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Darkness Before the Dawn - Part 2

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Last week we discovered the code for Geulah, passed down from Yaakov to Yosef to the Children of Israel – *pakod Yifcode*.

Yet we also discovered that Moshe's initial mission ended in failure, that the people deserted him and that redemption seemed further away than ever.

Let us continue our journey:

The first question we must ask is why did Hashem send Moshe on a futile mission? The answer is that He didn't. Hashem's command was simple.

So now come, and I will send you to Pharaoh, and take My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.

הַעֲרָפֶלְאָ רְחִילָן שָׂאָה כָּלָה תְּעִנָּה
לְאַרְ שְׁיִינְ נְבִי מְעִתָּא אַצְחָה
מְרַצְמָה
Shemot 3:10

What then follows in the text is Moshe disagreeing with the initial strategy. Hashem even gives him the code words!

Go and assemble the elders of Israel, and say to them, 'The Lord God of your forefathers has appeared to me, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, "I have surely remembered you and what is being done to you in Egypt."

לְאָרֶב שְׁוִיכָה קְדַתָּא תְּפִפּוֹ אֲוֹרֶל
סְמִיכָה בְּאַקְלָא הַמְהֻלָּא תְּרִמָּא
קְחָצִים הַרְבָּא קְלָא לְאַהֲרֹן
מְכַתָּא תְּדִקָּה פְּדִיקָה פְּרִמָּא לְבַקְעָי
סְמִינָה רָצֵם בְּמַכְלִי שְׁעַהֲתָא
Shemot 3:16

However, Moshe insists this is not enough and as the midrash says, Hashem only gave Moshe the signs in keeping with Moshe's own approach.

In the end Moshe claims he is not suitable due to his speech impediment and rejects the whole tactic that Hashem was suggesting. Eventually when he does go to Egypt, he turns what was meant to be an opening statement to Paroh into a mass movement.

Eventually after all has failed and Moshe and the people are despondent and in a worse position than before Moshe came to Egypt— does Hashem then tell Moshe that now they are going to do it His way!

"Come, speak to Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, and he will let the children of Israel out of his land."

מִרְצָמָתְךָ מֶלֶךְ הָעָרָ פְּלַא רְבֵד אֲבָנִי
זְכָרָא מֶלֶךְ שְׂרִירָה בֵּיתָחַלְךָ

If you compare this instruction by Hashem, it has hardly changed from His initial strategy above. It is as if there had to be failure before redemption can happen that it can't be smooth sailing.

The understanding is that *Geula* is a process – *pakod* is a process.

Moshe didn't fail, that is the nature of *pakod*.

Hashem shows Himself, then goes into hiding. The Medrash compares it to a gazelle, you catch a glimpse – then it is gone.

Pakod means to remember, but it is used in a specific way in the Torah

And the Lord remembered Sarah as He had said, and the Lord did to Sarah as He had spoken.

רְמָאָרָן שְׁאָלָכָהָרָ שְׁתַּאֲדַקָּפְּהָן
רְבָדְרְשָׁאָלָכָהָרָ שְׁלִיהָ שְׁעִינָן
לְבָמָהָרְבָאָלָהָרָ שְׁדַלְתְּוֹרָהָתָן
וְתַּאֲרָבְדִּרְשָׁאָדְעֹזְמְלְוִיבְקָלְלָן
סְמִיקָּאָן:

The Gemara in *Rosh Hashana* (11a) explains that Hashem was *Pakod* Sarah on *Rosh Hashana*. Yet Yitzchak wasn't born till *Pesach*.

In this case *Pekida* is the conception – birth is going to happen, but it will take time, there will be pain, there will be difficulties – but birth is coming.

The beginning of *Geula*, is the conception, the *pakod*, which is the sudden dawning of a completely different way to think about the future. There is a small seed of freedom and people start to dream.

Pakod keeps the memory alive during the dark and dormant years, it is the genetic code for *geula*.

The *Rambam* explains that it is like being lost in a storm. Suddenly there is a flash of lightning and you can see clearly where you are heading and what direction you need to take. Then the lightning goes, and it is dark again and the work begins to make your way home, but unlike before, you now have the vision. Yet, still the journey home will be challenging.

The *Gemara* (*Sotah* 11b) states that we were redeemed from Egypt because of the women. They were inspired by the *pekida*, they never gave up hope.

That first *geula* process in Egypt is the model for the future. There are three stages. First there is the initial euphoria. That is then followed by despair as redemption seems further away than ever but then comes recognition of truth!

Today we have once again had the *bracha* of 'pekida' we have returned to Israel. Yet we understand this is only *Reishit Smichat* – the beginning of our *geula*, we have not fully arrived. However so much of the struggle, the pain, the despair has been experienced by our nation. It was those early Zionists both religious and secular who began to think differently, who began to believe that we could return. Who planted that seed.

However, what makes a Rav Kook different from a Theodore Herzl, is that Rav Kook realised that you cannot exchange the covenant with Hashem for mere love of the land or satisfy our yearning as a nation for meaning and significance with 19th century nationalism. We are far more than that, we are driven by that first *Geula* and its first stop on the way to Eretz Yisrael – Har Sinai.

As Rav Matis writes '*Events now conspire to force us to confront the essence of Jewish identity unclouded by silliness. We either unabashedly confirm the commitments of Yisrael or we must accept an honourable oblivion.*'

It is our choice. It is time to recognize the truth.

We see, certainly outside of Israel, wherever Jews do not connect themselves to the *mesorah* – they are tragically disappearing.

As Rav Matis concludes ‘*There is only one choice – and eventually it must be confirmed. Still sustained by pacode yifcode, the covenant will not die and history will not leave us alone. There can be nothing counterfeit in geula and that is why it takes so long. The last myths must run their course, do their damage and expose their sham. The process has begun – gestation proceeds beneath the surface.*’

So as we deal with a tremendous darkness.

A worsening global pandemic.

An America in crisis.

A rise in extremism globally.

A collapse in morality.

We must stay firm on our course, on our mission.

As we have done for the last three thousand years and realise that..

The dawn is coming.

Shabbat Shalom

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Are Names Boring

Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis
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Picture the scene. You're at a simcha, a happy event, and the host stands up, as hosts do, welcomes this one and that one, mentions this relative and the other – so and so who's come from afar and then of course those who are unfortunately not with us. Name after name after name. You're not a member of the family, you're not familiar with these names. Do you find them boring?

Actually no. And that's because you appreciate that some people must be mentioned because it's thanks to them that this simcha is actually taking place. It's because of what they have invested, either recently or way back in the past, to enable those who are celebrating to come together for a most wonderful occasion.

The Book of Names

This shabbat we will read Parshat Shemot, the portion of names, and it comes at the beginning of Sefer Shemot, the book of names. There are so many lists of names in the Torah. Sometimes the names are familiar, often they are not. What's particularly intriguing is that this list of names at the beginning of our parsha are very familiar. They're the children of Yaakov Avinu, those who came originally into Egypt. We already know these names and we know these details. Why is it mentioned right at the beginning of the book?

So the Midrash explains that the Torah here wants us to appreciate the contribution of these tzaddikim. Each and every one of them, says the Midrash, had a pure soul and was a great person.

Rashi adds that these names were mentioned at the end of the book of Bereishit in order to provide praise for what people did in their lifetime. Now these names are mentioned at the beginning of Shemot, to praise them once they had passed away, because their impact continues to be with us.

Appreciation

So the Torah therefore mentions names in order to show appreciation. If not for these great, wonderful people, we wouldn't be here as a nation to this day.

So what is the takeaway for us all? I believe we should be asking ourselves the question, "What does our name mean to others?" Not that we want our name to be on lists that are read out or engraved on buildings but rather, what is the impact we are making? To what degree are we influencing events and people now, and to what extent are we investing in the future of the world?

A good name

Let us ensure that through our deeds, through our words and through everything that we do, we will provide a beracha, a great blessing for those around us. In appreciation of what King Solomon taught,

"Tov shem mishemen tov," – "A good name is more important than the finest of oils."

And the Mishnah teaches,

"V'keter shem tov oleh al gabeihem," – "The crown of a good name supersedes all."

Shabbat shalom.

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