

Vayechie 5774

Rashi in our parsha alludes to the Gemara (Pesachim 56a) which describes the last hours of Ya'akov's physical existence in this world, when he gathered his 12 sons to reveal to them what awaits the Jewish nation in the "end of days".

However, at the precise moment when their hearts and minds were at their peak attentiveness, HaShem withdrew His Shechina (Divine spirit) from Yaakov and the revelations became obscured. Ya'akov feared that HaShem's withdrawal might be due to one or more of his sons being a heretic. For just as his grandfather Avraham had begot the sinful Yishmael and his own father Yitzchak begot the evil Esav, he too might be cursed with a wayward son.

The brothers then turned to their father and in unison recited:

שמע ישראל יהוה אחד יהוה אחד יהוה אחד

"Hearken Yisrael (our father), the Lord is our God, the Lord is One"

Yaakov then replied:

ברוך שם כבוד מלכותך לעולם ועד

"Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom forever"

Question: How could the single statement "Shema Yisrael" diffuse Ya'akov's deep seated suspicion of heresy? Why did Ya'akov not consider the possibility that the "heretical son" (if there was one) was lying?

I suggest:

The brothers waited impatiently to hear of the future *geula*.

When Yaakov realized that HaShem did not want the details to be disclosed, he turned to his sons with suspicion that they might be the cause. At that moment, HaShem placed His holy Shechina **on the brothers** and **they** announced in unison

אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֱלֹהֵינוּ-וְאֵין אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים

Ya'akov was stunned, because this statement was the essence of the prophecy that he had intended to reveal to his sons. Instead, it was taken from him and given to them.

The prophecy states that just as the "Shema" consists of three phrases:

- 1) *Shema Yisrael* – Hearken Yisrael
- 2) *HaShem Elokeinu* – the Lord is our God
- 3) *HaShem Echad* – the Lord is One

So too will the future of the Jewish people evolve in three stages:

1) In the initial phrase of "*Shema Yisrael*", the name of Am Yisrael is mentioned without any reference to HaShem. This refers to the first stage of redemption with the ingathering of *Bnei Yisrael* from the far corners of the globe to Eretz Yisrael. They will return for a variety of reasons but not necessarily religious ones. Most will come to escape anti-semitism, totalitarian regimes, or to build a state based on secular socialist Zionism.

2) Phase two "*HaShem Elokeinu*" includes two names of HaShem: the ineffable (unutterable) YH... representing HaShem's quality of compassion, and the name "*Elokeinu*" representing HaShem's quality of harsh justice.

This second stage of redemption will be characterized by a bitter conflict between Torah leaders regarding how to view

the Medina. Religious-Zionist rabbanim will see the Medina as the expression of HaShem's quality of compassion for His people Yisrael. The Medina is HaShem's declaration that the Shoah was the last major test in the 2000-year period of anger and galut (exile), and the beginning of a new period of our renaissance leading to the fulfillment of all our prophets' visions. Millions of Jews have returned, our sovereignty over Yerushalayim and the Temple Mount and the extraordinary military victories are undeniable signs that the geula is at hand.

In contrast, other Torah scholars will claim that the period of "*Elokeinu*" – harsh judgment – is still in effect with the Medina just a stage in the natural development of political societies.

3) Phase three "*HaShem Echad*", is when HaShem's quality of compassion will reign alone and all rabbinic leaders will unite in the reality that the Medina is HaShem's avenue for the advent of Mashiach and our final redemption.

Yaakov, upon hearing the revelations voiced by his sons, added a fourth stage: "*Baruch shem kevod malchuto le'olam va'ed*" – blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom forever – signaling the **universal** acceptance of HaShem's total mastery as Creator and Preserver of all things.

Today, with the near majority of the world's halachic Jews in EY, we are in the midst of the second stage of *HaShem Elokeinu* where most of the chareidi rabbinic leadership do not hear the footsteps of the Mashiach in Medinat Yisrael.

The third stage of total unity will come about when we witness the miraculous demise of our enemies, as stated at the end of the first chapter of Tractate Berachot, that we will witness miracles far surpassing those of the exodus from Egypt.

We are not far from a religious awakening among the people of EY, unparalleled since the time of Ezra Ha'Sofer. HaShem will

“shine His countenance” upon all those who are here to receive it.

May HaShem grant our gallant soldiers victory over the forces of evil, for the final redemption of our people will come about in the merit of the *mesirut nefesh* (self-sacrifice) of His loyal children in Eretz Yisrael.

Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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