

Pardes from Jerusalem - Weekly Parsha Podcast –
Parshat Te'tzaveh
Actualizing the Potential of a Soul's Mission - תיקון הנפש

Based on a teaching from the Lubavitcher Rebbe, as originally taught by Rav Sholom Brodt, z"l, Rosh Yeshiva, Yeshivat Simchat Shlomo, Jerusalem, Feb 2013.

Parshat Te'tzaveh begins with HaShem speaking to Moshe Rabbeinu in Exodus 27:20:

“And you shall command the children of Israel (שמות כז, כ) ואתה תצוה את בני ישראל.”

The Ba'al Haturim, R' Yaakov Ben Asher, 1269 Germany – 1343 Spain, points out that while many *parshiyot* open with the familiar “And HaShem spoke to Moshe, saying: ‘speak unto the B'nai Yisrael’ – וידבר ה' אל משה לאמר: דבר אל בני ישראל,” such is not the case in this *parsha*. From the beginning of *Sefer Shmot* (Exodus), until the end of *Sefer Devarim* (Deuteronomy), this is the only weekly *parsha* in which we find HaShem speaking to Moshe, but we do not find Moshe Rabbeinu's name in it. Why is this so?

The Lubavitcher Rebbe also points out there are two extremely opposing aspects in this *parsha*. On the one hand Moshe Rabbeinu's name is not mentioned at all and on the other hand, throughout the *parsha*, HaShem speaks to him directly, in the second person: “And *you* shall command, and *you* shall make, and *you* shall take.”

According to the Kabbalah, Moshe Rabbeinu was the *gilgul*, reincarnation, of Noach. Noach was a very great tzaddik and because of him the world and humankind were saved. Yet, HaShem did not choose Noach as the father of the Jewish people. We may wonder why was he not a great enough tzaddik to be the father of *Bnei Yisrael*?

Chassidut explains that when HaShem told Noach that He was going to destroy the world with a flood, we do not find in the Torah that Noach prayed to change or protested against HaShem's plan. Instead, he understood and accepted God's plan as it was revealed. We read in Genesis 6:9 that, “Noach walked with God - (בראשית ו, ט),” more than he was with “mankind.” In fact, he faithfully and wholeheartedly obeyed HaShem's command. We read in Genesis 6:22, “Noach did according to everything God commanded him, so he did – ויעש נח ככל אשר צוה אותו א-להים, כן עשה” (בראשית ו, כב).

Though he was very righteous and clearly obeyed HaShem's command, he could not be the father of the nation that does not give up, that does not pray for salvation and does not protest against destruction. In this respect Avraham Avinu was greater than Noach. Avraham Avinu loved and cared about people and had faith in their potential to change, to do *teshuvah*, enough so to protest, to challenge and to negotiate with HaShem over the intended destruction of Sodom and Amorah (Genesis 18:17-33). Because of this, HaShem chose *him* to be the first Jew, the first of *Bnei Yisrael*, entering into a covenant with *him* and his descendants.

From this perspective we see that Moshe Rabbeinu was the *tikkun* – the fixing, the healing, the bringing to potential – of Noach's soul. Moshe's actions brought completion to Noach's soul, the soul that he inhabited. When HaShem told him that he was going to annihilate the Jewish people for worshiping the golden calf, he stormed the gates of heaven and even went so far as to tell HaShem in Exodus 32:32:

“and now, if You will forgive their transgression...but if not, erase me now from the book which You have written” – (שמות לב,לב) **מחני נא מספרך אשר כתבת** – ואם אין, מחני נא מספרך אשר כתבת (שמות לב,לב) –

The word “erase me” – **מחני** – is spelled *mem, chet, nun, yod*. These letters, rearranged, spell, “the waters of Noach” – **מי נח** – *mem, yod, nun, chet*. This is the textual clue to the soul connection between Moshe and Noach.

The Rebbe explains that Moshe Rabbeinu fulfilled two primary roles, both of which were significant aspects of his essence:

1 – He was the one through whom HaShem gave us His Torah. Moshe Rabbeinu was completely united with the Torah, so much so that our Torah is actually known as “*Torat Moshe-* תורת משה” (*Joshua 8:31-32; 23:6*).

2 – Moshe Rabbeinu was also referred to as the “trusted shepherd – **רעיא מהימנא**” (Zohar, Volume 3, 214b), so much so that he and his flock are considered as one entity, as we find in a Rashi commentary on the verse in Numbers 21:21: “And Yisrael sent messengers to *Sichon* - “Moshe is the people of Yisrael and the people of Yisrael is Moshe.”

וישלח ישראל מלאכים אל סיחון (במדבר כא,כא). “שמשה הוא ישראל וישראל הם משה” (רש"י).

When we made the “golden calf” these two aspects of Moshe Rabbeinu were in conflict. The people of Yisrael had transgressed one of the most serious and important commandments of the Torah and thus deserved the harsh consequences as decided by the Divine Judge, HaShem. Yet, Moshe Rabbeinu, as the reliable and faithful shepherd of all of Yisrael, felt responsible for every single individual in his holy flock --- even though they had transgressed.

And so, Moshe felt compelled to tell HaShem:

“and now, if You will forgive their transgression...but if not, erase me now from the book which You have written – (שמות לב,לב) **מחני נא מספרך אשר כתבת** – ואם אין, מחני נא מספרך אשר כתבת (שמות לב,לב) –

From this we may interpret that what Moshe was saying in other words was, “If Your Torah prevents my people from being forgiven, and I have to choose between being Your messenger of Torah or being the Shepherd of Yisrael, then erase my name from Your book, because I choose to be the faithful shepherd, to remain with my people.”

By putting his entire worldly and heavenly existence on the line for the sake of his people, Moshe Rabbeinu fixed, healed and actualized the potential of Noach's soul. This is the kind of tzaddik that HaShem sought, indeed loves and is closest to: being completely connected to HaShem and at the same time, absolutely connected to God's people, even to the point of being ready to sacrifice not only his connection with HaShem but even his very life.

HaShem accepted Moshe Rabbeinu's prayer and forgave us, by replying to Moshe in the next verse in Exodus 32:33, “And the Lord said to Moshe, ‘Whosoever has sinned against me, it is he who I will erase from my book.’” (implying not Moshe, therefore granting forgiveness).

ויאמר ה' אל משה: מי אשר חטא לי, אמחנו מספרי (שמות לב, לג).

However, since Moshe had decreed “erase my name,” HaShem “was forced,” so to speak, to fulfill the decree in some way. This is based on a teaching in Tractate *Makkot 11a* “The curse of a sage comes true, even if it was conditional and the condition was not fulfilled.” Hence Moshe Rabbeinu's name does not appear in this *parsha*.

But the Rebbe points out, that this is much deeper. Moshe's **name** is not in the *parsha* but his **essence** is in the *parsha*. A name reveals or represents the essence of a person, but not entirely. Moshe's name represents his deep connection to the Torah – *Torat Moshe*. But his connection to his people is the deepest essence of his being --- deeper than that which his name could ever have expressed. Only through HaShem speaking to him directly in the second person - “you” – was this deepest essence revealed.

Therefore, it is *davkah* – particularly in **this** *parsha*, *Te'tzaveh*, the *parsha* which is read during the week of or right after Moshe Rabbeinu's *yahrtzeit*, on the seventh of Adar – *zayin Adar* - the day on which the deepest essence of the tzaddik is revealed, that HaShem fulfilled Moshe's demand, “erase my name from Your book which You have written.” Instead, HaShem says to him directly, “And YOU shall command.” Your deepest essence shall join Me in commanding this mitzvah to the Children of Israel, thus Moshe's deepest essence is revealed in the *parsha* of his *yahrtzeit*.

I would like to invite all of us to reflect and contemplate on this idea that the soul that resides within each one of us may be in this world at this time to affect a specific *tikkun* – a fixing, a healing, a bringing of unrealized potential in a previous life to fulfillment. How awesome is that!

While we may not know the details of the Divine's intention for each of our soul's specific *tikkun*, I suggest that mindfully increasing our performance of random acts of kindness towards others, cultivating more compassion in how we engage with our fellow human beings and the other Divine creations in our world, and walking along the path of gratitude and humility can only sweeten the harshness in the world today, can only illuminate much of the darkness we experience in the world today and can only advance both individual and collective higher consciousness where we sense the Divine Presence in all areas of our lives.

In fact, cultivating the spiritual practice of higher consciousness may very well be the general *tikkun* of all of our souls in our generation, started by people in previous generations but not yet fully realized. As descendants of Avraham Avinu and students of Moshe Rabbeinu, we have inherited a legacy of never giving up, always praying for salvation and never hesitating to protest against injustices. In the most general sense, perhaps the *tikkun* for the souls of our current time, and such a strange time at that, is to once and for all usher in the redemptive consciousness --- both personal and universal.

Reincarnation - גלגולים

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One of life's greatest challenges is to understand "why?"

Often when faced with crisis, trauma, or bereavement, we intuitively search for meaning and purpose. Cold realization that we may never fathom circumstance leaves us numb.

One avenue in which Kabbalah refreshes our faith is in its presentation of reincarnation and soul migration. Although no overt reference is made in the scripture to the subject, however the greatest Kabbalists—notably the Arizal as quoted in the work Shaar Ha*Gilgulim* (Gate of Reincarnation), expound clearly its principles.

The soul is eternal, a spark of the Divine, or as the prophet Job calls it “a part of G-d above.” The soul exists before it enters the body and it lives after the body is laid to rest. Though the soul's place of origin is in the higher worlds, there is something that the soul can achieve in a body that it cannot achieve in the heavenly realms. It has already been explained that the purpose of creation is to make an abode for the Divine in this world. Although higher worlds are glorious in terms of revelation and offer the best reward for a soul after it has achieved its earthly mission, the heavenly realms are not the purpose of creation. It was G-d's desire to create a world where His presence would be acutely concealed. He charged his children with the task of creating a home in this world, thereby revealing the Divine Presence. The soul fulfills that mission by its adherence to Torah and *Mitzvot*.

Kabbalah explains that the soul is comprised of 613 channels, which manifest through the 248 *mitzvot* requiring action and 365 *mitzvot* requiring restraint. These 613 channels attain eternal elevation when all 613 *Mitzvot* are fulfilled by a soul in its earthly descent.

Usually a soul does not manage to fulfill all the commandments in one descent, and the Arizal writes that every soul must be repeatedly reincarnated until it has fulfilled all 613 *Mitzvot* in thought, speech, and action.

The Kabbalists explain that when a soul returns to this world, the part of the soul that was elevated by its Torah learning and *Mitzvah* performance in the past is not reincarnated, rather it is only the other parts of the soul that were not affected by the first incarnation that return. The possibility of a soul being divided and part of a soul being reincarnated is discussed at length in Kabbalah. Through various reincarnations all parts of the soul are elevated and once the entire soul has been elevated the soul is no longer reincarnated. This explains the strange phenomena of why certain people engage in a specific *mitzvah* in which they excel. It could be that the person's soul descended again for sake of that specific *mitzvah*.

Souls may also be reincarnated to complete a certain task, repay a debt, or rectify a sin. In fact the concept of reincarnation as rectification for sin is well documented by the Kabbalists.

“The hidden matters are for G-d, and the revealed aspects for us and our children” (Deuteronomy 29:28). One should walk simply before G-d, and it is beyond the vision of mere mortals to figure out whose reincarnation one may be. However, in times of challenge and specifically when we feel out of control, it is good to know that all has been meticulously planned and executed in the Divine kaleidoscope.