is enveloped by Divine light.

And it is true. To begin with, the individual letters of an actual Sefer Torah are considered to be actual conduits for the light of Creation, the Ohr HaGanuz. To be exposed to them, if you are a believing Jew, is to be affected by the light coming through them. However, this must be true of all words of Torah, on some level, even if they are not actually written on parchment and part of a Sefer Torah.

Hence, the Midrash states:

The people that walk in the darkness see the Great Light. (Yeshayahu 9:1)

The masters of the Talmud are those who see the Great Light, for the Holy One, Blessed is He, enlightens their eyes ... Torah Sh'b'al Peh — the Oral Law — is compared to darkness, because it is difficult to learn and involves hardship. (Tanchuma, Noach 9)

Therefore, it cannot be a coincidence that there are 36 — the number of the Ohr HaGanuz — tractates in the Talmud Bavli — Babylonian Talmud, or that learning all 36 sections grants a person access to the Hidden Light of Creation. Or that:

Abaye said: There are no less than 36 righteous people who greet the Divine Presence on a daily basis. (Succah 45b)

Being involved in Torah and the reality of 36, they become inundated with the Ohr HaGanuz, and feel the Presence of God.

Hence, whether we are talking about the parshah of Zos HaBrochah itself, Simchas Torah, or Shemini Atzeres, it is all one and the same idea. In each case, we are talking about blessing, but specifically the blessing that results from the Ohr HaGanuz, which is the Torah, and these holidays. And, Moshe Rabbeinu.

Everything about Moshe Rabbeinu indicated a special relationship with the Ohr HaGanuz, which he used all of his life (Drushei Olam HaTohu 2:179b). First of all, regarding Moshe Rabbeinu's birth it says:

It is written here, "And she saw that he was good" (Shemot 2:2), and there it is written, "God saw the light, that it was good" (Bereishit 1:4). (Sotah 12a)

The Talmud has set up a comparison between Moshe and the Ohr Ha- Ganuz, since they are both described using the same word: good. In other words, it is not incidental that the Torah refers to Moshe as being "good," but an indication that there was something special about him from the moment he was born, as the Talmud explains:

The Chachamim say that when Moshe was born, the entire house filled with light. (Ibid.)

Therefore, it is not surprising to learn that Moshe was born 36 years after the slavery began, or that he was born already circumcised (Sotah 12a). It seems that, from birth, Moshe was destined to be the leader to redeem the Jewish people from Egyptian slavery, and to be a conduit for the Ohr HaParashas Ganuz. Kabbalistically-speaking, Moshe's greatness and connection to the Primordial Light of Creation was due to the high level root of his soul:

The level of Moshe Rabbeinu was ... from the Ohr HaGanuz itself. (Drushei Olam HaTohu 2:255b)
and therefore:

The Torah was given through him, as well as all chidushei Torah — Torah novellae — throughout time. (Ibid.)

Hence, when Moshe walked the face of the earth, in reality, he had the capacity to span many spiritual worlds. After all, he did enter Heaven to receive Torah — and returned:

This is what it means when it says, "Praise to the nation with such a portion (Shin-Chof-Chof-Heh)" (Tehillim 144:15); Shin-Chof-Chof-Heh is equal in gematria to "Moshe" (40+300+5). (Ibid.)

In other words, "Praise to the nation with such a leader as Moshe," for, without Moshe Rabbeinu, the Jewish people could never have received their life-line, Torah:

For this commandment which I command you today is not hidden from you, nor is it far away. It is not in Heaven, that you can say, "Who shall go up to the heaven and bring it to us, and let us hear it that we can do it?" (Devarim 30:11)

Thus, Moshe was:

... the channel to the Light of the Upper Da'as — which is the level of the Tree of Life ... the level of Tifferes of Atzilus that the Da'as is inside. (Drushei Olam HaTohu 2:255b)

He was from the "Mystery of the Upper Emanation of Adam HaRishon," which was withdrawn as a result of the sin. Had the Jewish people not sinned [with the golden calf, then] Moshe would have entered the land and would have been in a position to return the world to perfection from before the sin. (Drushei Olam HaTohu 2:277b).

In conclusion, Moshe Rabbeinu's body may been of humbler origins, coming from flesh-and-blood parents, but his soul came from as lofty a place as a human soul can come. This made him like no other man on earth since Adam HaRishon himself, and it gave him the right to make use of the Hidden Light of Creation at will, and why he was able to speak to God "mouth-to-mouth," while conscious, and "without riddle" (Bamidbar 12:8). So powerful was Moshe's soul that it was able to

encompass all of the Jewish people (Rashi, Shemot 18:1), and when he died he went right to Gan Aiden (Temurah 16b). Therefore, it is only fitting that, on Simchas Torah and Shemini Atzeres, the day that we celebrate our wondrous and Heavenly gift of Torah and source of eternal life, we end the reading with a eulogy of the very person responsible for all of it:

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 Moav for 30 days, after which the days of crying and mourning for Moshe were completed ... There never again arose a prophet in Israel like Moshe, 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 34:7-12)

Chazak!

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