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PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

What's Your Name?

But with My Name, Hashem, I did not make Myself known to them.” (6:3)

Moshe had ten names: *Moshe, Yered, Chaver, Yekutiel, Avigdor, Avi Socho, Avi Zanuach, Tuvia, Shemaya* and *Halevi*. Of all these names, the only one that Hashem used was Moshe, the name he was given by Pharaoh's daughter, Batya.

Why, of all Moshe's names, did Hashem use the one name given to Moshe by an Egyptian princess? What was so special about this name?

The name Moshe comes from the word meaning to be drawn, for Moshe was drawn from the water by Batya. When Batya took Moshe out of the river she was flouting her father's will. Pharaoh's order was to kill all the Jewish male babies to stifle their savior. By rescuing Moshe, Batya was putting her life in grave danger. Because Batya risked her life to save Moshe, that quality was embedded in Moshe's personality and in his soul. It was this quality of self-sacrifice that typified Moshe more than all his other qualities, and for this reason Moshe was the only name that Hashem would call him.

This is what made Moshe the quintessential leader of the Jewish People, for more than any other trait, a leader of the Jewish People needs self-sacrifice to care and worry over each one of his flock.

Another question – but with the same answer:

Of all the places that Moshe's mother, Yocheved, could have chosen to hide Moshe, why did she choose the river? Why not in a tunnel? Why not hide

him in a barn or any of the other numerous possible hiding places? Why did Yocheved choose to hide Moshe in the river?

Yocheved hoped that by putting Moshe into the river the astrological signs would show that the savior of the Jews had been cast into the Nile and Pharaoh would abandon the massacre of the baby boys. Yocheved was right. The Egyptian astrologers told Pharaoh the Jewish savior had been dispatched into the Nile and Pharaoh ordered the killing to cease.

It was not an easy thing for Yocheved to put her son into a wicker basket and abandon him to the eddies of the Nile. Before she placed Moshe into the water, Yocheved made a little canopy over the basket and said in sadness *Who knows if I will ever see my son's chupa (marriage canopy)?* Certainly there were safer places for a baby than a makeshift basket adrift in a river. However, Yocheved chose a hiding place that may not have been the safest because it meant that she could save the lives of other Jewish children.

From two sides of the same event the quality of self-sacrifice was instilled into Moshe - by his real mother when she put him into the river and by his adopted mother when she drew him out from the river, for if any quality epitomizes the essence of leadership, it is the ability to forget oneself and give up everything for the good of the people.

- Sources: Based on the Midrash of *Shemot Rabbah* 1:24, 1:29; Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz

Q & A

Questions

1. Did G-d ever appear to Avraham and say "I am G-d"?
2. What cause did the forefathers have to question G-d?
3. How was Moshe commanded to act towards Pharaoh?
4. How long did Levi live?
5. Who was Aharon's wife? Who was her father? Who was her brother?
6. Why are Yitro and Yosef both referred to as "Putiel"?
7. After which plague did G-d begin to "harden Pharaoh's heart"?
8. Why did Pharaoh go to the Nile every morning?
9. Give two reasons why the blood was chosen as the first plague.
10. How long did the plague of blood last?
11. Why did the frogs affect Pharaoh's house first?
12. What did Moshe mean when he told Pharaoh that the frogs would be "in you and in your nation"?
13. What are "chamarim"?
14. Why didn't Moshe strike the dust to initiate the plague of lice?
15. Why were the Egyptian sorcerers unable to bring lice?
16. What were the Egyptians likely to do if they saw the Jews slaughtering lambs?
17. Why didn't the wild beasts die as the frogs had?
18. The dever killed "all the cattle of Egypt." Later, boils afflicted their cattle. How can this be?
19. Why did Moshe pray only after leaving the city?
20. What was miraculous about the way the hail stopped falling?

Answers

1. 6:9 - Yes.
2. 6:9 - Although G-d swore to give them the Land, they never actually had control over it.
3. 6:13 - With the respect due a king.
4. 6:16 - 137 years.
5. 6:23 - Elisheva, daughter of Aminadav, sister of Nachshon.
6. 6:25 - Yitro fattened (pitem) cows for idol worship. Yosef scoffed (pitpet) at his evil inclination.
7. 7:3 - After the sixth plague – shechin.
8. 7:15 - To relieve himself. Pharaoh pretended to be a god who did not need to attend to his bodily functions. Therefore, he secretly used the Nile for this purpose.
9. (a) 7:17 - Because the Nile was an Egyptian god.
(b) 8:17 - Because an invading army first attacks the enemy's water supply, and G-d did the same.
10. 7:25 - Seven days.
11. 7:28 - Pharaoh himself advised the enslavement of the Jewish People.
12. 7:29 - He warned that the frogs would enter their intestines and croak.
13. 8:10 - Piles.
14. 8:12 - Because the dust protected Moshe by hiding the body of the Egyptian that Moshe killed.
15. 8:14 - The Egyptian sorcerers' magic had no power over anything smaller than a barley kernel.
16. 8:22 - Stone the Jews.
17. 8:27 - So the Egyptians would not benefit from their hides.
18. 9:10 - In the plague of dever only the cattle in the fields died. The plague of shechin affected the surviving cattle.
19. 9:29 - Because the city was full of idols.
20. 9:33 - The hailstones stopped in mid-air and didn't fall to the ground.

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

Stop It!

When faced with the devastating Plague of Hail, Pharaoh called for Moses and asked him to pray to G-d to remove this pox from upon himself and his people. Moses replied that he would indeed do so, saying, “As I exit the city, I will stretch out my palms to G-d, and the sounds will stop (*chadal*)...” (Ex. 9:29). Indeed, the Bible (Ex. 9:33) reports that when Moses left the city and lifted his hands in prayer, the noises and hail “stopped” (*chadal*). Yet, when Pharaoh saw that the hail “stopped” (*chadal*), he hardened his heart and continued to refuse to release the Jews from bondage (Ex. 9:34). This essay explores five different terms that denote the verb of “stopping/withholding”: *chadal*, *mana*, *kala*, *chasach* and *pasak*.

Rabbi Yosef Grayever of Ostrow (1808-1898) explains that these different synonyms refer to different types of “stopping,” and while they can colloquially be used interchangeably, each word has a specific connotation in most places that it appears in Scripture, thus allowing us to explain how their primary meanings differ from one another.

The way Rabbi Grayever explains it, *chadal* connotes the inability to perform a certain action, or sustain a reality, which leads to something being “stopped” – whether this inability stems from nature or from legal considerations. On the other hand, he writes that *mana* denotes “stopping” to do something by conscious decision and not simply because of an inability to do it. For example, when the Book of Proverbs warns that one should take care not to enjoy the company of sinners, it says “Withhold (*mana*) your feet from their ways” (Prov. 1:15), using a cognate of *mana* because it refers to a conscious decision not to fraternize with the wicked.

Rabbi Grayever further explains that the word *pasak* means to “stop” something in the middle, that is, once it had already started. In contrast, he notes, *chasach* implies “stopping” something from starting in the first place.

Finally, Rabbi Grayever explains that the word *kala* connotes “stopping” something because it had already reached its goal, or because the reason that it began is no longer applicable. Examples of such usage can be found in the two times that the word *vayikaleh* appear in the Bible: At the end of the year-long Flood from which Noah was saved, the Bible reports “and the rains stopped (*vayikaleh*) from the Heavens” (Gen. 8:2) and when the Jews donated enough materials to begin constructing the Tabernacle, Moses commanded them to stop bringing more, and the Bible reports: “and the nation stopped (*vayikaleh*) from bringing” (Ex. 36:6). Both of these cases refer to “stopping” because the original reason for starting is no longer in play.

Interestingly, Rabbi Grayever offers another example of such usage in King David’s prayer, “You – O G-d – do not stop/withhold (*tichla*) Your mercy from me...” (Ps. 40:12). In this case, King David begged the Creator not to “stop” granting him mercy due to his lack of good deeds no longer serving as justification for His continued mercy. This too is an example of “stopping” in the sense of the original reason/justification no longer being relevant.

Rabbi Shlomo Aharon Wertheimer (1866-1935) notes that even though *chadal* refers to “stopping/withholding” due to a lack of ability to do that thing, when the word is written with a *vav* *ha’hipuch* to denote future tense (*v’chadal*), it refers to somebody who plans ahead of time to not do an action even though he could (physically or legally)

do that action. This explains the appearance of the word *v'chadal* when describing a person purposely failing to offer the Paschal Offering (Num. 9:13), or a person deliberately failing to help his enemy's donkey that was collapsing under its heavy burden (Ex. 23:5).

Rabbi Wertheimer contrasts the words *mana* and *chasach* by clarifying what each word implies. As he puts it, *mana* implies willfully (see II Shmuel 13:13) and totally "withholding" something from another (or totally "refraining" from a certain course of action), while *chasach* – on the other hand – implies something that already started that will be "stopped" in the middle (contra Rabbi Grayever).

Based on this, Rabbi Wertheimer explains why Joseph says that Potiphar gave him all authority concerning his household, except that he withheld (*chasach*) his wife from Joseph (Gen. 39:9). In this case, since Potiphar had already begun to give over his various responsibilities to Joseph, withholding his wife from Joseph was not an absolute "withholding" but merely the interruption of a process that already started, and so the Bible uses the word *chasach* in this case. Similarly, when G-d praised Abraham after the Binding of Isaac for his willingness to sacrifice his son, G-d said to him, "You did not withhold (*chasach*) your son from Me" (Gen. 22:12), because Abraham had already begun the process of giving over to G-d everything he had, and not giving over his son Isaac would have been an interruption in a process that Abraham had already initiated.

While Rabbi Wertheimer agrees with Rabbi Grayever's explanation that *kala* implies "stopping" because one had already achieved one's goals, the Malbim offers a slightly different take on the word. The Malbim explains that *kala* means to "stop" something from happening or being done in a way that goes against the person's or item's nature. He notes that this word is cognate with the word *kele* ("jail") and denotes "forcibly detaining" something to stop it from performing a certain action. For example, in the above-cited verse concerning the end of the Flood, the nature of rain is to fall from the sky, but when the rain stopped falling at the close of the Flood it was as though G-d had "detained" the rain to hold it back from descending.

Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim of Breslau (1740-1814) explains that the word *mana* implies that "stopping" to perform the act in question constitutes a breach of morality or nature. In other words, *mana* means to "stop" doing something you are supposed to be doing, or to "withhold" something which ought to not be withheld. This contrasts with the term *chadal*, which Rabbi Pappenheim sees as carrying no implication as to any value judgment in terms of whether this "stopping/withholding" is good or bad.

Another point that Rabbi Pappenheim makes about the word *mana* is that it indicates the presence of outside forces that stop a person from a certain course of action, as does the word *chasach*. In contrast, he explains that *chadal* implies that the person himself has "stopped" doing something without any interference from an outside force.

In a separate discussion, Rabbi Pappenheim offers a fascinating theory related to the trilateral root MEM-NUN-AYIN from which *mana* derives. He argues that many three-letter roots which begin with the letter MEM are really derivatives of the two-letter roots comprised of the remaining two letters, with the letter MEM actually serving as a way of flipping the meaning of the two-letter root to its exact opposite. He provides several examples of this phenomenon: the two-letter root CHET-KUF (*chok*) means "engrave," while the three letter root MEM-CHET-KUF (*machak*) means "erase;" the two-letter root LAMMED-TZADI (*leitz*) means "scorn/mockery," while MEM-LAMMED-TZADI (*meilitz*) means "justification/defense;" and REISH-DALET (*rad*) refers to "governing/ruling," while MEM-REISH-DALET (*marad*) means "rebellion." In a similar vein, Rabbi Pappenheim notes that the biliteral root NUN-AYIN (*na*, like in *tenuah*) refers to "movement," while MEM-NUN-AYIN (*mana*) means "stopping/withholding" which means the exact opposite!

In explaining the specific implication of the word *chasach*, Rabbi Pappenheim writes that this term implies "withholding" or "stopping" an act that was supposed to be stopped by the laws of morality or nature. In other words, *chasach* means to appropriately stop an unbecoming action from happening, thus making it an antonym of *mana* in

a sense. Interestingly, Rabbi Pappenheim also argues that the word *chasach* is derived from a conglomeration of the two roots CHET-SAMECH (“caring”) and SAMECH-KAF (“protection”), as it refers to one who stops another from performing a morally reprehensible act that goes against nature/morality.

The Malbim explicitly follows Rabbi Pappenheim in explaining that the term *chasach* refers to an outside force that impedes one’s ability to do a certain action (as opposed to the person himself being unable or unwilling to perform a certain action). Like Rabbi Pappenheim, the Malbim also contrasts this with the term *chadal*, which refers to the impediment to a certain action coming from the person himself (whether on purpose or not). (See also the Malbim in *Ayelet HaShachar* 461, Lev. 2:13 145, Lev. 26:6 8 and the *Yair Ohr* on how the verb *Shabbat*, “stop/rest,” differs from these terms.)

Interestingly, these nuances seem exclusive to Hebrew. They are not found in Targumic Aramaic even when the Targumim use cognates of these Hebrew words. For example, Targum Onkelos translates *chasach* as *mana* (Gen. 20:6, 22:16, 39:9), and translates both *kala* (Ex. 36:6) and *chadal* (Gen. 18:11, 41:49, Deut. 15:11) as *pasak* (which literally means to “split” or “cut”). In other cases, Onkelos leaves *kala* (Gen. 8:2) and *mana* (Gen. 30:2, Num. 24:11) without translation, in their Hebrew forms. This interchangeability of the words in Aramaic shows that the nuances described above were no longer appreciated.

Indeed, when the Bible reports that Sarah’s menstrual cycles *chadal* “stopped” (Gen. 18:11), Rashi follows Targum Onkelos in explaining that *chadal* means *pasak*. The Moroccan scholar Rabbi Yaakov Toledano of Meknes (1690-1771) explains that because the term *chadal* refers specifically to a

person purposely, willfully deciding to “stop” doing something, Rashi was bothered by the appearance of that word in this context, given that these fluids are not sentient beings that could “decide” to stop flowing. As he explains it, Rashi resolved this issue by defining *chadal* as *pasak*, which could also refer to an insentient item “stopping” on its own, without making a conscious decision to “stop.” (A simpler way of understanding Rashi is that he was clarifying what *chadal* means by using the Aramaic term *pasak* that Targum Onkelos uses to render the word *chadal*, but was not really bothered by the blood’s insentience.)

Rabbi Rafael Binyamin Posen (1942-2016) notes that Targum Onkelos thrice translates the word *chadal* in the context of the Plague of Hail with a cognate of *mana*, yet when it comes to the word *chadal* in the context of Sarah (Gen. 18:11), Onkelos renders this word in Aramaic as *pasak*. Rabbi Posen reconciles this apparent contradiction by postulating that the Hebrew *chadal* can denote two disparate types of “stopping.” The first type refers to “stopping” a regular, ongoing process from continuing. In this sense, Sarah’s cycles were said to have “stopped,” and so Onkelos uses the word *pasak* in this case. However, *chadal* also denotes “stopping” a one-time event. This form of “stopping” is rendered by Onkelos as *mana*, such as when the Bible records that people “stopped” (*chadal*) building the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:8), which Onkelos translates into Aramaic with an inflection of *mana*. Like building the Tower of Babel, the Plague of Hail was also a one-time event, so when it “stopped” (*chadal*) a cognate of *mana* was used in the Aramaic translation. Rabbi Posen notes that this consistency in which Aramaic term is used to translate the Hebrew *chadal* can only be found in Targum Onkelos, but not in the so-called Targum Yonatan.

COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

THE BLESSINGS OF THE SHEMA (PART 14)

“The most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched
- they must be felt with the heart.”
(Helen Keller)

The third blessing continues: “He frees the captives, liberates the humble, helps the needy, and answers His nation, Israel, when they cry out to Him. Praises to the Supreme G-d.”

Structured prayer has been an integral dimension of Jewish life since the times of our forefathers. Our Sages teach (*Brachot* 26b) that the morning prayer service was instituted by Avraham, the afternoon service was initiated by Yitzchak, and Yaakov established the evening services. Every Jew’s “spiritual DNA” was inherited from our forefathers, and when we pray, we have an unparalleled moment to take advantage of an extraordinary potential for connection to G-d. The Zohar HaKadosh (*Bamidbar*, *Balak*) states that in preparing for the *Amidah* prayer, one should regard himself as being completely helpless and entirely reliant upon G-d. As we pray, we have the unique opportunity to stand in front of G-d in exactly the same way as our forefathers did. However, in order to do so in the most effective way possible, we must follow the advice of our blessing and cry out to G-d in the manner of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov - with absolute purity and sincerity. As we stand on the cusp of reciting the *Amidah*, we must recognize our complete and absolute dependency on G-d for our prayer to occur with the appropriate state of mind.

The nineteenth century Eastern European prodigy, Rabbi Chanoch Zundel ben Yosef, was a prolific author. Among many other works, his commentaries on the *Midrash Rabbah* and the *Ein Yaakov* are seen as essential to understanding the esoteric lessons contained in our classic texts. He also authored an insightful and thought-provoking

commentary on the prayers that is printed in the classic Siddur titled *Otzar Hatefillot*. In his commentary on our blessing, he points out that the four different descriptions which appear in our blessing correspond to the four expressions in the Torah describing the stages of the redemption from Egypt (*Shemot* 6:6-7). They also correspond to the four cups of wine we drink at the *Seder* on *Pesach* night.

- “He frees captives” corresponds to “*Vehotzeiti* - And I shall take you out.”
- “Liberates the humble” corresponds to “*Vegalti* - And I shall redeem.”
- “Helps the needy” corresponds to “*Vehitzalti* - And I shall save.”
- “And answers His nation, Israel” corresponds to “*Velakachti* - And I shall take you.”

As we come within reach of the *Amidah*, a new facet of G-d is being introduced into our prayer: Hashem is the “Supreme G-d.” In Hebrew, the title “Supreme G-d - *Kel Elyon*” carries with it the understanding that it is impossible for human beings to fathom G-d’s ways. He is so “lofty” that He is above our comprehension. It is precisely because G-d is so exalted that we are able to turn to Him in the *Amidah* and ask Him for anything and everything.

In *Tehillim* (105:3) King David declares, “Be glad of heart, you who seek (*mevakesh*) G-d”. In the Siddur of the Vilna Gaon, the word *mevakesh* is defined as someone who invests great effort in seeking out

G-d's bountiful goodness but has not yet received what it is that he is asking for. Rabbi Yitzchak Ber Weiss (Siach Yitzchak), paraphrasing Rabbi Yosef Albo (1380-1444), the brilliant Spanish scholar and philosopher famous for his masterpiece *Sefer haIkrim*, asks how a person can be "glad of heart" before he has been given what he was asking for. Rabbi Weiss explains that in physical endeavors when a person seeks out something specific but does not attain it, all the toil is for naught. However, when it comes to seeking out G-d, the toil is never for naught. When it comes to spiritual pursuits, it is the very quest that becomes the

vehicle for drawing a person closer to their Father in Heaven. In the spiritual realms, it is the effort and the determination which makes a person "glad of heart." Or, in the words of Rabbi Albo: "A person who dedicates himself to seeking G-d demonstrates that they have found G-d to be the ultimate good fortune, and they therefore rejoice as they seek."

Truly a tantalizing concept!

To be continued...

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Hashem tells Moshe to inform the Jewish People that He is going to take them out of Egypt. However, the Jewish People do not listen. Hashem commands Moshe to go to Pharaoh and ask him to free the Jewish People. Although Aharon shows Pharaoh a sign by turning a staff into a snake, Pharaoh's magicians copy the sign, emboldening Pharaoh to refuse the request. Hashem punishes the Egyptians, sending plagues of blood and frogs, but the magicians copy these miracles on a smaller scale, again encouraging Pharaoh to be obstinate. After the plague of lice, Pharaoh's magicians concede that only Hashem could be performing these miracles.

Only the Egyptians, and not the Jews in Goshen, suffer during the plagues. The onslaught continues with wild animals, pestilence, boils and fiery hail. However, despite Moshe's offers to end the plagues if Pharaoh will let the Jewish People leave, Pharaoh continues to harden his heart and refuses.

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TALMUD TIPS

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

Megillah 9-15

The Reward for Giving Credit

Rabbi Elazar said, “Whoever says something in the name of the person who originally said it brings redemption to the world.”

He cites his source for this teaching (which is also taught in Pirkei Avot 6:6) as the Purim story that we read in the Megillah of Esther. “And Esther told the king (the assassination plot against him by Bigsan and Seresh) in the name of Mordechai (who had revealed it to her, as the queen).” (Esther 2:22). Rabbi Elazar teaches us that Esther brought – or at least helped to bring – redemption to world in this way. She not only told the king about the plot against him, but also revealed her source as Mordechai, a seemingly unnecessary piece of information at the time. But it was a factor that would play a crucial role later in the king’s elevating the honor and standing of Mordechai, in the Divine plan for the miraculous saving of the Jewish People from evil Haman’s claws.

What is the connection between the special merit of quoting one’s source and the reward of being credited as bringing redemption to the world? One of many human traits is the desire for recognition. True, at times our name recognition can be a positive force for helping others. But if it is felt as internal self-pride and not applied for the sake of Heaven it is considered the very negative trait of haughtiness. This is the exact opposite of the very positive trait of humility. The Torah states, “And the man Moshe was extremely humble, more than any person on the face of the earth.” (Bamidbar 12:3) Also, the *Mishna 4:4* in Pirkei Avos teaches, “Rabbi Levitas of Yavneh says: “Be very, very humble”. The Rambam codifies the trait of haughtiness as being one of only two human traits that one should strive to avoid at all costs - the other one being anger. Regarding all other

character traits – such as one’s propensity to spend money – one should make every effort to remain in the middle of the spectrum, which he writes is the “straight path” and the *Derech Hashem* (the path of Hashem). (*Hilchot De’ot* chapter 1)

Someone whose character is haughty will want to take credit for any positive outcome. It makes that person look “bigger” in the eyes of others, or at least that’s what many have been led to think. A humble person, however, not only does not want to receive kudos but also does not feel deserving of being given credit. A humble person has the attitude of “What did I do? Anyone would have done the same. Hashem runs the world – not me!”

When the world is redeemed and saved, who will jump up to take credit? Only Hashem can and will save the world despite all human effort to save it (or destroy it). Only someone who gives credit to others by citing them as the source of something positive will also give credit to Hashem for any positive result as for saving the world. Only a person who, in general, gives credit to the source of what he knows – *omer davar b’shem omro* – will also give credit to the Source when there is a time of redemption. This person will make it clear that Hashem is the One to thank for His boundless kindness. The positive outcome is the Truth and Will of Hashem. A person who does not claim personal fame and honor merits to be the means of bringing Hashem’s redemption to the world, as Rabbi Elazar teaches us. (Many commentaries address this connection in a variety of other ways, such as the Torah Temimah and the Eitz Yosef, and I wish I could mention all of their names!)

Although this teaching does not seem to appear in Shulchan Aruch or the Rambam’s Mishneh Torah,

the importance of giving credit to the source of a Torah teaching is appreciated and applies in widespread practice. Although the verse does not seem to limit the virtue of citing the source of even matters and statements that are not Torah per se, the practice of giving credit seems to be limited to Torah matters. However it should be evident that citing sources about “who said what” in mundane matters could potentially violate the laws of *lashon hara* and *rechilus*.

And even in matters of Torah, I have been personally instructed about how to proceed correctly and with care. For example, more than thirty years ago after asking Rav Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg *zatzal* a halachic *sheilah* pertaining to *kiruv rechokim*, I received a clear *psak* from him. Just to be sure, I asked if we (co-authors) could publish it in our *sefer* in his name, and he replied, “You heard it from me. I would certainly

hope that you would!” I slightly lowered my head and blushed at the mild rebuke. However, regarding matters of *hashkafa* and philosophy, citing the source by name is not as straightforward. When I asked another Rav about a certain conceptual matter I heard him address in a certain setting, he suggested I write that he does not necessarily agree wholeheartedly with how I express his thoughts in my own manner. Rather, he suggested mentioning that what I write is *based* on his teachings (and include his name) or, alternatively, that what I write is my personal understanding of the Rav’s words. When I asked if perhaps I should not mention his name at all, he reminded me that one who cites the source brings *geulah* to the world, and that it is important to abide by this teaching to name the source in an appropriate manner.

▪ *Megillah 15a*

PEREK SHIRA: The Song of Existence

by Rabbi Shmuel Kraines

THE SONG OF THE NIGHT

The night says: “To tell of Your kindnesses in the morning, and of Your faithfulness in the nights.”
(*Tehillim* 92:3)

Night is a time of darkness and desolation. It is also a time of rest and rejuvenation. In the same way that without an end there can be no beginning, without a night there can be no morning. It therefore sings of Hashem’s faithfulness throughout the night, and His willingness to bestow a new day.

The night’s song is of particular significance to mankind. When a person sleeps at night, the more spiritual part of his soul rises to Heaven and he lies partially dead until Hashem deems fit to fully restore his soul to him in the morning. Hashem is faithful to us in that He guards our souls and overlooks that tainted and damaged them during the past day hoping for betterment in the morrow.

On a deeper level, the darkness is an analogy for the dark times of a person’s life, as well as the dark exile of the nation as a whole. Hashem remains faithful to us in all these forms of night, and so too we must remain faithful to Him. At times we see Him as clear as day, while at times we have no choice but to remember Him in the darkness of the night.

All existence sings of different aspects of its Creator’s praise, and we must seek out Hashem equally in all situations. In some ways, our relationship with Hashem at times of darkness is more meaningful than the brilliance of the awaited day itself.

**In loving memory of Harav Zeev Shlomo ben Zecharia Leib*

LETTER AND SPIRIT

Insights based on the writings of Rav S.R. Hirsch by Rabbi Yosef Hershman

From Nadir to Nation

The beginning of our Torah portion marks a critical turning point in the history of the Jewish people. At the end of last week's Torah portion, Moshe complains to the Almighty: *Ever since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your Name, he has abused the people even more, and You have not rescued Your people.* G-d responds, telling Moshe to brace himself for the events that will unfold: *Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh.* Before this new order comes to be, G-d speaks to Moshe: *I am Hashem. I appeared to Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov as El Shadai, but did not become known to them by my name Hashem.*

From the time of Avraham until now there had been a steady descent: Avraham was regarded as a prince of G-d in the Land, whereas Yaakov was an unfortunate servant of Lavan, whose life was punctuated by colossal challenges. Ultimately, the sale of Yosef and unrelenting famine forced the House of Yaakov to move to Egypt, where they multiplied under the frightening grip of Egyptian slavery.

It could have been otherwise. Avraham could have had a child in his prime years, and could have overseen the flourishing of his progeny in happy, favorable circumstances on its native soil. But if the Jewish nation had emerged in this way, the people would not have become G-d's people. Instead, like all peoples, they would have been rooted in physical

foundations. They would have sought material power and material greatness, aspiring to the spiritual and moral only to the extent that these were compatible with, and beneficial to, its material aims.

The birth of the nation of G-d had to be founded solely on G-d and His law, and not on any other earthly hold. To fulfill its mandate of reawakening mankind and releasing it from the bonds of materialism, Israel had to be poor in everything upon which the rest of mankind builds its greatness. Israel had to begin at the climax of despair. Moshe is baffled by the downward spiral, and G-d reassures him that this was all deliberate: *I appeared to Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov as El Shadai, the All-Sufficing One, with Whose help one can endure all the vicissitudes of life. I had not revealed Myself to them, as I do now, as Hashem, The Sole Creator, Judge and Master of history and nature.* The curtain is about to be drawn, and as this defenseless and pitiful nation emerges, as directly sustained and redeemed by G-d, it stands center stage in the play of history.

Indeed, this act will repeat itself time and again, to a different audience in each generation. The protagonist, the people of Hashem, small and downtrodden, will beat the odds, manifestly overcoming all opposing forces, revealing the Master of history and nature to all of mankind.

- Sources: Commentary, Shemot 6:3; Nineteen Letters, #7

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