



הנה הוא

*Wishing you and your loved ones a
year of peace, joy, and growth.*

The Pardes Family

September 11, 2007
28th of Elul, 5767

Sorry, no Podcast this week. Rabbi Schweiger continues work on his new home. He looks forward to resuming the podcast as soon as he's able.

Below is a D'var Torah by Rabbi Danny Landes, the Director and Rosh Ha'yeshiva of Pardes.

Best wishes for a peaceful new year.

Larry Kluger

Dvar Torah by Rabbi Danny Landes

The very last Parshah read on Simchat Torah is Vezot HaBracha, the blessing with which Moshe blesses the tribes. The Midrash Tanchumah sees an obvious problem in the first verse: vezot HaBracha asher beirach Moshe ish HaElokim et Bnai Yisrael Lifnei Moto. "And this is the blessing with which Moses, the man of God, blessed the children of Israel before he died" (Deut. 33:1). The Midrash Tanhumah is astonished: obviously it needed to be before his death: how could he bless him after his death?) (Here the Midrash uses what I call a hyper-peshat orientation to arrive at an exegesis. For contextually the term Lifnei Moto means "right before he died". But the hyper-peshat calls out for an explanation.)

The Midrash Tanhumah explains "Lifnei Moto" to mean before the Malach HaMavet, before the Angel of Death. For when the Holy One blessed be He, instructed the Angel of Death to kill Moshe, the Angel confided to Moshe: the Holy One blessed be He, sent me to you, for you depart (this world) today." Moshe responded: "Leave, for I desire to praise God, indeed, "Lo Amut ki Echyeh Va'Asaper Ma'asai Yah," "I shall not die, but rather I shall live and declare the acts of God" (Ps. 118:17, said in our Hallel). The Angel retorted: "Why are you so haughty, He has others to praise Him," "HaShamayim Misaprim Kevod E-L," "the heavens speak of the glory of God" (Ps. 19:2). Moshe declared to him: "I shall silence them and I shall praise, as it states, HaAzinu HaShamayim Va 'Adabeirah - listen up, Heavens, for I shall speak!" (Deut. 32:1)

In this delightful dialogue, Moshe gets the last word. Nonetheless, a master of the introspective Mussar movement saw a real debate or clash occurring. On the one hand was the majesty of Nature which, seemingly eternal, speaks the praise of God by its own magnificent presence. Indeed, the great 20th century theologian, Prof. Abraham Joshua Heschel, was able to describe an ontology of nature as a spiritual resource with the powers to evoke a sense of the ineffable and of awe.

On the other side stands Moshe, who in the words of Rabbi Shimon Tenah, "responds that man is greater than nature, for it is in his power to change nature. Man does not need to submit to the nature of the world, but nature must submit to man and to his Torah. For all of creation was formed for the needs of man and his Torah, and therefore the songs of praises of man have a far greater worth than that of creation."

For HaRav Tenah, man doesn't just joust with windmills, but he even battles the wind itself. Mussar was always a path to overcome the limitations of one's personal nature. Perhaps, I suggest, this is a way of viewing the holidays that are upon us. We believe in Teshuvah, giving us a new start although the "nature of things" seems to condemn us to the "same old" and to sin. We pray for life, even though we are surrounded by death. We boldly build a frail succah that can be knocked over by a stiff breeze. We bring Jews together - in our succah, and symbolically in the four types of Jews symbolized in the four species, even though the laws of sociology tell us that it is impossible. And we seek new meaning in the ancient text that many theoreticians of nature tell us whose time has come and gone. We use nature, we bless nature, and we overcome nature. And even when we fail, and when we feel a sense of the tragic, in our seeming inability to defeat nature, that itself is a victory over the cold, unspeaking and mute forces of nature.

Here at Pardes, we wish you a Shanah Tovah U'mitukah - a year of great achievements and of noble living.