

Revelation and Rulership – Parshat Beshalach

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

“Hashem is the Sovereign, Hashem was the Sovereign, Hashem will be the Sovereign forever and ever.” Our Sages combined this sentence for our liturgy from verses appearing in different parts of *Tanach*. It comprises our absolute belief in Hashem’s sovereignty from before time began to after time ends. Yet Bnei Yisroel, after they witnessed the destruction of Pharaoh’s armies at the Red Sea, sang only of the future, “Hashem will be Sovereign forever and ever.” Why did they limit their proclamation to the future? Furthermore, why is this line also most often found in our liturgy?

The Torah continues, “When Pharaoh’s cavalry came ... into the sea and Hashem turned back the waters upon them ... *Bnei Yisroel* walked on the dry land amid the sea.” The commentators ask if this continuation is part of the original song or an introduction to the Song of Miriam which follows. These verses are written in the Torah in the same brick-like format as the preceding song, which implies that they are indeed connected. Let us explore the link.

Rav Pincus discusses the unusual construct of combining the three verses about God’s sovereignty into one. We must remember that past, present and future are all equal. Yet there are differences. In the time of Shlomo Hamelech, Hashem’s presence was so manifest in the world that all truly recognized Him as King. Our patriarch Abraham was the first in history to recognize Hashem as the Sovereign of the universe. There were fifteen generations from Abraham to Shlomo and the building of the *beit hamikdash*. Similarly, there were 15 generations from Rehovam son of Shlomo, (during whose time the kingdom split into two - the kingdoms of Judah and the kingdom of the Ten Tribes of Israel) until Tzidikiyahu, when the Temple was destroyed.

This is compared to the waxing and waning of the moon. It takes fifteen days to see the moon fully reflecting the sun’s light and another fifteen days when the moon seems to slowly disappear. In reality, the sun is always present and shining; only our ability to see it has been diminished. So too, Hashem’s sovereignty always exists, even when our ability to sense His presence is compromised. And in the future, Hashem’s presence will again be manifest and recognized throughout the world just as the full moon reflects the luminosity of the sun reflecting off it

It is easy to recognize Hashem in the past and project Him into the future. The final verse of Psalms testifies, “All souls will praise God – Y-K - Hallelukah.” The four lettered God’s name – Y-K-V-K, refers to past, present and future. By using only two letters of God’s name, we are admitting that we are distant from Hashem today. We recognize Him only as present in different parts of time, either in our history or in our future. Our challenge is to recognize God in the present, in our souls and in our daily lives. As Rabbi Gamliel Rabinowitz writes, when life challenges us, we may acknowledge the difficulty, but we must still know that Hashem is with us although His face is hidden. Therefore in our liturgy, writes Rabbi Sternbach, we begin with the present tense, *Hashem Melech*, and with awareness of Hashem in our daily lives, we extend it to the past, *Hashem Moloch*, and to the future, *Hashem Yimloch*.

Certainly the Jews felt Hashem’s palpable presence in their daily lives, especially at the splitting of the Sea. Why didn’t they refer to Hashem in the present tense? Rabbi Schwab explains that they made a choice similar to Adam. He chose not to eat of the Tree of Life for he understood that he would lose the ability

to sin, and thus lose his freedom to serve Hashem through his own choice. Had Bnei Yisroel declared Hashem Sovereign over the world at that time and brought about a perfect world of *Moshiach*, they would have lost that sense of accomplishment of choosing to serve Hashem of their own free will.

The Belzer Rebbe notes a variation here from the earlier verse of the story. There Bnei Yisroel went into the sea on dry land. Here the order is reversed; they went on dry land within the sea. Rabbi Yallin explains that the sea is symbolic of the spiritual realm while dry land is symbolic of the physical world. That Bnei Yisroel could recognize Hashem upon entering the spiritual environs of the sea could be expected. But on dry land, amid the challenges of the physical world, it would be more difficult. Yet it is specifically there that we must continue to see God’s hidden hand and declare His sovereignty over all the nations. The drowning of the Egyptians in the sea brought home the point that inspired the song, writes Rabbi S.R. Hirsch, the point that God rules over nature, and history. Our mission is to remember and remind the world of God’s sovereignty over all.

That Moshe and *Bnei Yisroel* could now discern that all that happened in Egypt was orchestrated by Hashem was both the cause and the goal of their song, writes Rabbi Moshe Shapira. Just as Bnei Yisroel could see the hand of God then, even in the unfolding of seemingly natural events, we are to recognize that God’s hand is present in the unfolding of our daily lives. Therefore we remember these events and this song as we are about to begin the *Shemoneh Esrei* prayer and the congregation calls out in unison, “Hashem will reign for all eternity.”



Bringing It All Together

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Yitzchak Cohen

When Hashem created Adam in His image the angels could not differentiate between the Creator and the creation. There was such an aura of holiness about Adam that the angels did not know to whom to say "*Kadosh kadosh...*" until he fell asleep and they saw that he was human. The Gemara says that when Moshe went up to heaven to receive the Torah, the angels wanted to attack him. They asked, "How can the Torah be given to physical man? It belongs in heaven not on earth." The Michtav M'Eliyahu explains that the angels felt that if man would have the Torah and not observe it he would profane the name of Hashem. Nothing can be worse than *chilul Hashem*. When one sins, one denigrates the whole purpose of man and creation.

Hashem disguised Moshe and made him appear like Avraham in the eyes of the angels so that they would be embarrassed and allow him to receive the Torah. On the third day after his *brit*, Avraham who was weak and sick, ran out in the heat of day to welcome the angels who were appeared as men. The verse states, "*V'hu omed aleihem*," Avraham was standing on top of them. The angels saw he was greater than them. They saw the zeal

and joy with which he served them. The Baalei Mussar learn that not only was he above them but they felt elevated and inspired by him. Similarly, the verse says about Yaakov that the angels went up and down. The angels too were elevated by his righteous ways. He worked seven years for Rachel and was given Leah. Instead of expressing his rage at Lavan or taking revenge, he offered to work another seven years with the same dedication.

The Mesilas Yesharim writes that if a person works on himself and masters the *middot* as outlined by Rav Pinchas ben Yair he can come to Divine inspiration. If he emulates the ways of Hashem and elevates the physical to holiness, He can cleave to Hashem and reach the level of angels even in this world. One way to come closer to Hashem is to be conscious of His greatness and to praise Him through the holy words of Tehilim. Chazal say that Yaakov spent 20 years with Lavan but he did not go to sleep without first reciting the 15 *Shir Haama-lot*. The verse says, "*V'ata kadosh yoshev tehilot Yisrael*." (You are holy who sits on the praises of Yisrael.) When we say Tehilim we utilize the same means that Yaakov used to come closer to Hashem.

The Gemara says if a thief steals a lamb or

sheep he must pay back four times as much. If he steals a cow he must pay back five times as much. While a cow can be led out, a sheep must be carried. The thief experienced difficulty while performing his evil act. Yet the Torah is sensitive to his disgrace and gives him a lesser punishment. Even a lowly burglar is holy in Hashem's eyes. How much more holy is regular simple Jew. Man doesn't attain the level of *kedusha* he is capable of attaining because he doesn't realize the power concealed within him. He doesn't realize his purpose. He doesn't see the beauty of Torah. His environment prevents him from knowing himself. If he doesn't elevate himself, his soul goes into captivity.

In Bereishit the parsha says, "*Vayar Elokim et kol asher asa v'hinei tov ma'od*." *Tov ma'od* refers to the good inclination. The *vav* in *v'hinei* is the evil inclination which is on a higher level. It can ignite our desire to reach greater heights. Everything in this world is a vehicle to get closer to Hashem. Our essence is our soul and our mission is to bring it forth. When we can actualize the Divine Image within ourselves, we can come closer to Hashem.

Ask The Dayan #4

Based on a Naaleh.com Q&A Series by Dayan Shlomo Cohen

Question:

Michelle put an advertisement in her neighborhood bulletin about a home sale she was having on Monday night. The bulletin is normally distributed on *Motzai Shabbat*. However, due to an accident, all the bulletins were destroyed and needed to be reprinted. They were only delivered Monday night which deemed the ad worthless. Is Michelle obligated to pay for it?

Answer:

In normal circumstances, the offender would

be responsible for all damages. However the *halacha* says that where unforeseen circumstances caused damage the offender is exempt from paying. The Shulchan Aruch gives an example of someone climbing up a ladder. If while climbing he saw that the rungs were rotten and he nevertheless continued going up and then fell causing damage, he's responsible to pay for it. Although it was unintentional, he acted in a negligent way. But if at the time he was climbing, the rungs appeared perfectly strong and he nevertheless fell and caused damage, then the Shulchan Aruch rules that he's exempt from paying due

to unexpected circumstances.

In the case mentioned above, Michelle hired the company to provide her with a service. It's almost as if a clear condition was made to get her ad out on *Motzai Shabbat*. The company was prevented from fulfilling their obligation due to extraordinary circumstances. An onus exempts a damager but it can't obligate the other side to pay for a service that was never provided. Therefore Michelle is exempt from paying for the ad.