

Parsha Pearls

FROM THE WORDS OF THE GEDOLIM

And G-d spoke to Moshe, and said to him, "I am Hashem." (6:2)

Why does the Torah switch in mid-sentence from "Elokim" to "Hashem"? At the end of last week's parsha, Moshe said, "Why have You dealt badly with this people? Why did You send me? Since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has made this people suffer even more." What Moshe did not realize was that the decree of exile had really been for 400 years, and now Hashem was taking Israel out of Egypt after only 210 years. In order to make up for the other 190 years, Hashem was making the slavery especially hard at the end. Thus, the extra suffering was actually beneficial, and essential

to the redemption process. Hashem therefore said to Moshe, "Even when I appear in the role of Elokim, the attribute of justice and punishment, I am really Hashem, the attribute of mercy. Do not complain about the suffering of exile – know that I am doing everything for your benefit." (Tuv Hapeninim, p. 279)

The Ateres Yehoshua gives another explanation as the benefit of this extra suffering. If Pharaoh had obeyed right away and let the Jewish people go, he would have had a hand in the birth of the Jewish people.

When a wicked man gives something or accomplishes something, he has a certain power over it; in this case, Pharaoh's generosity would have left an imprint of defilement on the Jewish people forever. For our benefit, Hashem made sure that Pharaoh resisted the order, so that when we did eventually get out, we would be completely free of Pharaoh's influence. We would then be ready to accept the Torah at Sinai. How important it is to avoid favors and money coming from unclean sources – the Exodus from Egypt was delayed only because of this! (ibid. p. 280)



Behold, I am smiting the water in the river with the staff in my hand, and it will become blood. And the fish in the river will die..." (7:17-18)

Rashi explains that the Nile River was smitten in the first plague because when Hashem punishes a nation, He first punishes its idols. The Egyptians depended on the Nile for irrigation, and they worshipped it as a deity. This explains why the Nile suffered, but why did the fish have to suffer? The Satmar Rav answered: The fish lived and breathed and were sustained by the river, which was idolatry. Whoever is sustained by idolatry is punished along with the idolatry, even if he himself

is righteous and innocent. (Toros Ve'uvdos Mibeis Raboseinu, p. 128)

Reb Dovid Soloveitchik reports that his father, the Brisker Rav, once said, "Those who keep far away from the Zionist movement – from their deeds, their money and all that is theirs – need not fear, G-d forbid, the evil that will befall those who support Zionism." (Uvdos Vehanhagos Leveis Brisk, v. 4 p. 203)

“And I will place a separation between My people and your people; tomorrow this sign will be.” (8:19)

The word “pedus” means “separation,” but it can also mean “redemption.” The Mesorah notes that the word occurs only two other times in Tanach: “Redemption He sent for His people” (Tehillim 111:9), and “Israel will hope to Hashem, for with Hashem is the kindness and with Him is much redemption” (Tehillim 130:7). Moreover, in our parsha the word is written without a vav, but in both places in Tehillim it has a vav.

The Yitav Lev explained this based on the Midrash Tanchuma, end of Acharei Mos: “Fortunate are you, Israel, who is like you? A people redeemed with Hashem” (Devarim 33:29). It does not say “a people that Hashem redeemed,” but “redeemed with Hashem.” Just as a man takes his maaser sheni tithes and redeems them with coins, so too Israel is redeemed with Hashem, if it were possible to say such a thing. Said the Holy One, blessed is He: In this world you were redeemed by humans – in Egypt by Moshe and Aharon, in the time of Sisera by Barak and Devorah, in the time of the Midyanites by Shamgar the son of Anas, as it says, “And he also saved Israel.” And so by the Judges, and since they were humans, you became subjugated again later. But in the future, I Myself will redeem you, and you will never be subjugated again, as it says, “Israel is redeemed with Hashem an everlasting redemption.” (Yishaya 45:17)

This is why the word “pedus” – redemption – is missing a vav in our parsha: the redemption from Egypt was incomplete and not permanent. Why wasn’t it permanent? Because “redemption He sent for His people” – Hashem sent the redemption through a human emissary. But when Hashem Himself exercises His kindness and redeems us Himself, then “with Him is much redemption” – it will be complete and permanent. (Toros Ve’uvdos Mibeis Raboseinu, p. 128)

The Midrash Shochar Tov explains the same concept with a parable. “For with You is the source of life; through Your light will we see light” (Tehillim 36:10). Rabbi Yochanan said: Once a man lit a candle at night, and it went out. He lit it again and it went out. He said,

“How long will I tire myself out? I will wait until the sun rises and go by the light of the sun.” So too, the Jews were subjugated in Egypt – Moshe and Aharon arose and redeemed them. They were again subjugated in Babylonia – they were redeemed by Chanania, Mishael and Azarya. They were again subjugated by Greece – they were redeemed by the Hasmonean and his sons. They were again subjugated by Edom. Said the Jewish people: We have become tired – we are continually redeemed and then subjugated again. We no longer wish for the light of human beings, only the Holy One, blessed is He, as it says, “Hashem is G-d and He made light for us.” (Tehillim 118:27)

Reb Tzvi Elimelech of Dinov once posed the question: Why is our custom regarding the location of a wedding the opposite of the custom at the time of the Gemora? In the Gemora’s times, the kallah was brought from her father’s house to the chosson’s house, and the wedding took place there (Rashi on Kesubos 15b). But our custom is that the kallah’s parents make the wedding in their place, and the chosson comes to the kallah. He answers by quoting the Zohar (Vayikra 6a) where Rabbi Acha asked Rabbi Shimon the meaning of the verse, “The virgin of Israel has fallen and will never get up.” (Amos 5:2) Rabbi Shimon replied that it means that in the final redemption, Israel will not get up on her own as she did in previous redemptions, such as in Babylonia where the Jews went back with permission from the king. She is not allowed to do so, for Hashem adjured us not to arouse or awaken the love before its time (Kesubos 111a). Rather she will wait in her place in exile until Hashem Himself comes and helps her up. This is why the later generations established the custom of having the wedding in the place of the kallah, and the chosson comes to her to rejoice with her - the chosson symbolizes Hashem, who will come back to the Jewish people in exile. Indeed, all Israel’s customs are prophecy, for they are the children of prophets! (Bracha Meshuleshes on Chullin Chapter 5, Mishnah 3)

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