

NEFESH SHIMSHON

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

ישראל בן רחל נחמה ויעקב בן רחל נחמה
MAY THEY GROW TO BE TALMIDEI CHACHAMIM AND OVDEI HASHEM.

PEARLS OF WISDOM FROM THE PARSHAH

Moshe and Hashem's Name

וַאֲרָא אֶל אַבְרָהָם אֶל יִצְחָק וְאֶל יַעֲקֹב בְּאֵל שַׁדְיֵי וְשְׁמִי ה' לֹא נִוְדַעְתִּי לָהֶם: (שמות ו, ג)

I appeared to Avraham, to Yitzchak and to Yaakov as the Al-mighty G-d, but I did not make Myself known to them by My Name of Hashem. (Shemos 6:3)

When *Hashem* spoke to the *Avos*, He called Himself אֵל שַׁדְיֵי, the “Al-mighty G-d.” But when He spoke to *Moshe Rabbeinu*, He called Himself *Hashem*. So explains the *Ohr Hachayim*.

This brings out the difference between Moshe and the *Avos*, because *Hashem* is a higher Name.

That which is said about Moshe is greater than that which is said about Avraham, because about Avraham it says ואנוכי עפר ואפר, “I am dust and ashes,” whereas about Moshe it says ונחנו מה, “What are we?”¹

Moshe Rabbeinu said about himself, “What are we?” implying that he is actually nothing, not even “dust and ashes.” He did not feel himself to be an entity at all. This was due to his exceptionally lofty awareness of *Hashem's* presence.

The same idea is conveyed by the Name *Hashem*,

otherwise known as *Shem Havayah*. This Name signifies that *Hashem* brings everything into existence (*mehaveh*) out of utter nothingness. Since He created everything *ex nihilo*, nothing has its own independent existence. Although there is now a created world, nothing truly exists in its own right, other than *Hashem's* holy Will, which created everything.

This awareness was attained only by *Moshe Rabbeinu*, not by the *Avos*, as the above-quoted *Gemara* tells us.

This is why *Moshe Rabbeinu's* prophecy was on the level of “the *Shechinah* speaks from his throat.” Moshe lived on a level where he realized that a person does not truly exist. Only *Hashem's* holy Will has true existence.

There are factors that prevent us from seeing things this way, but Moshe was on a level where he saw the absolute truth of *Hashem's* exclusive existence. This is why it was fitting for the *Shechinah* to “speak from his throat.” ●

¹ Chulin 89a.

The Merciful Makos

וְהוֹצֵאתִי אֶת צְבֹאתַי אֶת עַמֵּי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם בְּשִׁפְטִים גְּדֹלִים. (שמות ז, ד)

I will bring My hosts, My people the children of Yisrael, out of the land of Egypt, with great judgments. (*Shemos* 7:4)

Hashem says He will bring the Jewish people out of *Mitzrayim* with “great judgments,” which refers to the many severe blows that came upon the Egyptians. As we say in the *Pesach Haggadah*, “In Egypt they were smitten with fifty *makos*, and at the Sea with two hundred and fifty *makos*.”

But why? What was the reason for so very many harsh and terrible blows?

I would say that they didn’t come just from the Divine trait of judgment, but also from the trait of compassion. Because when *Hashem’s midas harachamim* metes out punishment, it is much harsher and fiercer. I will explain why.

Let’s talk about Naomi, mother-in-law of Rus.

Naomi fled *Eretz Yisrael* during a famine. She remarked as follows when she returned with Rus to her hometown, many years later, widowed and destitute:

אַל תִּקְרָאנִי לִי נְעָמִי קְרָאנִי לִי מָרָא כִּי הִמְרָא – Do not call me “Naomi” [meaning “my pleasantness,”]; call me “Mara” [meaning “bitter”], because the Al-mighty has brought me great bitterness.”¹

Naomi is saying that her deeds were not “pleasant,” but rather bitter, so “Do not call me ‘Naomi.’” And

this also explains why *Hashem* brought her such great bitterness.

The Vilna Gaon elucidates the point by way of allegory. There was a king who had two sons. One of them went and killed the other. The murderous son came before his father the king to beg for mercy. His father answered him as follows: If your punishment would be for the sake of justice, maybe I could pardon you. But your punishment is for the sake of compassion. My compassion for my murdered son requires me to punish the murderer. Since the punishment is coming from my compassion for the victim, I cannot grant you clemency.

This is what Naomi was saying. If the punishment I received from *Hashem* was coming from the trait of judgment, I could look forward to *Hashem* forgiving me. However, the sin that I and my late husband Elimelech committed, our “bitter” deeds, was our failure to support the poor of *Eretz Yisrael* in the time of famine. We were wealthy, and we fled to the land of Moav to take care of ourselves.² Thus our punishment is coming from *Hashem’s* compassion for the poor, and this is why I cannot look forward to *Hashem’s* forgiveness.

Naomi then went on to say:

1 *Rus* 1:20.

2 See *Rus* 1:1, *Rashi ad loc.*



וְהָיָה עֲנָה בִּי – “*Hashem* afflicted me.”³

Here Naomi mentioned the Name *Hashem*, which denotes the Divine trait of compassion, to express the idea that her punishment was coming from *Hashem's* compassion. When a punishment is because of *Hashem's* compassion for the victim, it is a harsh and terrible blow indeed.

This applies even when one Jew wrongs another, as we can see from the above allegory about one brother killing the other. This is because Jews are *Hashem's* beloved children. But when a stranger

³ Rus 1:21.

harms the king's son, it incurs a much harsher punishment.

Now let's get back to the hundreds of blows that *Hashem* brought on the Egyptians. Their punishment came from the Divine trait of judgment. They sinned greatly. But it also came from the trait of compassion, because *Hashem* cares about the troubles that the Jewish people suffered through. And, as we said, punishment coming from the trait of compassion is even more severe.

It is thus understood why the Egyptians were subjected to so many harsh blows. ●

PARSHA TOPIC

Emunah Comes Before Geulah

וַשְׁמִי ה' לֹא נִודַעְתִּי לָהֶם: (שמות ו, ג)

But I did not make Myself known to them by My Name of *Hashem*. (*Shemos* 6:3)

“But I did not make Myself known to them by My Name of *Hashem*” – It does not say, “I did not inform them [of My Name],” but rather, “I did not make Myself known to them.” I was not familiar to them in My trait of making things come true, for which My Name is called *Hashem*, meaning that I am faithful in making My words come true. I made promises to them but I did not [yet] fulfill them. (*Rashi*)

There are Two Stages to Giving

R. Yerucham of Mir learned from these words of Rashi an important principle in how *Hashem* runs the world.

Whenever *Hashem* gives something to someone, there are two stages. First is the stage of promising without fulfilling. In other words, the fact that *Hashem* doesn't actually grant the promised thing at this stage has a fundamental reason. It is not just because the time for fulfilling

the promise did not happen to come yet. Rather, the stage of promising without fulfilling is significant on its own. It is denoted by one of *Hashem's* holy Names. This is the Name of א-ל-ל-וֹדֵי, “G-d Al-mighty.”

After that comes the second stage, the one denoted by the Name *Hashem*. This is the stage of *Hashem* making His promises come true in actuality.

Why two stages? Because *Hashem* has two different modes by which He runs His world. There

is the trait of *chesed* and the trait of *din*. Everything *Hashem* does is in accordance with both *chesed* and *din*.

Every time *Hashem* gives something, this is an expression of *chesed*. On the other hand, *Hashem* always gives only that which is appropriate and called for. מלך במשפט יעמיד ארץ – “A king establishes the country by means of justice.”¹ This is *midas hadin*.

And it is not a contradiction. In order for a person to receive *chesed* from *Hashem*, in order for *Hashem* to give him something, he needs to first justify it by means of his deeds.

There are conditions to be fulfilled in order for *Hashem* to bestow His *chesed*. For instance, it says in the second passage of *Krias Shema*: והיה אם שמוע – “If you will surely observe My commandments... I will grant rain to your land.”

This world is governed by spiritual rules. In order for rain to come, we need to pray. In order for *Hashem* to fulfill that which He promised, in order for the trait associated with the Name *Hashem* to express itself, first there needs to be a stage in which we express *emunah*, our faith in *Hashem* and what He promised. We need to have *bitachon* in *Hashem*. This is the first stage, the stage of *Hashem* promising and not fulfilling. This stage enables us to express our *emunah*.

It is thus absolutely necessary for *Hashem* to first promise but not fulfill, so we will rely on *Hashem* and believe in Him, as did the *Avos*, “who did not question My ways.”²

After we go through this stage, then comes the second stage, in which *Hashem* actualizes His promise and fulfills it. The second stage cannot come without us going through the first stage. This is one of the spiritual rules according to which *Hashem* runs His world.

So explains R. Yerucham of Mir.

I Will Be

1 *Mishlei* 29:4.

2 *Rashi* on *Shemos* 6:8.

We saw in the previous *parshah* that *Moshe Rabbeinu* asked *Hashem* what His Name is, so he can mention that Name when he comes to the Jewish people in Egypt with the news that *Hashem* is going to take them out of Egypt. *Hashem* answered that *Moshe* should use the Name of אהיה אשר אהיה, “I will be that which I will be.”³

The *Midrash* comments on this exchange as follows:

Hakadosh Baruch Hu said to *Moshe*, “Do you wish to know My Name? I am called according to My actions. Sometimes I am called א-ל שדי, sometimes צבאות and sometimes ה'. When I judge people I am called אלקים, and when I make war against the wicked I am called צבאות, and when I don't punish a person to the full extent of his sins I am called א-ל שדי, and when I have mercy on My world I am called ה', because ה' denotes mercy.... Thus ‘I will be that which I will be’ – I am called according to My deeds, [however they will be].”⁴

The *Midrash* is saying that the difference between *Hashem's* various Names goes according to the various modes in which He runs the world.

There is an amazing point here. On the one hand, the *Midrash* tells us that when *Moshe* asked *Hashem* what His Name is, *Hashem* did not actually answer him. He just said that He is called according to His various actions. On the other hand, the *pasuk* seems to say clearly that *Hashem* gave him an answer, and His Name is אהיה אשר אהיה, “I will be that which I will be.”

How are we to understand this?

Rashi explains on the *pasuk* that אהיה אשר אהיה means “‘I will be’ with them in this trouble, and ‘I will be’ with them when they are subjugated by the other kingdoms.”

Hashem has various modes of running His world.

3 *Ibid* 3:13-14.

4 *Shemos Rabbah* 3:6.

He executes justice; He shows mercy.

This teaches us an important principle. Even though *Hashem* sometimes acts judgmentally and at other times mercifully, there is one thing that is constant. This thing is the inner aspect, the root of it all.

What is it?

כל דעביד רחמנא לטב עביד – Whatever the Merciful One does is for the good.⁵

All of *Hashem's* actions are only for the good.

Amazingly Good

People commonly think that “Whatever the Merciful One does is for the good” means that even when *Hashem* punishes, in the end it will be for the good. It is worthwhile for a person to accept this punishment for whatever reason, for instance, that it will enable him to go to *Olam Haba*.

But if this teaching really means that even though we don't understand what good is hidden inside the thing that happened to us, it is good nevertheless, then *Chazal* would have not have said, “This world is not like the next world. In this world, we say *Hatov vebaMeitiv* on good news, and *Baruch Dayan Ha'emes* on bad news. But in the next world, we will say *Hatov vebaMeitiv* on everything.”⁶

Although we don't see the good in it, we are told that it is all for the good, and we indeed believe that it is so. If this is true, why don't we say *Hatov vebaMeitiv* over it?

Because, it is much deeper than that. Not everything that happens in the world can be called “good.”

⁵ *Berachos* 60b.

⁶ *Pesachim* 3a.

כל דעביד רחמנא לטב עביד – “Whatever the Merciful One does is for the good” – is that every act and every subject, everything that *Hashem* created in His world, including judgment and *din*, is amazingly for the good. Not that it brings something good in its wake, not that we can see some positive aspect to it, but that it really is good. This is something wondrous. There are two things here that contradict each other, but they both are true. It is bad and good at the same time.

This is why, in this world, we say *Baruch Dayan Ha'emes* on bad news. We don't say *Hatov vebaMeitiv*, because it is an act of *din*. It is punishment. It is something bad; it is darkness. But at the same time, in a wondrous way, it is good!

As long as we can't grasp this, we say *Baruch Dayan Ha'emes*. Because only in the future, this wonder will be revealed, the fact that *Baruch Dayan Ha'emes* itself is *Hatov vebaMeitiv*. It's not that we were mistaken. We were right; something bad happened. It's that the bad thing is, at the same time, something good. But we can't grasp this here in this world.

When Moshe asked *Hashem* what Name to tell the Jewish people, *Hashem* said, “Do you wish to know My Name?” I have a lot of different modes of action. But I will tell you something that is the internal aspect, the root of everything: אהיה אשר אהיה.

In other words, the truth will be revealed in the future, and then you will understand how everything *Hashem* did is good. And Rashi explains how, in a certain sense, it is true even now. “I will be' with them in this trouble.” All the troubles that *Hashem* brings upon a person are indeed troubles, but wondrously, with all the troubles, *Hashem* is here with him.

This is *emunah*. ●