

## Pesach: The Journey from *And You Shall Know That I Am Hashem* to *The World Will Be Filled* with the Knowledge of Hashem

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

The Torah tells us that there was a dual purpose in Hashem bringing the ten plagues upon Egypt. Hashem tells Moshe, "I'll harden the heart of Pharaoh and make many miracles... so that all of Egypt will know that I am Hashem..." This is also said about *Klal Yisrael*. "So that they will know that Hashem took them out of Egypt..." This seems confusing. Didn't Pharaoh already know Hashem? We see this at the beginning of Shemot where he tells his advisors, "*Hava nischakma lo*- Let us outsmart Him (Hashem)." However, when Moshe and Aharon go to Pharaoh to ask him to let out the Jews, Pharaoh says, "Who is Hashem that I should listen to His voice?" Did he or did he not know Hashem?

The Ramban explains that of course Pharaoh knew of the existence of a Higher Being. However, he only knew *Elokim* but not Hashem- *yud keh vuv keh*. This signifies *hayah hayah v'hyiyeh*, He was, is, and will be. Everything in creation depends on Him.

There's no existence unless Hashem wills it. Pharaoh believed in Hashem as a deity among many other deities. He didn't think Hashem was the only one or that there was no power other than Him. Therefore, he said, "Who is Hashem that I must listen to His voice?" We see that his knowledge of Hashem or what he wanted to accept was limited. He didn't want to affirm the truth. The plagues came to teach him that Hashem was absolute.

So too the Jewish people already knew Hashem. Yet the *Beit Halevi* explains that when Yaakov went down to Egypt, he was very afraid. He knew there would be an exile and he accepted it upon himself. He was ready to pay the price to father the chosen nation. But he did not know that the exile would be in Egypt, a land filled with idol worship and impurity. He was afraid the Jewish people wouldn't survive. Hashem reassured him, "I will go down with you and bring you out." And He also gave us a special promise. "*Vishmicha hagadol aleinu karata*- You called us in your

great name." Hashem will never do something beyond nature. But for the sake of saving the Jewish people, He sometimes will. The knowledge of Hashem in this world is meant to be revealed via the miracles He will do for the Jews. Without this, the world cannot exist. And being that the Jewish nation is bound up with this plan, they must continue to exist.

The world depends on us. Without us, there's no purpose to creation. The reason for the ten plagues was not to take the Jews out of Egypt but to show the world the profound relationship between Hashem and His beloved nation. Of course, the Jews knew of the existence of Hashem. What they learned was how dear they were to Him. So much so that Hashem attached His name to us in a way that it could never be torn asunder. It was a new and higher level of knowing Hashem which was revealed through the Exodus and the splitting of the Red Sea.

## The Four Cups: Level of the Soul

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Hershel Reichman

The Shem Mishmuel discusses the number four, which plays a central role in the *Hagadah*. There are four cups of wine, four questions, and four sons. In Parshat Va'eira, Hashem uses four expressions of redemption – *V'hotzeiti, V'hitzalti, V'ga'alti, V'lakachti* – which parallel the four cups of wine. There is a fifth expression, *V'heiviti*, corresponding to the fifth step in the redemptive process. *V'hotzeiti*, I will remove the bondage. *V'hitzalti*, I will save you from their threats. *V'ga'alti*, I will redeem you. *V'lakachti*, I will bring you to Me as My people, which refers to the giving of the Torah at Sinai. Finally, *V'heiviti*, I will bring you to the land of Israel, the ultimate goal of redemption.

Instead of focusing on five levels of redemption, why did the sages only focus on four? If

the expressions of redemption parallel the cups of wine we drink at the Seder, why do we not have a fifth cup?

The Shem MiShmuel explains that there are seven special names of Hashem. The primary name is the shem hameforosh written as *yud-keh-vav-keh*. This name was never pronounced except in the *Beit Hamikdash* on Yom Kippur. According to Kabbalistic teaching there's a fifth letter in this name, the *kutzo shel yud*, the small line at the top of the yud. Chassidut teaches us that there are four levels of reality; *atzilut, bria, yetzirah, and asiyah*. Above these four universes stands the ultimately unknowable source of the universe, represented by the *kutzo shel yud*, the fifth line which has no sound.

The human mind can achieve a certain grasp of the four worlds. But there's a higher, infinite, fifth level beyond them. The Ein Sof is limitless, ineffable, and unfathomable. The Shem MiShmuel explains that Hashem created the world in triplicate form. Just as there are five levels of the universe, the human soul also have five levels: *nefesh, ruach, neshama, chaya, and yechida*. *Nefesh* is the biological level, *ruach* is the emotional level, *neschama* is the intellectual level, and *chaya* is the divine aspect of the soul which is the connective, pervasive, force that knits together the three levels of the soul and makes us divinely human. The fifth level is *yechida*, which is beyond anything we can grasp. In Kabbalah it is called the 50th level, the *yovel* or the *nekuda penimit*. It is the unreachable realm, our core identity which defines who we

Continued on page 2



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Continued from page 1

are but is beyond description or human perception. This parallels the *kutzo shel yud*.

The Shem MiShmuel explains that the five senses correspond to the five levels of the soul. When Adam and Chava sinned with the four levels of the soul they damaged their four senses and in turn the four letters of Hashem's name. The four letters were a foundation for the fifth level, *yechida*, which then had no foundation to rest on. The sin of Adam

produced four evils which parallel the four major exiles. Idolatry corresponds to *neshama* and relates to Bavel. Immorality is associated with *ruach*, misplaced passion and *Paras*. *Yavan* corresponds to murder and *neshama*. Edom, the final exile, relates to *lashon hara* and *chaya*. Hashem though is the essence of goodness, Man was created in the divine image and therefore he must be fundamentally good.

We drink the four cups and focus on the number four because at the Exodus of Egypt there were four levels of redemption of the soul. The fifth level remains inaccessible. When Mashiach comes and brings us to the land of Israel, Hashem will recreate that realm of Adam and Chava before the sin. The fifth cup is the cup of Eliyahu which we do not drink. It signifies the era of Mashiach when we will finally reach *V'heiveiti*, the level of *yechida*, when evil will no longer reign.

## Parshat Tazria: Narrow Vision

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

The Midrash in Vayikra Rabbah teaches that one of the ten reasons *tzaarat* (leprosy) came on a person was because of *ayin ra* (a negative eye). The letters of the word *tzaarat* can be transposed to read *tzarat ayin*, narrow vision. When the Torah discusses the *negaim* (different types of blemishes) it says, "The one to whom the house belongs will come to the *kohen*." The Gemara explains that *tzaarat* came upon a person who intended to have his home all to himself. The foundation of the world is *chesed*. Hashem created man so that he would give. If he is egotistical and thinks only of himself, he corrupts his soul.

When a person would find a *nega*, he had to empty his entire house before the *kohen* came. Everyone would see what he had and they would know that he had lied and been stingy with his possessions. This taught the sinner a fitting lesson. We are meant to share what we have with others.

The essence of *ayin tova* (a good eye) is an orientation of doing *chesed*. A person should look for opportunities to give to others. This is

emulating Hashem. The Siftei Chaim notes that the root of *tzarat ayin* is one's ego, the *I*, which is the source of all negative *middot*. Thinking of others, giving a sincere compliment, and making people feel special, involves shrinking your *I* and stepping out of your *me*. When you smile to someone, you give a part of yourself to the person. This is what Hashem desires. The Gemara says the walls of a person's home will testify before him. When we fill our homes with acts of loving kindness, we create an abode where Hashem's presence can rest.

The Rambam says *ayin tova* means being content with what one has. A good eye denotes a wholesome acceptance of yourself and your lot in life. A person with an evil eye will always be jealous and dissatisfied. He lacks *emunah* and *anavah* (humility). If you have *emunah* you will believe that whatever a person has is meant for him. Being jealous means that you doubt Hashem's ability to decide what is best for the person. A humble person will say, "I don't deserve anything." Everything Hashem does is *chesed*. Instead of

feeling dissatisfied and wanting more, a humble person will thank Hashem and use what he has been given to elevate Hashem's name. The Leket V'halibuv notes that if you move the letter *ayin* to the beginning of the word *nega*, you get the word *oneg* (pleasure). If a person looks at everything in a negative way, he will have *negaim*. In contrast, if he works on attaining an *ayin tova*, life will be pleasurable and joyous.

Rashi explains that *ayin tova* is about honoring others. The Alei Shur writes that this begins with honoring oneself. Recognizing that there is a spark of divinity within each of us, leads a person to respect others too. When the students of Rabbi Akiva didn't treat each other with *kavod*, it was symptomatic that on their level they lacked the ability to recognize the greatness within themselves.

May we merit to seize every opportunity to give, may we discern the goodness and blessing in our lives, and may all our interaction with ourselves and others be honorable.