

Parshat Ve'etchanan The Second Version of Aseret Hadibrot

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Hershel Reichman

In his commentary on *Parshat Va'etchanan*, the Shem MiShmuel asks a question related to the *mitzva* of *Shabbat* which is mentioned twice. First in Parshat Yitro and then again in Parshat Va'etchanan. But while in Yitro the reason given for the *mitzva* is *zecher l'maaseh bereishit*- to remember that Hashem created the world, the reason given in *Va'etchanan* is *zecher l'yetziat Mitzrayim*- to remember that Hashem took us out of Egypt. Both reasons are valid and in *kiddush* we mention both, so why are they mentioned separately in the *Torah*?

The Rambam's opinion is that the main reason is *maaseh bereishit* and *yetziat Mitzrayim* proves that Hashem created the world as there were fundamental changes in nature during the ten plagues. Therefore, at *Matan Torah* when the first *luchot* were given, *maaseh bereishit* is mentioned as the reason. Whereas in *Vae'tchanan* where Moshe reviews the *Torah*, he gives *yetziat Mitzrayim* as a supportive reason.

The Shem MiShmuel suggests a different approach. He brings a discussion between the Kotzker Rebbe and Reb Bunim M'Pesi-cha. Reb Bunim asked the Kotzker to tell him what the core impetus of his *avodat Hashem* was. The Kotzker replied with a verse from Yeshaya, "Look up at the heavens and see who created all this." Reb Bunim said he had a different motivator which was *yetziat Mitzrayim*, the precursor of the special relationship Hashem has with the Jewish people. The Shem MiShmuel elaborates on these two points of view. The Rambam writes that the way for a Jew to acquire love and fear

of Hashem is to contemplate Hashem's wondrous creation. Yet the Shem MiShmuel points out that the *Torah* constantly reiterates the importance of remembering *yetziat Mitzrayim* and many *mitzvot* are connected to it. Both ideas are true. There's a universal concept of serving Hashem through His creation and a more individual concept of serving Him as a Jew who was released from Egyptian bondage.

It seems at least from our tradition and the way Jews have lived for thousands of years that the vast majority are not approaching Hashem from the standpoint of creation. We do speak about it but it doesn't compare to the focus we have on *yetziat Mitzrayim* which signifies the special relationship Hashem has with the Jewish people. It is more difficult to connect to the universal concept of Hashem as the master of the universe and a lot easier to connect to the idea of *Elokai Yisrael*. The way of the Rambam and the Kotzker is the path of select *tzadikim*. However, the average Jew can most easily connect to *yetziat Mitzrayim*. The Shem MiShmuel explains that although discovering Hashem through creation might seem simple, as clearly there is a supernatural intelligence conducting the world, it's in fact difficult for the average person. We must first find Him through *yetziat Mitzrayim* and studying and living the *Torah* and then we can move on and try to discern Him through creation. *Yetziat Mitzrayim* is personal. Hashem stepped into history, into every Jew's life, to bring us to *Matan Torah* and He talks to us as an individual through *Torah*.

The *Torah* and *mitzvot* were given to us as a guidebook to help us navigate the difficulties of

this world. Once this stage of history ends and Hashem ushers in the redemption the *mitzvot* won't be necessary anymore because our character will be so much more developed and refined. There will no longer be evil forces driving us off the true path. By just looking at the universe without having to study *Torah*, Hashem's presence will be so visible that we will discern him straightaway. The Shem MiShmuel is suggesting that perhaps when Mashiach comes the focal service of Hashem will switch from remembering *yetziat Mitzrayim* and the giving of the *Torah* to recognizing Hashem as the master of creation.

Parshat Yitro describes the state of the Jews at *Har Sinai* when they accepted the *Torah*. They were on such a lofty level that they had no *yetzer hara* and they could discern Hashem directly within creation without having to focus on *yetziat Mitzrayim*. However, 40 years later in *Va'etchanan* when Moshe gave his farewell speech, the Jews had experienced many downfalls. The common people needed the *yetziat Mitzrayim* experience and the *Torah* to connect to Hashem.

So too, we in exile must focus on *yetziat Mitzrayim* and *Torah* study which is the guarantee for Jewish survival. Some mistakenly think they can connect to Him through scientific study while neglecting to learn *Torah*. This unfortunately led to widespread assimilation because this pathway which might seem apparent, is in fact quite elusive.

May we merit to achieve a true and lasting relationship with Hashem which will lead us to the *geulah* and the ultimate redemption.

Baruch Shem Kavod Malchuto

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Michael Taubes

When Yaakov perceived that his death was near, he summoned all of his sons to gather around his bedside. Chazal say he wanted to reveal matters related to the future of the Jewish people. Hashem's presence departed momentarily from Yaakov and he thought that perhaps something was wrong with one of his children that they were not worthy of hearing his prophecy.

The Gemara says that the tribes responded by saying *Shema Yisrael*. They affirmed their belief in the one Hashem and were following in the ways of the forefathers. This is the origin of *Shema Yisrael*, which was later incorporated by Moshe into the *Torah*. Yaakov responded with the words, "Baruch shem kavod malchuto l'olam v'aed."

The Midrash in *Devarim Rabbah* says that Moshe heard the angels say *Baruch shem* when he was in heaven but he didn't include it in the *Torah*. The Gemara asks, if we say this phrase in the *Shema* it would be a slight to Moshe. If we ignore it would be a slight to Yaakov. So we compromise by saying it quietly. On *Yom Kippur* we say it aloud because then we are considered like angels.

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The Yerushalmi in Brachot says that one can remedy a bracha levatala (blessing uttered in vain) by reciting the phrase Baruch shem. The Rosh adds that if a person only says the first part of the blessing stopping after the name of Hashem he can end with the words, lamdeini chukecha.

In Hilchot Shevuot, the Rambam says that not only is swearing in the name of Hashem prohibited but even mentioning one of Hashem's name in vain. If a person made a mistake and said a bracha l'vatala he should immediately say Baruch shem as a form of praise to correct the slight brought about by empty usage of His name.

The Chiddah offers another reason. When a person says a bracha lavatala it causes a chillul Hashem (desecration of Hashem's name). The world's equilibrium is upset on a

cosmic level. Saying Baruch shem restores that balance. The Panim Meiros writes that Baruch shem eliminates the bracha lavatala by making it as though one never said the bracha. Similarly, the Aruch Hashulchan explains that if one said Hashem's name in vain one can undo the damage by accepting the yoke of heaven and giving the Almighty honor with Baruch shem.

The verse in the Haazinu says, "Ki shem Hashem ekra havu godel lelokeinu." When I call out the name of Hashem, ascribe greatness to him. Baruch shem is a form of sanctifying Hashem's name. The Gemara in Taanit writes that in the beit hamikdash the Jews didn't answer amen to a bracha. Rather they responded with Baruch shem and other phrases of praise. On Yom Kippur when the high priest would utter the ineffable name the Jewish people would bow and fall on their face

and say Baruch shem.

If you say the name of Hashem several times in vain how many times do you have to say Baruch shem? The Aishel Avraham says you have to say Baruch shem for each mistake. Rav Shlomo Zalman maintains that saying Baruch shem once suffices since it only serves as a form of praise. Repeating the praise does not add to it.

The Rambam rules that one should hurry to say Baruch shem after the bracha levatala. The Aishel Avraham holds that although it's preferable to say it right away you can fix your mistake later too. The Chayei Adam and Rav Shlomo Zalman maintain that the praise must be related to the blessing right away, otherwise it loses its address and cannot be said anymore.

Tu B'av

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

The Gemara in Tannit tells us, "There were no *yomim tovim* (good occasions) in Israel more joyous than the 15th of Av and Yom Kippur." The spiritual happiness of atonement on Yom Kippur was deeply felt but what was so significant about Tu B'av?

The Gemara lists several occurrences. On this day the tribes were permitted to intermarry, the ban against marrying into the tribe of Binyamin was lifted, the generation of the desert ceased dying, Hoshea ben Eleh removed the sentries blocking the roads to Jerusalem, the massacred Jews of Beitar were buried, and the wood for the altar was finally cut for the next year's sacrifices. In addition, the Mishna tells us that on this day the daughters of Jerusalem would go out in borrowed white clothing and dance in the fields and matches were made. But the Gemara alludes to something deeper. It tells us about the marriage bond between Hashem and the Jews. In the future, the *tzadikim* will form a circle in Gan Eden and dance and point to Hashem and say, "Zeh Hashem kivinilo (This is Hashem, we have put our faith in Him)." What does dancing signify and why did the women in particular celebrate? What is the significance of borrowed clothing? Why does the Gemara give six reasons for the

holiday, wouldn't one have been sufficient?

Tu B'av celebrates re-unification both among the Jewish people and with Hashem. When there is unity there is true joy. Disparity creates a terrible *kitrug* (accusation) in heaven. The *beit hamikdash* was destroyed because of dissension. On Tu B'av, the barriers between the tribes were lifted. When the generation of the desert stopped dying, Hashem's anger dissipated and He renewed His relationship with us once again. We celebrate the completion of gathering the wood because there is no greater joy than completing a *mitzva*. Now that they could ascend to Jerusalem, they could once again bask in the close proximity of the Divine Presence. Tu B'av is about separation and re-unification, distance and return. The knowledge that Hashem is One, creates unity. In the past we sensed this oneness and in the future we will once again experience it. This is the meaning of the Gemara that the *tzadikim* will dance in a circle. A circle is equidistant from the center. In the future world there will be total unity. Each *tzadik* will be able to see from the vantage point of his friend. This too is why the daughters of Zion went out in borrowed clothing. Borrowing clothes signifies friendship and harmony.

The common thread between Tu B'av and Yom

Kippur is atonement. On Yom Kippur, the sin of the Golden Calf was forgiven while on Tu B'av the sin of the Spies was forgiven. This is why the women celebrate. They had no part in either sin. Tu B'av commemorates the burial of those massacred in Beitar. This teaches us that we must be grateful for the slightest good even in the midst of overwhelming tragedy. Likewise matches were made on Tu B'av. A marriage can only function if we recognize the smallest benefit we receive from our spouses. The Sages designated Tu B'av as a holiday in order to help us bear our exile. By being thankful for the smallest good we can overcome our suffering. Sometimes in life, it's not about the one big answer, it's about the little reasons. If we can be grateful for all the small *chasadim* (kindnesses), we can build a genuine relationship with Hashem.

The Gemara calls both Yom Kippur and Tu B'av *Yamim Tovim*. *Tov* connotes something lasting. *Yom tov* is an elevated day whose qualities transcend time. It represents eternity even amidst adversity. Yom Kippur is about forgiveness of sin. Likewise Tu' Bav, which follows close on the heels of Tisha B'av, signifies rebirth from destruction.

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