

PARSHAS VAERA

by Rabbi Dr. Meir Tamari

'And I appeared to Avraham, Yitschak and Yaakov as El Shaddai, but as Hashem I had not become known to them' (Shmot, 6:3). Yet how will we understand this since as the commentators have pointed out, He had appeared to the Patriarchs also as HaShem? We can explain it by seeing the differences between Moshe and the Avot.

The Midrash (Bereishit Rabbah, 19) tells of the seven Tzaddikim, who brought the Shechinah down to earth. The six who preceded him, each brought the Shechinah down one Heaven, till Moshe brought it down to Earth. The six are like the 6 days of creation, whose purpose it is to extend and continue kedushah in the material and natural world so as to light up that world with the Divine light. This is like the Midrash (Ber. Rab. 30), of the king who brings the light through the darkened paths till he comes before G-d. In all matters where nature and materialism stood before them, like the 10 tests of Avraham, the Avot were able to breakthrough them, even as through a metal wall, and pursue after G-d. In this way they lit up the natural world, brought forth the spiritual valuables from the material, separated good from evil and made converts. This they were able to do through the power of Shaddai, only through hidden miracles that are shrouded in nature as the Ramban explains. Then came Moshe, who performed revealed miracles and signs that transformed the natural, made it behave contrary to its nature and showed that nature is simply without any power beyond that created by G-d. This was done through the power of the name HaShem that constantly and repeatedly creates anew. This is like Shabbat on which there is no action only shevitah that is contrary to the natural world of the weekdays, and yet provides the power and the strength to create anew, in the following week. From the Avot we received the ability and strength to bring light to the world of nature and materialism and from Moshe, the power to go beyond such a world.

Shaddai is the Name that comes to limit and to restrict; 'He who said to the world, 'dai-enough' '. Revelation through this Name enabled the Avot to become great, yet only as individuals. The Midrash (Yalkut Tehillim, 65 and Bamidbar Rabbah 3), explains that the verse 'who are chosen by G-d but are not drawn close to Him', refers to those who bring themselves close through their own efforts. These are the Avot and David who were the tzadikim who brought themselves close to HaShem through their own efforts and merits. However He did not draw them close to Him. Their avodah was completely from the Earth up to the Heavens. So we can understand the verse, 'One was Avraham' (Ezekiel, 33; 24); Avraham stood alone and merely through the unity of his heart and mind was able to draw himself close to Hashem. So too, Yaakov who united everything to draw himself close to G-d, was the contrast to Eisav who separated and unraveled his merits and

strengths. When G-d appeared to Moshe as HaShem, he gave him the wherewithal to create a nation, since this Name is the source of all the Names and therefore transforms them into a unity, thereby fusing the individuals into the body that is Israel. The matzeivah the solitary stone pillar was used by the Avot, yet Moshe built a mizbach of stones, individuals fused into an entity. After him, only the mizbach was used.

Each of the Avot were different and each one possessed his own special merit; Avraham is Chesed, Yitschak is Din and Yaakov is Emet. They thereby possessed the ability to thwart the three evil decrees proposed by Pharaoh and we have the three festivals in their merit. Pesach is in the merit of Avraham and comes to remedy sexual immorality. This was what was intended by Pharaoh in his decree to kill the sons; this would free the women for the Egyptians. Avraham and Sarah exemplify sexual morality; as we know he had never seen her beauty before they came to Egypt.

Shavout is Yaakov, yoshev ohalim shel Torah. This is the protection against the idolatry brought upon us when we were enslaved. The Zohar (part 3 section 108) explains Israel's claim of eating fish and vegetables for free in Egypt, as being free of mitzvot, that is free of the rule of G-d. So too in Chagigah 4a, we learn that slaves are free of the mitzvah of reiyah on the Chagim. This mitzvah is to appear before the Adon, the Lord and Master; this excludes those who already have a master since one cannot serve two masters.

Yitschak is Sukkot that is bitachon. Bitachon frees one from the passions and lusts that move to bloodshed. Yitschak who demonstrates so clearly faith and bitachon by his willingness to sacrifice himself, is the antidote against the bloodshed of the decree to drown the sons in the Nile. From the Avot Israel got the ability and the power to withstand and overcome these three decrees.

However there was a fourth decree, that of forcing them to spread out and to devote their time, minds and energies to the dispersion needed to gather straw. This decree was added by Pharaoh of his own initiative to the three of bein habetarim. This meant that the first five plagues that would have sufficed were now insufficient. Furthermore, his initiative explains why the power of teshuvah was withheld from Pharaoh, in contradiction to the halakhic ruling of, for instance the Rambam in Hilkhos Teshuvah. To overcome this decree the lessons of the Avot were insufficient and so there was the revelation of the Name Shaddai through Moshe, that by its nature comes to limit.

The decree of the straw spread dispersion and separation and took away from them the Shabbat on which they read the scrolls telling of the geulah. Galut is just such dispersal and disunity and therefore needed the addition of a revelation from above to the individualism and efforts of the Avot. We see that the verse tells us, 'and My Name HaShem I did not make known to them'. G-d did not draw them to Himself and did not give them the knowledge [Torah], needed to add a revelation from above. This was given to Moshe who is equal to all Israel, and who by giving them the Torah that is in his name made them, as it were, prophets who could overcome the fourth decree of Pharaoh.

'Every mitzvah that the Jews accepted willingly and in joy, like milah, continues to be observed by

them in simcha '(Shabbat, 130a). From the Zohar we learn that the gathering together of the celebrants needs the orlah to be removed, so we see that the meal itself has a value... This is like the saying that G-d gathered together the whole host when He Revealed Himself. Obviously He does not require such a gathering. The Avnei Nezer observes from Sanhedrin, 88b, that just as the use of a 5th specie to bind the lulav invalidates the lulav, so too the addition of anything unsuitable destroys any unity. In the same way it is the orlah that destroys the gathering. The converse also applies. The gathering together for the festive meal ensures the observance of the mitzvah. To Moshe was given the fourth language of redemption, 'velakachti, this is the giving of Torah. This enabled Israel to join together and thereby to overcome the disruption and dispersion of the fourth decree, that of the straw, but also to achieve geulah, that is unification.

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