בס"ד

Inspired Torah perspectives for our wondrous generation

Eilecha weekly

EILECHA

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וְאֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הַבָּאִים מִצְרַיְמָה אֵת יַעֲקֹב אִישׁ וּבֵיתוֹ בָּאוּ׃

MEKOR

SHEMOS 1:1

And these are the names of the children of Yisrael who came to Egypt with Yaakov, each man came with his family.

MEANING

RAMBAN, ABARBANEL, CHIZKUNI

Although sefer Shemos is a new *sefer*, the letter *"vav"* of "וְאֵלֶּה" highlights that this *sefer* is a continuation of the story of Yosef and his brothers. The *pasuk* does not intend to list the names of those who descended to Mitzrayim, but to remind us that "**אֵת** יַעֲקֹב" - the *Shevatim* were the cause of Yaakov's move to Mitzrayim. Because of the shocking intensity of the forced labor that soon began, **"הַבָּאִים מִצְרַיְמָה"** the Jewish people felt fresh pain each day anew, as if they were constantly re-experiencing having just arrived.

MESSAGE

NOAM ELIMELECH

וְאֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: This refers to the tzaddik whose spiritual essence - referred to as a "name" - is יִשְׂרָאֵל, a lofty spiritual level. **הַבָּאִים מִצְרַיְמָה:** There are times that even such an elevated personally experiences - on his level - the lowliness and impurity of Egypt despite his essential distance from this experience. The reason for this is: **אֵת** יַעֲקֹב - this experience of Hashem's concealment enables the tzaddik to understand and relate to those who are on a lower spiritual plane. **אִישׁ וּבֵיתוֹ:** So that ultimately, when the tzaddik ("אִישׁ") reconnects with his spiritual source ("בֵּיתוֹ"), accessing a state of *devekius* once more, this will impact the souls of the common people, reverberating with relevance and a keen understanding of their challenges and struggles. Then, **בָּאוּ**: they will be able to rise, together with the tzaddik, to journey toward Hashem's embrace.

ROOTS OF REDEMPTION

THE INITIAL ENCOUNTER between Moshe Rabbeinu and the Master of the world at the burning bush is arguably the single most significant encounter in history. The *Sefas Emes* reveals some of the deep symbolism in this awesome vision – the secret of exile and its relationship with the redemption in which Moshe is destined to play such a major role.

Whereas we are inclined to think that the relationship between exile and redemption is simply that of a problem and its solution, there is a deeper perspective. The relationship between exile and redemption can be likened to the relationship between a **question** and an **answer**, as well. We know that the more difficult and profound a question, the deeper and more illuminating the answer will be. In the same way, the darker and more difficult a given exile, the more glorious and epic the subsequent redemption we will experience. Exile and redemption are not merely two steps in an unrelated process. Rather, in a certain way, exile serves as the vessel for redemption: it is only when we experience the deepest darkness of the most difficult question that we can subsequently experience the great clarity of the most wondrous answer. The Jewish day starts with the nighttime; redemption does not begin where exile ends; *redemption begins with the exile itself.*

This week starts the six-week period of **שובבים** (mnemonic for "***Sh****emos*, ***V****aeira*, ***B****o*, ***B****ishalach*, ***Y****isro*, ***M****ishpatim*") during which one can experience special divine assistance in the area of spiritual purity. One of the reasons given for why this particular time period holds this special power is that these six weeks are when we read the story of Klal Yisrael's redemption from slavery in Egypt. Since these weeks hold the power of redemption, it is a special time for each member of our holy nation to break out of his or her enslavement to physical gratification.

This raises a glaring question. If the power of *Shovavim* is the energy of redemption, shouldn't this special time period start from parshas Beshalach, where we read about krias Yam Suf and the destruction of the Egyptian army? If it was only then that Klal Yisrael was finally and truly free, isn't that where the light of redemption shines in its full glory?

Based on this teaching from the *Sefas Emes*, the answer becomes clear. We now understand that although the redemption may appear have to have culminated in parshas Beshalach, in truth, the deepest root and, indeed, the pinnacle of the redemption, is hidden within *Shemos*, *Va'eira* and *Bo* (whose opening letters spell the word **"שוב"**, literally "to return", a reference to spiritual descent - see *Likutei Moharan* 6), the darkness of the exile itself. The experience of descent, with all of the pain we experience, the lessons we learn, the sensitivity we develop to the struggles of others, the humility we are forced to embody - this is all part and parcel of transforming ourselves into vessels ready to receive the light of *Geulah*.

The *Sefas Emes* explains that this is the deeper message of the burning bush. When Hashem appears to Moshe in the burning bush, He is demonstrating that it is not *despite* the great darkness of exile (symbolized by the lowly thorn bush) that the light of redemption (symbolized by the fire) shines so brightly, but specifically **because** of it. The fact that the bush isn't consumed by the flames teaches Moshe that exile is a necessary process; that the light of redemption comes not to negate, but rather to illuminate, in order to demonstrate its necessity in the glorious process of growth.

JUST AS THE LOWLY THORN BUSH SERVES AS A VESSEL FOR THE FLICKERING FLAMES, SO DOES THE GREAT DARKNESS OF EXILE CONTAIN WITHIN IT THE GLORIOUS ROOTS OF REDEMPTION.

- Rebbe Yehuda Aryeh Leib Alter of Ger zy"a

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בס"ד

Feel First, Strategize Second

Based on a teaching of Rav Nison Alpert *zt"l* and the *Be'er Mayim Chaim zy"a*

Eilecha weekly

וַתִּפְתַּח וַתִּרְאֵהוּ אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד וְהִנֵּה־נַעַר בֹּכֶה וַתַּחְמֹל עָלָיו וַתֹּאמֶר מִיַּלְדֵי הָעִבְרִים זֶה׃ [שמות ב:ו]

Pharaoh's daughter, Batya, sees a basket floating on the river. She opens it, takes pity on the baby, and remarks that it's a Jewish baby.

Commentators note that the *pasuk* seems out of order - first should be a recognition that it's a Jewish baby, and then the pity. Rav Alpert writes that the identity of the baby wasn't the most relevant aspect of Batya's calculations and that the reversal of the expected sequence teaches an important lesson about the proper order of how to react when perceiving others' pain:

STEP 1 — וַתַּחְמֹל עָלָיו — Pity/Empathy	STEP 2 — וַתֹּאמֶר מִיַּלְדֵי הָעִבְרִים זֶה — Assesing/Action
Batya took pity on baby Moshe, **before** ever identifying who/what he was, or considering the consequences. **She was determined to help** before analyzing the risks.	Only **after** committing to take action, Batya then figures out **how** to save the child in a way that would pose the least danger to herself while violating her father's command.
Feel the pain of another, take pity, reach out...all with the hope that there will be something we can do to help.	Delve into feasibility; capability, resources, time, expertise, ascertain if it's the type of person we can justifiably help, etc.

Noting that the Torah only uses the expression "חֶסֶד וֶאֱמֶת" with חֶסֶד preceding אֱמֶת, Rav Alpert further extends the idea:

STEP 1 — חֶסֶד	STEP 2 — אֱמֶת
Inclination to help, feeling of compassion for the person who needs it, desire to perform חֶסֶד.	Logical assessment of the person or situation, rational investigation into how to practically help.

The danger of beginning with אֱמֶת is that a person may never get to the חֶסֶד piece; humans are highly prone to rationalizing, creatively finding reasons not to get involved or believing we can't make a difference in the face of dire need.
"Both traits are essential and must be used in conjunction with each other."

The *Be'er Mayim Chaim* asks:
Why does the *pasuk* describe Batya "seeing" the baby (וַתִּרְאֵהוּ אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד) when the *pasuk*'s focus seems to be on the baby's cries, which would trigger *hearing*? She shouldn't need to *see* the baby in order to know the baby is crying?

He explains that the absence of hearing must be one of two reasons:

1. The baby was so tired from crying that, by the time he reached the place where Batya was standing, he no longer had the strength to cry. Yet Batya was able to perceive Moshe **crying from his heart** - "שאינו יכול לבכות בקול כי אם **בבכיית הלב**"
2. Hashem made a **miracle that the baby didn't audibly cry**, lest an Egyptian hear the screaming and seek to kill him. Instead, Moshe's face had tears but didn't make audible crying noises - "**שזה מה'** הוא **שלא ישאג בקול בכיה** פן ישמע קולו אחד ממצרים"
   - *Degel Machaneh Ephraim*: *Sotah* 12b states that Batya "**saw** the *Shechinah* with Moshe." He offers proof from the word **בְּכֹה**; splitting it into two words **בּוֹ כֹּה** - "with him, is the *Shechinah*" (often referred to as כֹּה).

- Batya has compassion for the baby floating in the river and saves him. Thanks to her mercy (and example), Moshe grows up with the virtue of **attentiveness to suffering**, as stated in *Shemos* 2:11: וַיִּגְדַּל מֹשֶׁה **וַיֵּצֵא** אֶל־אֶחָיו **וַיַּרְא** בְּסִבְלֹתָם -
- When Moshe sees an Egyptian striking a Jew, he rises up immediately, ready to act, without contemplating what personal danger he might incur. Already "with them" in their pain, Moshe resolves to step in and end the injustice he was witnessing.
- Having decided to do *something*, וַיִּפֶן כֹּה וָכֹה וַיַּרְא כִּי אֵין אִישׁ וַיַּךְ אֶת־הַמִּצְרִי - he surveys his surroundings and actively engages.
- Moshe, and his adoptive mother, teach the lesson of first attuning to the pain of others and then meaningfully intervening.

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