The Coercion of Geula (2024)

(Yom Kippur/Sukkot)

My younger brother always post-scripts his letters with the words 'grow or die'. In a way this encapsulates the evolution of Geula. On Yom Kippur I noticed that the sin of coercion in Hebrew is written Yad Chazaka. These are the same words that describe the way in which Hashem redeemed us from Egypt. This amazed me. Previously I have written how Yad Chazakah and Chozek Yad represent two types of Geula; masculine (Chozek Yad) and feminine (Yad Chazaka). I experienced both. The first time I escaped Galut with fear and trepidation secretly hoping I would find a place to dwell in Israel. The second time I left proudly and assuredly having found that temporary dwelling to bring my possessions to. How is it that the strong arm of coercion is called by the name associated with Geula? Can we say there is an element of coercion in Geula?

It certainly seems that way after the most recent war of Gog and Magog that began on Oct 7 of last year. Isolation, self-reliance and prayer has been forced upon us by alliances that have increasingly betrayed us. Like a married woman sitting with her baby and crying on the doorstep of her lover we have no place to go. They spit at us and tell us to go away after they have had their way with us. Now this may not seem like coercion from above but the price we pay for our sins. I believe it is both. It seems that part of the process of Geula is forced upon us so that we are then given the masculine choice to accept what we have already proven to ourselves to be true.

The Sephira

This may also be reflected in the sephira. On the night of the Ushpizen of Yacov I asked Rav Boaz if Chassidut discusses the connection between the central sephira of Yacov, Yoseph and David. There seems to be a similarity in all three. Yacov has a double identity. He is both the non-confrontational scholar immersed in Torah who runs from Esav as well as Israel who is forced to battle Esav and defeat him. Yoseph is both the persecuted prisoner as well as the mighty ruler of Egypt. David is both the fugitive and also the mighty king of Israel.

Rav Boaz gave me an interesting answer. Yacov balances and completes two opposing ideas of Chesed and Gevurah to arrive at truth. That wholeness causes himself to be nullified in a way so that there is only Hashem above him. From this type of nullification which is a type of death so to speak comes the ability for something new to grow. For example, similar to a seed that loses its form and disintegrates before the root begins to grow. Yoseph unites Netzach and Hod together. David is a continuation of Yoseph that shapes this gold bar fused by all of the above into a menorah.

Rav Kahane brings down an interesting explanation of a passage in the Haftorah of Sukkoth regarding a time of neither day nor night.

> And it shall be one day that shall be known to the Lord, neither day nor night; and it shall come to pass that at eventide it shall be light. (Zecharia 14:7)

He explains that this describes Geula 'in its time.' As we continue to grow, we are still partly free and partly enslaved. We have a state but still an exile mentality. Now we are learning to be alone and resilient even more yet still only the zealous Chasidim cry 'settle Gaza and Lebanon' while still others who have learned nothing say no this will bring doom. Geula comes in stages just like the evolution of the vav in the center of the sephira. Moshiach ben Yoseph is also related to the vav of the 6th sephirot that is completed in the 7th sephira of Moshiach ben David. The battles that Yoseph succeeds in, pave the way for new realities previously only dreamed and yearned for.

The Parallel Torah Reading

In Sukkot as well as Pesach we read from the same passages in the Torah. Though completely different holidays there is still a common theme. We sinned and did teshuva to place us in a higher position than we were previously. This occurred with Egel as well as the teshuva of Elul that raises us up through stages and mitzvot and inspirations of the holiday to sit in the sukkah.

After Hashem raises us up, we are reminded that Hashem is a jealous God. On Rosh Hashanah we remember the punishment of the Akeida for our sinful alliances. On Pesach we remember the punishment of slavery and plagues, also due to assimilation and alliances to Egypt. Finally, we are reminded after we have received admonition, and at the same time raised to a higher level despite our sins, that we must continue and throw out the enemies of the Land. In other words, do not repeat the same sin and keep moving forward.

There is an interesting concept I heard from Rav Kahane. Our rabbis tell us that in the future our holidays will not have the same significance as they did when it was more difficult to make choices. In a world where revelation is not yet fully revealed, there are often tremendous self-sacrifices involved in choosing good. In this future time of devalued mitzvot of the Jewish people, so to speak, the Gentiles will be obligated to increase mitzvot in a way.

The Gentiles obligated to a mitzvah?

They will be obligated to come to Israel with their offerings on Sukkot as a reparation for the terrible Galut they inflicted upon us. It seems to me that this counterpoints our remembrance of Amalek. The nations will be obligated to remember their sins as well and come to make restitution and celebrate in Israel.

Stages of Coercion

The concept of the stages of Geula that are forced upon us from outside and from within and grow against our will through coercion I was reminded of a few weeks ago. In Rambam's daily mitzvot I heard an interesting explanation.

How does the greatest form of life come from death? We learn that when in contact with death and impurity we need to sprinkle ourselves with the mikveh waters of Torah to restore us. This may return us to where we were. However, there is another type of growth that comes from death and impurity that returns us to an even higher place.

We typically learn stage by stage and grow. There is a growth however that goes far beyond gradual growth. Rav Zera fasted to forget his learning so he would have a new head for the Talmud of Israel. The concerns of Babylon were not the same concerns in Jerusalem. The method of thinking and experiencing was completely different. It wasn't a gradual growth but a nullification and transformation into a new entity. As we stated previously A seed in order to become a tree disintegrates and nullifies itself before roots begin to grow. [See Sefer Hamitzvoth (#107 day 201)]

> It was taught: R. Simeon b. Eleazar said: If the young tell you to build, and the old to destroy, hearken to the elders, but hearken not to the young, for the building of youth is destruction, whilst the destruction of the old is building. (Nedarim 40)

Through this year we have died a little and been reborn with new tools and new directions unrelated to our previous modus operandi. Like a seed we have partly been destroyed so we can now sprout from places that we did not know we had. It's time for a new head for the new year. One with no connection to the past yet completely connected to everything that has preceded us.

The last letter of the Torah is lamed and the first Bet which spells 'lev' - heart. This teaches that the heart cannot stop beating, just like Torah learning cannot stop. However, it also teaches that the end of the Torah is a new circumcised heart. The beginning is a garden with seeds that disintegrate and become something completely different. May we continue to be reborn into something completely different with a new heart and refined soul. May the death and destruction of last Simchat Torah bring us to a new world and a new body of Israel that has greater faith and understanding of the freedom that awaits us when opposite forces are balanced, united, nullified and then transformed into something entirely different.

May the stages of Geula begin to snowball so that darkness and light become clearer. The world has been recreated, Man has been recreated, Israel has been recreated. New alliances await us. Will we build or destroy? Will we settle our conquered lands and build or retreat again and by retreating cause the cycle of destruction again. I trust that Hashem will coerce us into the right direction. May we have the courage and faith to choose it once it has already been chosen for us.

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