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פרשת וארא PARSHAT VAERA

DVAR TORAH

ACT LIKE A FROG, ACT LIKE A WILD ANIMAL

This parshah gives us the opportunity to learn about Avodat Hashem from wild animals and frogs.

Hashem's warning about the plague of ערוב, a dangerous mixture of wild animals seems strangely worded: וּמִלְאוּ בְּהֵמֵי מִצְרַיִם אֶת הָעֵרֹב וְגַם הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר הֵם עָלֶיהָ – “The homes of Egypt will be filled with the mixture of wild animals, **and also the land that they are on**” (Shemot 8:17). Couldn't Hashem have simply said וּמִלְאוּ בְּהֵמֵי מִצְרַיִם וְאֲדָמַת מִצְרַיִם אֶת הָעֵרֹב if He meant that the land and homes would be filled with the animals?

Harav Yitzchak of Volozhin, זצ"ל (1780-1849, known as Rav Itzeleh, Harav Chaim Volozhin, זצ"ל's son) offers an answer (recorded in Peh Kadosh on Vaeira). Wild animals outside of their normal habitat are less powerful and vicious than normal. The extra expression in our verse reveals an extra miracle. Hashem not only brought wild dangerous animals to wreak havoc in Egypt, but He also brought their natural habitat along with them. Not only did they fill Egypt, but עָלֶיהָ הֵם עָלֶיהָ, they also acted as if they were in their natural habitats, the jungles, marshes, and savannahs where they usually rule.

This carries with it a lesson for successfully serving Hashem in unnatural situations. The adventures and struggles of life often take us to places and situations which lack the spiritual comforts of our natural habitat – the schedule and setting most naturally conducive to learning, davening, and doing mitzvot with ease. Ovdei Hashem can find themselves in spiritually challenging offices, neighborhoods, or social settings. Rav Itzeleh of Volozhin's comment about the wild animals of ערוב teaches a strategy for dealing with these situations – to bring our natural habitat along with us. This might be one of the secrets of Daf Hayomi, daily prayers at set times, berachot over eating: wherever we are we bring our spiritual home along with us.

A newspaper clipping: The Hornosteipler Rebbe, זצ"ל, of Milwaukee, Harav Yaakov Yisrael Twerski, was interviewed in the Milwaukee Journal. The interviewer asked him: Wasn't it tough relocating from Hornosteipel in the Ukraine to modern-day Milwaukee, Wisconsin in the United States? His response – “I never left Hornosteipel.”

The frogs teach us a totally different lesson about habitat. There was a group of frogs that simply had to relocate from their comfortable swamps and marshes to the fiery ovens of Egypt (Shemot 7:28). The Gemara (Pesachim 53b) tells us that when threatened to either worship an idol or get thrown in a fiery furnace, Chananiah, Mishael, and Azariah reasoned that if the frogs, who were not obligated in the mitzvah of Kiddush Hashem – to sanctify G-d's Name – jumped into the fiery furnaces of Egypt, we who are commanded must certainly give up our lives rather than worship idols. And just as those frogs lived through the experience (unlike the rest of them who died, leaving Egypt with the stench of dead frogs), so did those tsaddikim.

We learn from these two miracles: both from the wild animals' special ability to carry their habitat along with them; and the frogs' willingness to jump into a hostile one when service of Hashem demands it.

SOURCE GUIDE:

4 STAGES OF RESTORING A RELATIONSHIP

The “four expressions of redemption” that appear at the opening of our parshah describe four stages of the redemption, says the Kli Yakar. In the sweeping approach he presents in his commentary, the Kli Yakar outlines the reason for these four steps and how they developed.

A. 4 Aspects of Exile, 4 Aspects of Redemption

Hashem uses four expressions when he says He will redeem His People:

1. Shemot 6:6-7

(6) Therefore say to the Children of Israel: I am Hashem. And I will take you out from under the burdens of Egypt and I will save you from their work. And I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and great judgments.

(7) And I will take you to Me as a nation and I will be for you as G-d, and you will know that I am Hashem your G-d who takes you out from under the burdens of Egypt.

שמות ו:ו-ז

לְכֵן אָמַר לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲנִי ה' וְהוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מִתַּחַת סְבֻלֹת מִצְרַיִם וְהִצַּלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם מֵעֲבָדֵתָם וְנִגַּלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם בְּזְרוּעַ נְטוּיָהּ וּבְשִׁפְטִים גְּדֹלִים.

(ז) וְלָקַחְתִּי אֶתְכֶם לִי לְעָם וְהִיִּיתִי לְכֶם לְאֱלֹקִים וַיְדַעְתֶּם כִּי אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם הַמוֹצֵיא אֶתְכֶם מִתַּחַת סְבֻלֹת מִצְרַיִם.

The Kli Yakar sees these as four stages of the redemption, and the key to understanding them, he says, lies in understanding the four stages of exile that appear in Hashem’s prophecy to Avraham:

2. Bereishit 15:13

And He said to Avram: You should know that your offspring will be a stranger in a land not theirs and they will force them to work and torture them for four hundred years.

בראשית טו:יג

וַיֹּאמֶר לְאַבְרָם יְדַע תְּדַע כִּי גֵר יִהְיֶה זְרַעְךָ בְּאֶרֶץ לֹא לָהֶם וְעֲבָדוּם וְעָנּוּ אֹתָם אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה.

The exile they went through had four dimensions:

3. Kli Yakar on Shemot 6:6

[The four expressions of redemption] correspond to the four things that befell them, as it says:

1. “That your offspring will be a stranger” – this refers to being a stranger (exile itself).
2. “In a land not theirs” – this refers to the distancing of the Divine Presence, for one who lives outside of the Land of Israel is considered as one ‘without a G-d’ (Ketuvot 110b). The distancing of the Divine Presence is juxtaposed to exile because one is dependent on the other. For distancing of the Divine Presence derives from living as a stranger, for they will be strangers outside of Israel in a place far from the Divine Presence.
3. “They will cause them to work” – this is an addition to being a stranger, for a normal stranger is not made a slave.
4. “And they will torture them” – This is an addition to slavery, for a normal slave is not unnecessarily tortured.

כלי יקר על שמות ו:ו

כנגד ד' דברים שעברו עליהם שנאמר:

1. “כי גר יהיה זרעך” – הרי הגרות.
2. “בארץ לא להם” - הרי ריחוק השכינה, כי הדר בחו"ל דומה כאילו אין לו אלוה כו' (כתובות קי:). וסמך ריחוק השכינה לגרות כי הא בהא תליא, שריחוק השכינה נמשך מן הגרות שיהיו כגרים בחו"ל במקום ריחוק השכינה.
3. “ועבדום” – זה דבר נוסף על הגרות, כי סתם גר אינו עבד לפחות.
4. “וענו אותם” – זה דבר נוסף על העבדות, כי סתם עבד אין מענין אותו חנם.

These four aspects of the exile were removed step by step:

4. Kli Yakar on Shemot 6:6

When He saved them, the Holy One, blessed be He, saw fit to save them in stages, little by little. At first he saved them from the most dangerous thing, the torture. Concerning that it says, “And I took you out of the burdens of Egypt,” for burdens refers to torture, as it says, “to torture them through their burdens, their work load.” Afterwards He saved them from slavery. Concerning that it says, “I will save them from their slavery.” After that He saved them from the easiest, their being strangers.

כלי יקר על שמות ו:ו

ובהצלה ראה הקב"ה להצילם בהדרגה מעט מעט. מתחילה הצילם מן הדבר המסוכן ביותר והוא העינוי, ועליו נאמר “והוצאתי אתכם מתחת סבלות מצרים,” כי הסבלות היינו העינוי, כמ"ש “למען ענותו בסבלותם.” ואח"כ הצילם גם מן העבדות, ועליו נאמר “והצלתי אתכם מעבודתם.” ואח"כ הצילם מן הקל שבכולם והוא

Concerning that it says, "I will redeem them ..." A stranger usually doesn't have a redeemer, as it says, "And if the man has no redeemer." And our sages said, "This refers to the stranger (the convert).

הגרות, ועל זה אמר "וגאלתי אתכם וגו', " כי סתם גר אין לו גואל כמ"ש (במדבר ה ח) "ואם אין לאיש גואל" ארז"ל (ב"ק קט). "זה הגר כו'."

B. Restoring the Divine Presence

The last of the four stages is the key:

5. Kli Yakar on Shemot 6:6

And since the removal of the Divine Presence stems from being strangers – and being a stranger in a foreign land was juxtaposed to the removal of the Divine Presence – the flip side is also true: ending exile in a foreign land allows for clinging to the Divine Presence. Concerning this Hashem says, "I will take you to me for a nation and I will be for you a G-d." This taking is the same expression used for marriage of a man and a young woman.

And since "anyone who dwells outside Israel is as if he 'has no G-d,' it therefore says here "I will be for you as G-d." Through this clinging to the Divine Presence "You will know that I am the One Who takes you out from under the burdens of Egypt," the greatest of the evils.

Last, it explains this "taking" through saying "I will bring you to the land ..."

כלי יקר על שמות ו:

ולפי שמן הגרות נמשך סילוק השכינה, כי מטעם זה הוצרך להסמיך אל הגרות מאמר "בארץ לא להם" המורה על סילוק השכינה, לעומת זה אמר כאן שבביטול הגרות יזכו לדיבוק השכינה. וע"ז אמר "ולקחתי אתכם לי לעם והייתי לכם לאלקים." ליקוחין ממש כדרך גבר בעלמה.

ויען כי הדר בחו"ל כאילו אין לו אלוה, ע"כ אמר כאן "והייתי לכם לאלהים," וע"י דיבוק זה "וידעתם כי אני המוציא אתכם מתחת סבלות מצרים" הגדולה שברעות.

ואחר כך פירש ליקוחין אלו באמרו "והבאתי אתכם אל הארץ וגו'."

These four expressions correspond to the four cups on Pesach night, and also relate to the Avot:

6. Kli Yakar on Shemot 6:6

Part of the presentation of these four expressions is the four-fold mention of the name of G-d in the verse, "Thus you should say to the people of Israel: The G-d of your fathers, the G-d of Avraham, the G-d of Yitzchak, and the G-d of Yaakov sent me to you" (Shemot 3:15). Why is there a need to speak about the forefathers in general and then to list them one by one?

This is because they were saved from being strangers in the merit of **Avraham**, who had to leave his land, his birthplace, and his father's house to go to a strange land. And in the merit of the service of **Yitzchak**, who was bound on the altar for the service of Hashem they were saved from the slavery of Egypt. And in the merit of **Yaakov**, who suffered all sorts of afflictions throughout his life they were saved from the torture of Egypt. But regards to clinging to G-d all of the forefathers were equal. That is why they were spoken about as a unit, "The G-d of your forefathers," for in the merit of all of them they merited to cling to the Divine Presence.

כלי יקר על שמות ו:

והנה בד' לשונות של גאולה אלו, מה שהזכיר ד' פעמים שם אלקים בפסוק "כה תאמר אל בני ישראל אלקי אבותיכם אלהי אברהם אלקי יצחק ואלקי יעקב שלחני אליכם," כלל ופרט למה לי?

אלא לומר כי מן הגרות נצולו בזכות אברהם שהלך לו מארצו וממולדתו ומבית אביו אל ארץ נכריה, ובזכות העבודה של יצחק שנעקד על גבי המזבח לעבודת ה' נצולו מעבודת מצרים, ובזכות יעקב שסבל עינויים כל ימיו נצולו מעינוי מצרים, אבל בענין דיבוק האלקי היו כל האבות שוים בו ע"כ כללם יחד ואמר "אלקי אבותיכם," שבזכות כולם יזכו לדיבוק השכינה.

Question:

What does the Kli Yakar's explanation teach us how to restore a relationship between people?

BREAKING ALL THE RULES

BY RABBI YITZCHAK HIRSHFELD

We are taught at the beginning of this week's parshah, Parshat Vaeira, that Hashem appeared to the Avot, our forefathers, using the name קל שקי. However, through the supernatural miracles of Yetziat Mitzrayim He became known to the Moshe and the Jewish People by the Four-Letter Name, יקוּק.

The commentaries explain that the name קל שקי represents G-d's control over and utilization of the laws of nature, subjugating them to the spiritual laws of cause and effect, reward and punishment. On the other hand, the Four-Letter Shem Havayah reflects Hashem's ability to nullify and contravene the laws of nature. The Jew drinks water from the cup, the Egyptian – blood.

Does that mean that the Jewish People in Egypt were on a higher spiritual level than the Avot? Does it mean that they merited a higher degree of revelation?

Not necessarily, says Harav Gedalyahu Schorr, זצ"ל (1910-1979, Rosh Yeshiva of Torah Vodaas) in Or Gedalyahu. The Avot, by virtue of their greatness, transcended the material order. There was no need to break those laws. Those physical laws address a limited range of the spectrum of human beings, and a human personality which is outside that range isn't subject to the physical laws. These were the Avot.

The Jews in Egypt, however, were idol worshippers, very much within the range of human beings under the control of natural law. For them to be redeemed required a completely new order, one in which the King could exercise His authority by totally breaking every rule that He had ever made.

What are the implications for us? Judging by the state of the world and the Jewish People today the future redemption is going to manifest a revelation of G-d's omnipotence and power of a totally different order of magnitude than ever before. As the Navi tells us, the miracles of Egypt will pale beside the miracles of the גאולה שלימה, the complete redemption, may it come בימינו אמן.

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**We continue to pray for a refuah shleimah, a complete healing,
for all those wounded in the attacks against our People.**