



NEFESH SHIMSHON

DIVREI TORAH ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA AND HOLIDAYS FROM
THE TEACHINGS OF **RABBEINU SHIMSHON DOVID PINCUS ZT"l**

THIS PUBLICATION IS DEDICATED TO THE HATZLACHAH AND ZECHUS OF נחמה ויעקב בן רחל נחמה.
MAY THEY GROW TO BE TALMIDEI CHACHAMIM AND OVDEI HASHEM.

PEARLS OF WISDOM
FROM THE PARSHAH

Afraid to Go to Pharaoh

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה בֹּא אֶל פַּרְעֹה. (שמות י, א)

Hashem said to Moshe, “Come to Pharaoh.” (*Shemos* 10:1)

Here *Moshe Rabbeinu* is commanded to go to Pharaoh, yet the verse says, “Come to Pharaoh.” *Chazal* explain in the *Zohar* on this verse that *Moshe Rabbeinu* was afraid to go to Pharaoh, so *Hashem* said to him, “Come with Me.”

The question is why, when it came to *makas arbeh*, the plague of locusts, did *Moshe Rabbeinu* need special help from *Hashem* in order to go to Pharaoh? Why was he suddenly afraid?

Early Torah sources say that Moshe’s fear stemmed from the fact that seven plagues had already gone by. The number seven expresses nature, whereas the number eight expresses the supernatural, that which is above nature.

Moshe saw that seven *makos* didn’t make Pharaoh budge. In other words, nothing related to the natural world was capable of moving him.

Pharaoh must be connected to *lemaalab min hateva*, to the supernatural. Moshe was thus afraid to fight him, and *Hashem* needed to come with him, so to speak.

Since Pharaoh is in truth the *Yetzer Hara*,¹ we can learn from here that the *Yetzer Hara* has supernatural power. This explains why *Chazal* say:

If *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* would not help a person, he could not overcome the *Yetzer Hara*.²

This is why *Hashem* said to Moshe, “Come with Me to Pharaoh.” Only by means of *Hashem’s* Torah, which is the antidote to the *Yetzer Hara*, can a person defeat the *Yetzer Hara*. ●

1 *Rambam, Igeres Hamusar.*

2 *Kidushin* 30b.

Jewish Teshuvah

הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֶם. (שמות יב, ב)

This month shall be for you. (*Shemos* 12:2)

When the Jewish people left Egypt, they were wallowing very deep in impurity. They were down at the forty-ninth level of *tumah*. Accusing voices in heaven were heard saying:

Both these [the Egyptians] and those [the Israelites] are idol worshippers.¹

Nevertheless, once they turned to *Hashem* by means of sanctifying *rosh chodesh* – as commanded in our verse, “This month shall be for you” – they merited the revelation of the *Shechinah* on Pesach night, and a week later, Moshe and the Jews sang *shiras hayam*, regarding which *Chazal* say that everyone was in a state of sublime prophecy, and they recited the words of this song by *ruach hakodesh*.² At that point, everyone was on the exalted *madreigah* of *Moshe Rabbeinu*.

So we see that the Jewish people has the ability to do *teshuvah* for sins, and to change from one extreme to another in a short time.

Non-Jews don't have this ability. Yes, the *Tanach* testifies that the people of Nineveh repented their sins, but this doesn't mean they attained a Jewish level of *teshuvah*. Nevertheless, they did in fact change their ways, so *Hashem* refrained from destroying them.

We see this point from *Sefer Yonah* itself. It says

that after *Hashem* annulled the evil decree against Nineveh, Yonah was deeply grieved, and cried out to Him:

כִּי יָדַעְתִּי כִּי אַתָּה אֱלֹהֵי חַנוּן וְרַחוּם אַרְךָ אַפַּיִם
וְרַב חַסְדֵךְ וְנָחָם עַל הָרָעָה – I knew that You are
a gracious and merciful G-d, forbearing,
great in kindness, Who reconsiders evil
decrees.³

Hashem did not answer Yonah by saying that the people of Nineveh did *teshuvah*. He just said that He had compassion for them: וְאֲנִי לֹא אָחוּס עַל גִּינוּהַ הָעִיר? In other words, they changed their ways in the end, so it was appropriate to show them mercy. However, their change of ways did not deserve the name of *teshuvah*. This is different from Jews. They are capable of real *teshuvah*.

What makes a Jew's *teshuvah* different from a non-Jew's aptitude to change his ways?

The non-Jews are compared to the sun,⁴ which is an unchanging source of energy. Therefore, every non-Jew has his own unique qualities, which never change. An Italian is an Italian, an Indian is an Indian. They don't undergo fundamental change and metamorphosize into something else.

The Jewish people is compared to the moon, which is not a source of energy on its own. It is like

1 *Rus Rabba*, beginning.

2 See *Mechilta*, *Shemos* 15:1.

3 *Yonah* 4:2.

4 See *Sukah* 29a.

לְעִילּוֹי נִשְׁמָת

מוֹהַ"ד מוֹשֶׁה בֶּן אֱלִיעֶזֶר הַמְּבוֹרְגָה זצ"ל

וּמוֹהַ"ד בְּרוּךְ זַאב בֶּן נִפְתָּלִי קְרָאוּס זצ"ל

נִדְבַת נִכְרִיהֶם ~ עֲטַרְת זָקִימִים בְּנֵי בָנִים וְהַפְאֶרֶת בָּנִים אֲבוֹתָם

a mirror. When it faces the sun, it fills with light and its shape becomes round, and if it turns a little to the side, its shape changes.

This is the deeper meaning of **הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֶם** – “This month shall be for you.” This verse speaks of the appearance of the new moon. The Jewish

people are compared to the moon; they do not have inherent qualities. They are a mirror, like the moon. After 210 years of wallowing in Egyptian impurity they reflected *tumah*. But all they have to do is turn a little toward *Hashem*, and in an instant, they reflect a totally different picture! ●

PARSHAH TOPIC

Why Not an Angel?

וְעָבַרְתִּי בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בַּלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה וְהַכִּיתִי כָּל בְּכוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מֵאָדָם וְעַד בְּהֵמָה וּבְכָל
אֱלֹהֵי מִצְרַיִם אֶעֱשֶׂה שְׁפָטִים אֲנִי ה': (שמות יב, יב)

I will pass through the land of Egypt on this night, and I will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from humans to livestock, and I will perform judgments upon the gods of Egypt; I am Hashem. (Shemos 12:12)

We learn an important principle about *Yetzias Mitzrayim* from this verse: *Hashem* Himself took us out of Egypt. We spell out the point in the *Pesach Hagadah*.

וְיֵצֵאֲנוּ ה' מִמִּצְרַיִם – “*Hashem* took us out of Egypt.” Not by an angel and not by a seraph and not by a messenger; rather, it was *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* Himself. As it says, וְעָבַרְתִּי בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וְגו' “I will pass through the land of Egypt...”

וְעָבַרְתִּי בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בַּלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה – “I will pass through the land of Egypt on this night.” I, and not an angel. וְהַכִּיתִי כָּל בְּכוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם – “And I will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt.” I, and not a seraph. וּבְכָל אֱלֹהֵי מִצְרַיִם אֶעֱשֶׂה שְׁפָטִים – “And I will perform judgments upon all the gods of Egypt.” I, and not a messenger. אֲנִי ה' – “I am *Hashem*.” I am the One, and no other.¹

Why wasn't *Yetzias Mitzrayim* performed by

an angel? The cities of Sedom and Amarah were overturned by the angel Gavriel. He didn't need any help; apparently it wasn't very hard for him. Gavriel can go between earth and the highest heavens in one jump,² so apparently he didn't need to exert himself very much when he overturned Sedom.

Accordingly, the angel Gavriel (or another angel) could have smitten the firstborn and taken the Jewish people out of Egypt. Why did *Hashem* Himself need to smite them and take us out? What stands behind this fact?

Angels Can Block Us Out

Let's talk about King Menashe.

Menashe was one of the worst and wickedest people the Jewish people ever knew. His father was a great *tzaddik*, King Chizkiyahu, about whom *Chazal* say:

¹ *Pesach Hagadah*.

² *Berachos 4b*.

שָׁקֵר הַחַן – “Grace is false.” This is the generation of Moshe. וְהַבֵּל הַיָּפִי – “And beauty is nothingness.” This is the generation of Yehoshua. יִרְאַת ה' הִיא תִתְהַלֵּל – “The fear of *Hashem* is to be praised.” This is the generation of Chizkiyahu, king of Yehudah.³

But his son, Menashe, did everything just the opposite. Chizkiyahu “stuck a sword at the entrance of the *beis midrash* and said, “Whoever does not engage in Torah study shall be stabbed by this sword.”⁴ Menashe ordered that anyone who learns Torah shall be put to death.

Menashe even killed his grandfather, the prophet Yeshayahu,⁵ and it says clearly in *Tanach* that Menashe’s evil deeds caused the destruction of *Beis Hamikash*:

אֲךָ לֹא שָׁב ה' מִחֲרוֹן אָפוֹ הַגָּדוֹל אֲשֶׁר חָרָה אָפוֹ בַּיהוּדָה עַל כָּל הַכַּעֲסִים אֲשֶׁר הִכְעִיסוּ מְנַשֶּׁה. וַיֹּאמֶר ה' גַּם אֶת יְהוּדָה אֲסִיר מֵעַל פְּנֵי כְּאֲשֶׁר הִסְרֹתִי אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמֵאַסְתִּי אֶת הָעִיר הַזֹּאת אֲשֶׁר בְּחַרְתִּי אֶת יְרוּשָׁלַם וְאֶת הַבַּיִת אֲשֶׁר אָמַרְתִּי שָׁם יִהְיֶה שְׁמִי שָׁם – However, *Hashem* did not turn back from His great anger that flamed up against Yehudah for all the things that Menashe did to anger Him. *Hashem* said, “I will remove Yehudah, too, from before Me, as I removed Yisrael. I reject this city of Yerushalyim, which I had chosen, and [I reject] the House about which I had said that My Name shall be there.”⁶

Yirmeyahu Hanavi cried out to the people to return to *Hashem*, but Rashi explains⁷ that this was not in order to annul the decree of exile, but only to lessen the punishment and to prepare the Jewish kingdom when they return from exile.

In other words, Menashe was so evil that even

3 *Sanhedrin* 20a.

4 *Ibid* 94b.

5 *Ibid* 103b.

6 II *Melachim* 23:26-27.

7 *Shir Hashirim* 5:6.

teshuvah couldn’t save from destruction and exile.

What happened to Menashe in the end?

It says in the *Midrash*⁸ that the army of Ashur captured him and shackled him and put him in a copper cauldron, under which they lit a fire. He started to burn.

What does a person do when he finds himself in a cauldron that is on the fire?

Menashe started calling out to all the idols and false gods in the world. He was a genius, an expert in all kinds of idol worship. As the cauldron was heating up he managed to call out to every false deity there is, yet none answered him.

In the end, Menashe remembered that his righteous father, king Chizkiyahu, used to repeat to him over and over a certain *pasuk*:

בְּצָר לָךְ וּמִצְאוּךָ כָּל הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה בְּאַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים וְשָׁבַת עַד ה' אֶלְקֶיךָ וְשָׁמַעְתָּ בְּקוֹלוֹ – When you are in distress, and all these things happen to you at the end of days, you shall return to *Hashem* your G-d.⁹

At that point, Menashe called out to *Hashem*, and said, “Master of the World, You are the G-d over all gods. If you don’t answer me, I will say that there is no difference between You and them.”

Menashe put stipulations on *Hashem*, so to speak.

Then the ministering angels went and “closed all the windows of heaven, so his prayer will not ascend to heaven. They said to *Hashem*, ‘O Master of the World, would You accept the prayer of the man who set up an idol in the Sanctuary?!’”

So *Hashem* “dug a tunnel in the heavens under His Throne of Glory, and received his prayer.”

A stormy wind then came and tipped the cauldron, and Menashe returned to Yerushalayim, to his royal throne.

The point we want to focus on in this story is the angels shutting the entrances to heaven. What does that mean?

8 *Devarim Rabbah* 2:20.

9 *Devarim* 4:30.

Above All Chesed

Hashem created the world, and “the world is built on *chesed*”: עולם הַסֵּד יִבְנֶה.¹⁰

In the *Yud Gimel Midos Shel Rachamim*, the Thirteen Attributes of Divine Mercy, there are many different aspects of *chesed*. There is the first word, “*Hashem*,” which represents His *chesed* before a person sins. And there is the second word, also “*Hashem*,” which represents His *chesed* after a person sins. Then comes 'אל, רחום, וחנון, ארך אפים, וגו' all of which represent different aspects of *Hashem's* infinite *chesed*.

All these forms of infinite *chesed* were not enough for the repentance of Menashe to be accepted. The angels argued that he is only doing *teshuvah* because he is starting to boil inside a giant cauldron. This is an extremely low grade of repentance and is in no way worthy of acceptance, in light of his monstrous sins.

But there is something beyond all these expressions of infinite *chesed*, and that is, “He dug a tunnel in the heavens under His Throne of Glory.” *Hashem* Himself went and dug out this tunnel for Menashe. And the *chesed* of *Hashem* Himself is above and beyond all.

Indeed, each one of the enormously powerful Thirteen Attributes of Divine Mercy fell short of extending clemency to Menashe, but *Hashem* said: I will save him Myself! “He dug a tunnel in the heavens under His Throne of Glory, and received his prayer.”

This is what happens when *Hashem* Himself does something.

¹⁰ *Tehillim* 89:3.

Only Faith Can Do It

On the night of the 15th of Nisan, in Egypt, there was no way in the world that the Jewish people's meager merits would result in their redemption from bondage. As the angels said at *Yam Suf*:

Both these [the Egyptians] and those [the Israelites] are idol worshippers.¹¹

The Israelites were firmly interwoven in Egyptian society. Their exodus is described as גוי מקרב גוי – “A nation from within another nation.”¹² They were likened to a fetus within “Mother Egypt,” and a fetus is considered part of the mother.¹³ They worshiped idols along with the Egyptians. All the *chesed* that exists could not justify taking them out of Egypt, to be “born” from within Egypt and brought out to a new existence.

But *Hashem* Himself is above all this. He can do as He wishes even if the spiritual rules He set in place do not justify it. *Hashem's chesed* is beyond all *chesed*. He is the Master of the World, and He decided to take them out of *Mitzrayim*, so He did.

What engendered this overpowering miracle?

Emunah. There was one thing the Jewish people needed to do, and that is to believe. To believe that *Hashem* can and will redeem them, despite everything. As it says:

וַיֵּאֱמֵן הָעָם וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ כִּי פָקַד ה' אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל – The people believed, and they heard that *Hashem* has remembered the Israelites.¹⁴ ●

¹¹ *Rus Rabba*, beginning.

¹² *Devarim* 4:34.

¹³ *Sanhedrin* 80b.

¹⁴ *Shemos* 4:31.