

Vayechi

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The Torah says that Ya'akov *Avinu*, sensing his end was near, decided to let his sons in on one of the best kept secrets of all history, the end of days. But, instead of spilling the beans Ya'akov moved on to blessing his sons, leaving us with a monumental cliff hanger. We could sure use that critical information now.

Rashi explains the sudden change of direction. Apparently, the information was not something Ya'akov *Avinu* knew on his own, but was a prophecy that he had to receive, but didn't. So all he could do was move on to the next item on his personal end of days agenda, which was to bless his sons. That he did without a problem.

The *Gemora* elaborates somewhat on what actually happened at that time:

"Ya'akov wanted to reveal to his sons the End of Days, but the Divine Presence left him. He asked: 'Perhaps, *God forbid*, there is something unfit from my bed, just as Yishmael was born to Avraham, and Eisav to my father Yitzchak?' His sons answered, '*Shema Yisroel, Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad*: Just as in your heart only [God is] one, so too in our hearts, there is only one.' At that moment Ya'akov said, '*Boruch Shem kevod Malchuso l'olam va'ed*—Blessed is the Name of His glorious kingdom forever!'" (*Pesachim* 56a)

We can understand Ya'akov's question and concern. But how did his sons' recital of the *Shema* and their professing the oneness of God, answer it, and why did he conclude with *Boruch Shem*?

Because that was obviously the question that Ya'akov had asked them, about *Yichud Hashem*, the unification of God's Name. Everything that had gone wrong for the brothers, particularly the slaughter of Shechem and the sale of Yosef, was the result of a lack of *Yichud Hashem*. Ya'akov knew that if he lost the prophecy about the End

of Days it was because his sons still had not completed their *teshuva*.

In fact, though the *Gemora* does not indicate if Ya'akov had been satisfied with their answer, the *Zohar* does:

“Ya'akov wanted to establish the ‘Mystery of Unity’ below and composed the 24 letters of ‘*Blessed be the Name of His glorious kingdom forever.*’ He didn’t give it 25 letters since the *Mishkan* had yet to be built. Once the *Mishkan* was built, the first word was completed. . . With regard to this the verse says, ‘*God spoke to him from the Appointed Tent, saying, etc.*’ (*Vayikra* 1:1), which has 25 letters.” (*Zohar* 2:139b)

In other words, only once the *Mishkan* had been built was the unity of God expressed by *Boruch Shem* on par with the unity of God declared through the *Shema*. The *Mishkan*, in which the service of God was performed 24/7, and in which miracles daily occurred, made it perfectly clear to anyone who witnessed them that the Divine Presence was as real on earth as it was in Heaven. The future words of the Zechariah *HaNavi*, “*on that day, God will be One and His Name, One*” (*Zechariah* 14:9) were fulfilled on a daily basis in the *Mishkan*.

Shabbos Day

REMEMBER HOW PHARAOH said, “*Who is God that I should listen to His voice to let the Jewish people out? I do not know God, and will I not let the Jewish people out*” (*Shemos* 5:2)? It loses something in the translation, because Pharaoh not only believed in God, he believed that *Elokim*, the God of nature, had punished the world with the Flood.

This is why Pharaoh did not take Moshe *Rabbeinu*’s threat seriously. He knew that nature had rules that God Himself made and obeyed. If the Jewish people were going to go free, Pharaoh calculated, they would have to do it “naturally,” and naturally speaking they lacked the means to go free.

Moshe *Rabbeinu*, on the other hand, was trying to introduce Pharaoh, and really the Jewish people, to a higher level of God’s reality, *Hovayah*. This is the level of Divine revelation that becomes obvious specifically *because* it overrides the Laws of Physics, as the 10 Plagues did, et al. “It’s good that you see *Elokim*,” Moshe *Rabbeinu* told Pharaoh. “But if you trace *Elokim* upwards, you will see that it was *Hovayah* that gave rise to *Elokim*, and is what tells *Elokim* what to do and when.”

And lest one make the mistake of thinking that this was uniquely Pharaoh’s problem, it has been the problem of just about everyone going back to *Gan Aiden* and the first sin. We’re all failing the same test on some level that Ya'akov *Avinu* asked his

sons about. They answered with the *Shema* and said, “Just as in your heart only [God is] one, so too in our hearts, there is only one,” meaning that we are now clear on the *yichud* of *Hovayab-Elokim*.

Ya’akov *Avinu* suspected otherwise, or the prophecy about the End of Days would not have left him. That is what *Moshiach*’s arrival will do for mankind, unify *Hovayab* and *Elokim* as *Hovayab-Elokim*. If they had in fact completed the *yichud* in their hearts as well as their minds, then it would have been the End of Days in their time, and the prophecy would not have left Ya’akov.

Ya’akov’s suspicions were confirmed after his death here:

“They commanded [messengers to go] to Yosef to say, ‘Your father commanded [us] before his death, saying, “Say to Yosef, ‘Please, forgive now your brothers’ sin. . . .” Yosef wept when they spoke to him. . . . But Yosef told them, ‘Don’t be afraid, for am I instead of God?’”

“Am I perhaps in His place? . . . If I wanted to harm you, would I be able? Did not all of you plan evil against me? The Holy One, Blessed is He, however, designed it for good. So how can I alone harm you?” (*Rashi*)

In other words, Yosef told them, can anything happen against the will of God? Whether a person does good or evil it is all the will of God. Neither good nor evil has any independent power to override the will of God, and the moment a person acts in any way that would suggest otherwise, they have separated *Elokim* from *Hovayab*. That is the real sin in sin.

In fact, it was this separation of *Hovayab* and *Elokim* that the original snake used to trap Chava into eating from the *Aitz HaDa’as Tov v’Ra*. Ever wonder where God was when they were talking and Chava capitulated and ate? From the Torah, it sounds like God was somewhere else altogether because that is how they both acted.

In fact, God was right there the whole time, quietly watching everything unfold, especially once Chava said:

“The woman said to the snake, ‘We may eat from all the fruit of the trees of the garden, but of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, Elokim said, ‘You shall not eat of it, and you shall not touch it, lest you die.’” (Bereishis 3:2-3)

The snake, a.k.a., the *Sitra Achra*, picked up on Chava’s lack of *Hovayab* awareness when she failed to mention the Name with *Elokim*, and answered her:

“You will surely not die. Elokim knows that on the day that you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like Elokim, knowing good and evil.” (Bereishis 2:4-5)

This is what gave Chava a sense that she was on her own, to do as she saw fit. Being real with *Hovayab-Elokim* would have made her realize that God was there and that the whole thing was a test. As Dovid *HaMelech* later wrote: “*I have placed Hovayab before me constantly; because [He is] at my right hand, I will not falter*” (*Tehillim* 16:8). “If I can see everything in life as coming directly from God,” Dovid *HaMelech* said, “no matter how *natural* it looks, then I will always know that I am being tested and rise to the occasion.”

Seudas Shlishis

THERE IS A hint to this issue being the main one for the brothers and redemption, at the end of *Parashas Mikeitz*. After the viceroy’s goblet was found in Binyomin’s sack, and they were forced to return to Egypt to face judgment, Yosef told his brothers:

“*What is this deed that you have committed? Don’t you know that a person like me—kamoni—practices divination—nachesh yenchesh?*” (*Bereishis* 44:15)

The Hebrew word *kamoni—like me*—is spelled *Chof-Mem-Nun-Yud*. If you go backwards two letters in the verse from the *Mem*, the letter that follows is a *Shin*. Do the same again and you arrive at a *Yud*, and one more time brings you to a *Ches*. Together, the letters spell *Mosbiach* in reverse, and that is pretty amazing even if you don’t believe in things like this.

This is especially so, since it occurs in the verse that also happens to mention the word *nachash*—snake, a word that appears very, very few times in the entire Torah. It also happens to have the same *gematria* as *Mosbiach*, 358. This, we are told, is significant because it was the snake who caused us to go into exile, but it will be *Mosbiach* who will take us out of it.

But why *here*, why *now*? Even if this was not Yosef himself hinting to his brothers, it is the Torah hinting to us. Why?

Because this was the official turning point, or *potential* turning point. This was the place that the brothers were supposed to realize that all that had happened was from God—“*This is from Hovayab, that which is wondrous in our eyes*” (*Tehillim* 118:23)—part of some greater master plan that they had been oblivious to when they sold Yosef, but of which they were now fast becoming aware.

And they came so close too, buuuutt just missed it, saying instead:

“*What shall we say to my master? What shall we speak, and how shall we exonerate ourselves? Elokim has found your servants’ iniquity. . .*” (*Bereishis*

44:16)

Elokim only? Really? Not *Hovayab-Elokim*. . . after all you have gone through and were supposed to have learned about the inner workings of *Hashgochab Pratis*? Apparently not, and apparently setting up an even bigger reveal, and thousands of years of exile. It was the only way left to lead the Jewish people to the level of realization that the *yichud* of *Hovayab* and *Elokim* is redemption, as the verse of “*kamoni*” is telling us.

Acharis K'Reishis, Part 1

I HAVE QUOTED several times from a *sefer* called *Acharis K'Reishis*, which means “*Last Like First*.” It is a remarkable work by Rabbi Aryeh Shapira, *sblita*, based on the teachings of the *Ramchal* (Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato) and the *GR”A* (Vilna *Gaon*) regarding the final redemption, and its similarity to the first redemptions from Egypt and Bavel.

This is must-know information for anyone who wants to be ready for the final redemption, *it should come quickly in our time*. In fact, the information is so crucial, and the *Ramchal* and *GR”A* are so prominent, that it is hugely surprising that this is not taught everywhere and that more people do not know about it.

Therefore, I have decided to translate sections here. After all, the point of redemption is to make the reality of *ain od Milvado* real to the *entire* world.

The Future Redemption, Part 1

We will now clarify, *with the help of God*, what is relevant to the future redemption from what we have already brought from the commentary of the *GR”A* on *Tikunei Zohar Chodash* (27b), that the beginning will be with a *pekidab*—remembrance, as happened in the time of Koresh (Cyrus).

Actually, it is discussed in the *Gemora* in *Kesuvos*, 110b:

Rav Zeira was avoiding [being seen] by [his teacher] Rav Yehudah, wanting to go to [from Bavel to] *Eretz Yisroel*, [knowing that his teacher disapproved]. Rav Yehudah held that anyone who ascends from Bavel to *Eretz Yisrael* transgresses a positive *mitzvah*, as it says, “*They will be taken to Bavel and remain then until the day that I recall—pokdei—them, God testified*” (*Yirmiyahu* 27:22).

These words are amazing. What relevance does the verse in *Yirmiyahu* about redemption during the First Temple have to the final redemption?

Tosafos there already picked up on this and they wrote:

Even though the verse is written regarding the first exile, it can be said that the verse was particular about the second exile as well. These words also require explanation, because in the end, the verse was [only] said regarding the First Temple.

According to the *GR*"A however, the matter is illuminated. The *Chachamim* accepted that *every* redemption follows the same pattern of *pekidah*, [an initial act of redemption], and *zechirah* [the completion of the redemption]. Thus, whatever applied regarding the return of *Tzion* [the first time] is to also be the order for the future [redemptions] as well.

This is what Rav Yehudah learned from what was said regarding the First Temple, "*They will be taken to Babylonia and there they shall remain until the day that I recall them.*" The future redemption will also be according to this order, and the Jewish people will not leave exile until the time of the *pekidah*. *Chazak!*

Good Shabbos,
Pinchas Winston