

Unity Is The Key To The Redemption

In parshas Shemos we read that Moshe struck down an Egyptian taskmaster that was beating a Jewish slave and hid him in the sand, thinking that nobody knew. The next day he saw two Jews quarreling (Dasan and Aviram), one raised his hand to hit the other. Moshe said to him, "Why do you strike your friend?" The man retorted, "Who appointed you as a leader and judge over us, do you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?!" Moshe was afraid, he said, "so the fact is known."

The Midrash tells us, that Moshe said, "you have lashon hara (evil speech) between you, how are you worthy of redemption?"

It seems from here, that Moshe felt, that lashon hara alone, was enough to hold off the redemption from Egypt.

Our sages compare lashon hara to some of the worst sins, from denying G-d's existence, to the big three, idolatry, adultery and murder.

However, we know that among those that left Egypt, there were idolaters, but that didn't stop the redemption. So we have to understand, what is it about lashon hara, that is so egregious, that it alone could hold up the redemption?

When it comes to war, we see a similar differentiation. The Talmud Yerushalmi tells us, that "David's generation were all tzadikim (righteous), but because they had informers, they would go out to war and fall (in battle). Achav's generation were idolaters, but because they didn't have informers, they would go down to war and be victorious." What we see from this, is that when it comes to war, unity and peacefulness brings victory. However, we still have to understand, what is it about lashon hara, that holds up the redemption?

Rashi explains the words, "So the fact is known," from a second Midrash, that Moshe was saying, that now he knows why they are in exile. In other words, not only does lashon hara hold back the redemption, but it is also the reason for the exile.

In the words of Dasan and Aviram to Moshe there was far worse than lashon hara, they were threatening to inform on him to the Pharaoh, which they did, and informing, in this case, is much worse than plain lashon hara. But from the Midrash and Rashi, it seems that Moshe wasn't as bothered by that, as he was by the lashon hara. Why is lashon hara worse?

With the redemption from Egypt we became a nation of our own, as it says about the Exodus, that Hashem took for himself "a nation from within (another) nation." The defining factor of a nation is that the people are united, and what unites us as a nation is far greater and more powerful than any other nation, as will be explained.

The Rambam calls us a nation even before the Exodus, but what he is referring to, is what makes every nation a nation, that they are united with common ideals and purpose. The problem with this is, that when their ideals change or their purpose becomes irrelevant they lose their identity as a people. As he explains, that being the children of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, whose purpose was to teach the world about G-d, we were "a people that knew G-d," in other words, that was our ideal and our identity as a nation. However, the Rambam continues to say, that in Egypt many were influenced and entrenched in the Egyptian culture. He concludes that "out of Hashem's love for us, and to keep the promise he made to Avraham our forefather. . . Hashem chose Israel as his (nachala) portion. . ."

From the last words of the Rambam, the difference between the kind of nation we were before the Exodus and after the Exodus becomes clear. In Egypt, we were united under a common ideal, but Hashem took us out of Egypt because He chose us, we became a nation based on something greater than any human ideal, we are united because Hashem chose us to be his nachala. What is a nachala?

A nachala refers to the portion of land that was given to the Jewish people upon conquering the

land after the Exodus. By law, the portion of land that was given to a family, was to stay in the family forever. In other words, when Hashem chose us to be his nachala, it means that we became His nation forever. This uniting factor, being from Hashem is not subject to change.

True choice is not based on the items being chosen, but on the one who is choosing. If it is based on the items, you will always choose the one you think is better. That is not true choice, that is called being smart. However, when the items are exactly the same, and you choose one, that is true choice.

When Hashem chooses, it is always true choice, and he chose us as His nation. Which includes all of us, from the most righteous to the least. That is why even idolaters went out of Egypt, because they were also part of the nation that Hashem chose. The only thing is that we had to be united, because if we weren't, then there would be no nation for Hashem to choose. So the only thing that would hold up the redemption is disunity.

There are several negative aspects of lashon hara.

The first is the damage it does, as "The sages say, 'lashon hara kills Three. The one spoken about, the listener and the speaker.'"

The second is the bad it brings out in the person who is spoken about, because until it was said, it was hidden.

These two aspects are destructive and hurtful, but like other sins, they don't breed disunity.

But there is a third dimension, and that is lashon hara itself. Even if the person speaking has no intention to cause damage, or to tell of the negative aspects of his friend, and even if he doesn't speak out of hate, the mere fact that someone talks badly of another, shows that there is disunity. And as mentioned earlier, when there is disunity, there is no nation for Hashem to choose, and by extension, there is no redemption possible.

Now we can understand why lashon hara is so bad, and why it bothered Moshe so much, because it itself could hold up the redemption.

This will help us understand why by the Seder, one of the four sons we speak of, is the wicked son. You may ask, why include the wicked son? The answer is, that without him, we aren't complete, meaning, there is no nation to redeem.

The unity of the Jewish people, is what caused the redemption from Egypt, and it is the same unity that will bring the future redemption. May it come soon.

Plant Now, Benefit Later

The Haftora for parshas Shemos has one theme, divided into three parts. The theme is the blossoming of redemption. First, we go down into exile for a reason. Second, in the darkness of the exile is where we are able to accomplish the most, developing ourselves and the world for the ultimate redemption. Third, the gathering of the exiles and how when Moshiach comes, we will reap the fruits of our labor in exile.

There are also hints of how to bring Moshiach, through showing love to our fellow Jews.

The connection to our parsha, is that the parsha begins with the descent of the Jewish people into Egypt. Then it tells of the hard labor and the amazing growth of the Jewish nation. And finally the beginning of our redemption from Egypt, when Hashem sent Moshe to start the process of the Exodus.

Another connection to our parsha is the first verse of the Haftora. The parsha begins, "And these are the names of the Children of Yisrael who came to Egypt."¹ The Haftora also begins, "Those who came," and continues, "whom Yaakov caused to take root, Yisrael budded and blossomed and they

¹ Exodus 1:1

filled the face of the Earth with fruit."² Just as the parsha tells us, how the Jewish people multiplied.

Both Yaakov and Yisrael are names of the Jewish people. When it comes to taking root it says Yaakov, but by budding and blossoming it says Yisrael. Why the difference?

Yaakov, refers to the Jewish people when they interact with the physical world, which in the time of exile, is a very dark place. Yaakov is symbolic of serving Hashem out of accepting the yoke of His will, which is our main service to Hashem in exile. This form of service is not necessarily very meaningful, but it is the most powerful. It is compared to planting which is hard work. Planting a small tasteless seed in the ground, where it is dark and cold. But it is there where this small tasteless seed takes root, and grows into a great tree. The transformation from a small seed to a large tree, is exponentially great. The same is true about our service in exile. It is hard work, tasteless, it is cold and dark, but here is where our work takes root and the transformation is well beyond our efforts.

Yisrael refers to the Jewish people's interaction with the spiritual and G-dly, which is mainly in the time of Moshiach. Yisrael is symbolic of serving Hashem out of understanding. It is compared to budding and blossoming, and the growth of fruit. Above ground, in the light and warmth, the budding and blossoming is visible and beautiful, and the fruit is tasty and enjoyable. Because in the light and revelation of Hashem in the era of Moshiach, we will have the pleasure of seeing the accomplishments of our actions and the fruit of our labor.

All this will be possible, only because of the seeds we planted in the exile. So our work now as Yaakov, in the darkness of the exile, is what gives us the great pleasure as Yisrael, in the time of Moshiach.³

The Haftora continues with a rebuke to the Jewish people for their idol worship and then resumes telling about the time of Moshiach. "It will be on that day, Hashem will remove the kernel from the chaff of the river and until the brook of Egypt, and you, the children of Israel, will be gathered one by one. And it will be on that day, the great shofar will be sounded, and those who are lost in Assyria and those who are cast away in Egypt, will come and bow down to Hashem on the Holy Mountain, in Yerushalayim."⁴

Hashem will remove the kernel, which is the Jewish people. From the chaff, which are the nations of the world. The river is Assyria, which was by the Euphrates, until the brook of Egypt. What is the significance of Egypt and Assyria, which are mentioned or hinted to, in these two verses? And why are the exiles in Egypt called "cast away," while those of Assyria are called lost?

There are two types of exiles. Egypt is symbolic of every exile of oppression and servitude. As the name Egypt in Hebrew is Mitzrayim, which means constraints. When the Jewish people were in the Egyptian exile, they were in forced servitude. That is why they are called "cast away," because they are oppressed.

The second kind of exile, is one of abundance and freedom. As the name Assyria in Hebrew is Ashur, which means happy. And when the Jewish people were exiled to Assyria, they had religious and economic freedom. When there is abundance and freedom, it is easy to get lost in the culture of the time and stray from the Jewish way. This is why the exiles of Assyria are called lost.⁵

The verse says, "and you the children of Israel, will be gathered one by one." Literally, "to the one, one." What is the meaning of these words?

First, that every Jewish person will be gathered. Second, that Hashem Himself will be involved personally with taking every individual one of us, as

² Isaiah 27:6

³ Maamar Habaim Yashresh 5730.

⁴ Isaiah 27:12-13

⁵ Torahs Menachem Hisvaduyos 5717a Bereishis 2 p136

Rashi explains that He will take each of us by the hand. Third, the "one," the essence of every Jew, will be gathered and become united with "The One," which is Hashem.

Alternatively, it is a call to each of us, to reach out to others with love and bring them closer to Hashem.⁶

"The great shofar will be sounded," what is the significance of a "great" shofar? Also, from the verse, there is no indication as to who is doing the blowing, why?

The sound of the shofar reaches the core of every Jew. The question is, how powerful is its effect? There are four levels in shofar, each of them shakes us up by touching our core.

The shofar of Rosh Hashanah, is a cry from deep within the heart of a Jew, deeper than the reach of our understanding. Therefore, it reaches deep within Hashem, to the divine will, which is far beyond divine wisdom. This causes Hashem, so to speak, to blow the shofar, meaning, shining from his divine will upon us. This is the meaning of the verse, "Hashem our G-d will blow the shofar."

Greater than the shofar of Rosh Hashanah is the shofar blowing of Yom Kippur, which was blown to announce the jubilee year, of which the Torah says, "You must proclaim shofar blasts."

Greater than that, was the shofar that was sounded at the Giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. Of which the Torah says, "The sound of the shofar was going and very strong."

Yet, the sounding of the shofar when Moshiach comes will be even greater than all the previous three, as it is called the "Great Shofar." It will be so strong, that it will reach every Jew, even "Those who are lost in Assyria and cast away in Egypt." It will affect them so much so, that they "will come and bow down to Hashem." Meaning, that they will start to keep Torah Judaism. And at what level?

The verse continues, "on the Holy Mountain in Yerushalayim," meaning, the holiest level.⁷

Why will it be so powerful? Because of the blower. While the shofar of Rosh Hashanah, jubilee, and Giving of the Torah are great, they all come from a place in Hashem that relates to the world. However, the sound of shofar of Moshiach, comes from the essence of Hashem, beyond any connection to existence. That is why it doesn't tell us who is doing the blowing, because it is a part of Hashem that is beyond any name or description. This call of the shofar will reach the essence of every Jew, no matter how far they have strayed.⁸

The Rebbe explains, that this is similar to major events in the world, like the Six Day War, where the hand of Hashem was so apparent, that the souls of Jewish people all around the world, were set ablaze.⁹

The Haftora continues with a rebuke to Efraim (the ten northern tribes), for their arrogance and the devastating consequences headed their way. Then it speaks of the future glory of Yehuda and Binyamin, followed by a depiction of their present drunken and irreverent state.

The last two verses return to the subject of Moshiach, "So says Hashem to the House of Yaakov, who redeemed Avraham."¹⁰ The simple meaning here, is that Hashem, Who saved Avraham, is speaking to the House of Yaakov. However, it could be read, as if Yaakov is the one who redeemed Avraham. What are we meant to learn from this? And what does it have to do with Moshiach?

Avraham's attribute is love. As Jews, we are obligated to love every Jewish person, irrespective of their observance level. However, when a friend who is observant sins, and even after you approach

⁷ Torahs Menachem Hisvaduyos 5713 p326

⁸ Maamar V'haya Bayom Hahu Yitaka 5728

⁹ Sichos Kodesh 5728a Bereishis 2 p134-135, Yud Tes Kislev p256.

¹⁰ Isaiah 29:22

⁶ Sichos Kodesh 5737a Emor p737

him and talk to him about it, he continues to do so, the Talmud tells you to hate him.

This is where Yaakov's attribute of compassion redeems Avraham. When you see your friend's failing, you will hate the bad in him, but at the same time, you will recognize that he has good deep within. You will have compassion on his Neshama, which will awaken the love for your friend again.¹¹

Since love among Jews is a key element in bringing Moshiach, it is mentioned here.

The verse continues, "Yaakov will no longer be ashamed... When he sees his children, the work of My hands, in his midst, they shall sanctify My name, and sanctify the Holy One of Yaakov, and they shall praise the G-d of Israel."¹²

May it happen soon.

Unbreakable

In this week's parsha, Shemos, we read about the burning bush. "The bush was on fire but the bush was not being consumed."

What is the meaning of this symbolism? What can we take from this to help us in our lives?

For the Jewish people in Egypt, the bondage had reached an all time low. Pharaoh inflicted with a skin ailment, was told by his doctors that to cure it, he needs to bathe in the blood of Jewish children. This was the blow that broke the Jewish people.

Until this point there was the hope, the understanding that as difficult as things are, there is a purpose to the suffering and soon will be an end to the bondage. But with their children being murdered, all hope of a future is gone.

Yet the Jewish people did not despair, when they had nothing left they remembered that a Jew

always has Hashem and they cried out to Hashem with all their hearts. Hashem then heard their cries.

This is when Hashem shows Moshe the burning bush and this is the start of the redemption.

The bush burns but it is not consumed. This is the Jewish people. When there seems to be no fuel left we remember that we have Hashem and burn bright and strong and we are not consumed. This is what kick starts our redemption.

At times, life is so difficult, we can see no hope, but there is no reason to despair, rather it is time to shine brighter than ever and cry out to Hashem from a place far deeper than what we ever imagined, from the inner fire that can never be extinguished. And then Hashem gives us true redemption.

I am amazed every day by my wife Dina, I don't know what keeps her going. The struggle to take care of the family and being there for me. It used to be burning the wick at both ends, but now there is no more fuse. I always wonder how she does it, but now I think she is the real thing, a Jewish mother, unbreakable and with an open connection to Hashem.

I think we have already suffered enough, Hashem please send Moshiach.

¹¹ Tanya chapter 32

¹² Isaiah 29:22-23