

מתוקים מדבש



Dei'ah, Binah and Haskel on the weekly parashah

RABBI YOSEF SCHOCHET

Bemachshvah Techilah

Rashi at the beginning of the parashah writes, on the pasuk (28:10; from Ber. Rab. 68:6): “Ya’akov left Be’er Sheva and went toward Charan”: “It had only to be written: ‘And Ya’akov went to Charan.’ Why, then, mention his departing? But, this tells us that the departure of a righteous person from his place makes an impression, for while a righteous person is in the city, he is its glory [lit., “radiance”], he is its brilliance, he is its splendor. Once he has left there, its glory has departed, its brilliance has departed, its splendor has departed. Similarly, ‘And she left the place,’ which is written concerning Naomi and Ruth (Ruth 1:7).”¹

The departure of a righteous person from his place makes an impression. Once he has left there, its brilliance has departed.

An obvious question that may be raised on the language of the midrash and Rashi concerns the use of the terminology “makes an impression” (“oseh roshem”). Since a roshem is an impression, it would seem that it would be the *presence* of “a righteous person” (“tzaddik”) in a place that makes an impression upon the place, and that the tzaddik’s exiting the place would not

make an impression, but rather remove an impression.

Al pi remez, the “roshem” here may be equated with the concept of “reshimu” associated with “tzimtzum.” According to the Arizal’s analogy, when HKB”H first willed the Creation, he “vacated” space (the “chalal”) by the process of contraction (“tzimtzum”). The analogy depicts the tableau before the Creation of one in which everything is permeated and filled with light. The contraction then created the vacated space which is dark. Into this void, a ray of light shines (the “kav”), and it is the task of Man – most specifically, of the Jewish nation – to expand the light of the kav and cause it to illuminate the chalal.

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But even before we began upon our mission to illuminate the chalal, it was not completely bereft of light. The residual light in the darkness is called the reshimu, as the light remains impressed upon the darkness – albeit, prior to our efforts, only faintly.

What is the nature of the reshimu? The Mittler Rebbe of Chabad explains:

...The general concept of the Reshimu can be understood, that though it comes in a manner of the removal of all, and only remains within it in a greatly concealed manner, in a way of an absolute summary and hint etc... Yet, still from this concealment itself come out and is drawn forth all of the particulars of the Hishtalshellus of the Kav (Line of Light), which are drawn out of this Reshimu. For, within this Reshimu, being that it includes everything, albeit in a concealed manner, it is which allows for the possibility for everything to come into revelation via the Kav, all the way until the end of the world of Asiyah (action – the lowest spiritual world), as per the statement “The entirety of creation is not missing from You” – specifically “from You,” meaning that everything is made and drawn into revelation according to what arose within His simple Will within the Essence of the Light preceding the Tzimtzum exactly as He estimated within Himself etc. For, with this ‘first thought’ – which He first estimated within Himself, He gazes and overviews everything in one glance. Meaning that is found in a concealed, summarized and hinted manner within this Reshimu etc.

This being analogous to a craftsman’s blueprint that it is specifically from it that he knows how to do the entire lengthy construction process with all of its minute

¹ Translation cited from <http://www.tachash.org/metsudah/b07r.html#ch28>

details, from beginning to end. Only, that in order that he should not forget his reasoning and considerations of the lengthy process he makes himself a blueprint as a reminder so that he will not veer from and he will not have to reconsider to himself. So too, this Reshimu, which includes in a hinted and summarized fashion the entire Light of the Essence, which is concealed within it; it itself is the source of all of the issuances of Light and vitality of the Kav u'Chut [line and thread], in an encompassing and an internalized manner, from its beginning to its end. So that everything should be just as it arose within His simple Will and Wisdom within the actual Essence of the Infinite Light etc....²

Thus, the reshimu contains in it the potential to become illuminated, a potential that in itself is derived from the light that once, in the

² Shaar Hayichud chap. 13, <http://www.geocities.com/kabbalahonline/bnk1306.html>

When, after an extended chase, Lavan finally caught up with Ya'akov's fleeing family and demanded to search for his stolen idols, Ya'akov had no concern that Lavan would find them. He did not know that Rachel had, in fact, taken them and he therefore offered Lavan free access to try to find the stolen idols. Additionally, confident in his own case, Ya'akov stated that if Lavan found the stolen idols then whoever stole them would die. "[Ya'akov said]: 'But anyone with whom you find your G-ds shall not remain

analogy, permeated that space, and the expansion of the ray to illuminate the darkness is not – and cannot be – an original illumination “from scratch.” To use a more contemporary analogy, the reshimu already has the fiber-optic cable in place, which in itself retains the glow of the original illumination, and must now be reconnected (through our Torah and Mitzvos) to the source of the light (the kav) which then flows into that chahal.

When the tzaddik is in the city, he radiates light within the city – there is of yet no vacated space.

When a tzaddik leaves a city “its radiance leaves.” Nevertheless, the tzaddik's sojourn in the city is not then as if it never occurred. The impression – the roshem, or reshimu remains. It is then incumbent upon the population that remains in the city, through their Avodas Hashem, to activate the potential that the tzaddik's light imprinted upon their locale.

alive! In the presence of our kinsmen, point out what I have of yours and take it.' Ya'akov did not know that Rachel had stolen them" (Bereishis 31:32).

Rashi points out that since, unbeknownst to Ya'akov, Rachel had stolen the idols, she died due to Ya'akov's statement that the person with whom Lavan finds the idols will die. Most commentators understand this along the line of the rule that a righteous person's curse will be fulfilled even if it is conditional and the condition is not fulfilled. However, this is difficult in our

This is also the underlying concept of the Chassidic custom to “celebrate” yahrzeits. As Reb Tzadok Hakohen writes: “The concept of the day of hilula [yahrzeit] that is [connected] with the death of tzaddikim... is because when the Sages die their wisdom becomes fixed in the world”.³ Although during the tzaddik's lifetime he radiated illumination, there was always the danger that the illumination might cease and become erased through a potential negative bechirah. Once, however, the tzaddik passes away, his impact is permanent and becomes “hard-wired” into the Beriah. This impact is the reshimu of the tzaddik, and those who follow him rejoice that they can now tap into that residual illumination by connecting to that tzaddik.

³ Pokked Ikkarim 23b; see Pri Tzaddik vol. 3, 89b

REB GIL STUDENT

Bakeish Shalom

case. The reason for G-d fulfilling the curse of a tzaddik is that He wants to do what the tzaddik desires. However, in our case Ya'akov was merely emphasizing his confidence that no member of his family had stolen the idols, not cursing the thief. He never desired that the person who stole the idols die. If so, we must then ask what the issue was that caused Rachel to die.

A careful reading of the midrash that is the source of Rashi's comments is extremely enlightening. Bereishis Rabbah (75:9) states as

follows:

"But anyone with whom you find your gods shall not remain alive!" (Bereishis 31:32). This is "like an error proceeding from the ruler" (Koheles 10:5). "And Rachel stole" (Bereishis 31:19) "and Rachel died" (Bereishis 35:19).

The midrash seems to say that Rachel's death was due to her having stolen and Ya'akov's statement that the thief should die. The consequence was "like an error proceeding from the ruler". That same phrase, taken from Koheles, is used elsewhere in rabbinic literature. In Kesuvos 62b the following story is told. Yehuda the son of Rabbi Chiya would stay in yeshiva all week and only return home to his wife on Friday nights. One week he became engrossed in his learning and did not return home. When Rabbi Yanai saw that Yehuda had not returned home he told the family to start sitting shiva because there could not be any reason other than death for Yehuda to not return home. Because of this, Yehuda quickly died.

Even though Rabbi Yanai was incorrect, the fact that he said that Yehuda must have died was, according to the Gemara, "like an error proceeding from the ruler". It was wrong, but G-d made it right.

Similar, Kesuvos 23a tells us that Shmuel made a remark that could be understood as disparaging women who are kidnapped. His father chastised him and said that if

Shmuel's daughter's were kidnapped he would never speak in such a fashion. That statement, the Gemara says, was "like an error proceeding from the ruler" and led to Shmuel's daughter's being kidnapped.

Reb Elchanan Wasserman¹ explains that these cases cannot be examples of G-d fulfilling a righteous person's conditional curse even if the condition is not fulfilled because, here, neither Rabbi Yanai nor Shmuel's father wanted anything bad to happen. Rather, Reb Elchanan explains, these cases prove the efficacy of human speech.

When G-d created man He made him into a "nefesh chayah" (Bereishis 2:7) which Onkelos translates as meaning that G-d put in man a spirit of speech. This power given to man is not just of speech but is of much more. "And I have placed My words in your mouth... to implant the heavens and to set a foundation for the earth" (Yishayah 51:16). Human speech has the ability to create worlds. Of course, this is not something that we see everyday. Speech can be compared to an axe. When the axe becomes dull from misuse it does not cut well if at all. Similarly, human speech when misused – as it unfortunately usually is – loses its efficacy. When we abuse our powerful gift of speech for mundane

¹ Kovetz Shiurim, Kesuvos no. 208. Cf. Peninim MiShulchan Gavoha, Bereishis 31:32

and even for-bidden purposes, we cause our words to lose their power. That is why ordinary people cannot simply change the world by saying things.

When we abuse our powerful gift of speech for mundane and even forbidden purposes, we cause our words to lose their power.

However, a righteous person who has not misused his gift can effect wondrous things with his mere speech. By saying something, even if unintentionally, he can make it happen. That is what happened when Rabbi Yanai and Shmuel's father spoke. When they said that something did or will happen it did, not because G-d chose to fulfill their desires but because their speech had not been dulled and therefore retained its original power. Similarly when Ya'akov stated that the thief of the idols would die, it happened. Not because Ya'akov wanted the thief to die but because he said that she would and his words were powerful enough to cause it to happen.

This amazing power of speech is something that we all could have if we would control our words properly. Perhaps most amazing is that this ability is not something supernatural but is how man was originally created. It is only our lack of restraint that holds us back.

REB JONATHAN BAKER

Sefasai Tiftach

words. But they set the tone for the Jewish day.

The morning blessings are often slurred, or skipped, or mumbled through. Their re-

petitive structure leads to rote recitation, rather than listening to the

The Gemara in Berachos 60a describes the morning blessings. The berachos were intended to be said on arising, as one went through the motions of awakening and preparing to greet the world; today we recite them seriatim in the synagogue, divorced from their referents.

But what is a Berachah? These morning blessings are mostly praises of G-d. What does it mean to bless G-d, the Source of blessings? R' Shimon Schwab, following the lead of R' S.R. Hirsch, interprets the classic Berachah phrase as follows:

“Baruch” – Blessed, but “beereich” also means to increase. We are increasing that in the world which is dedicated to G-d.

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“Atah” – You are the One whom I address, to whom I dedicate this praise. We have a dialogue, a relationship. Addressing the “You” implies the “I”.

“Ado-noi” – the cognomen of the Shem Havayah, the Tetragrammaton, the unpronounceable Name of G-d that signifies His Infinite Essence and His Timelessness (as a contraction of “Hayah, Hoveh, Yihyeh”, the three tenses of Being). Further, the cognomen itself is holy, as the Shem Adnus – the Name of Lordship, signifying the Power to whom we pray, who has control over our lives.

“Elo-heinu” – expresses a closer relationship, addressing **our** G-d,

not just the Infinite, Transcendent G-dhead. This G-d, the Master of Forces according to the Shulchan Aruch, is the Authority who commands us to pray, who directly sustains us and drives our lives, who allows us to talk with Him and hope it will make a difference in ourselves and in the world.

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“Melech ha-olam” – distances us again, yet we remain in a relation with the King of the Universes. The King is crowned by His subjects, and commands them, both in the physical world (olam) and in the spiritual world, the hidden world, that which is “ne’elam”.

Combining these ideas, we find that we say, over and over: We join You, O transcendent G-d yet G-d with whom we are granted a true relationship, O ruler of all of physical and spiritual reality, in dedicating our lives, and the objects and processes of Your world, to You. We join with You in the sanctification of the universe. Six simple words, yet they lay the foundation of our relationship and partnership with the Divine.

* * *

The baraisa in Berachos begins:

“When one opens the eyes, one says Elokai Neshamah – the soul which You, my G-d, have created in me is pure, is granted for my use, and will finally return to You” (paraphrased). The soul is not ours, it is G-d’s, it is in His care, as He is responsible for our continued existence, for which we constantly are grateful.

We typically recite Elokai Neshamah shortly after Asher Yatzar, with, in some nuschaos, the Torah berachos interposed. Outside of Eastern European traditions, Asher Yatzar immediately precedes Elokai Neshamah – a highly suggestive apposition. When we awaken, we are conscious of the physical body asserting itself. So we thank G-d that the body works properly, knowing that it is very easy to become ill. Immediately, we thank G-d for the loan of a soul.

This suggests a link between the two. We bless and praise G-d for our very existence. Asher Yatzar thanks G-d for our physical existence, and Elokai Neshamah establishes a state of constant gratitude for our spiritual existence, our link to the Divine.

We link ourselves, through the act of blessings of praise, to all Jews, to all who praise G-d, to all the worlds, to G-d Himself, dedicating our total existence, physical and spiritual, to the Holy One, blessed is He.

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