
Rabbi Meir Goldwicht

he *gemara* in *Taanis* (29a) says: "משנכנס אדר מרבים בשמחה, Once Adar begins we increase our rejoicing." Rashi explains: "ימי נסים היו לישראל פורים חפסח, The Jews experienced miraculous days, Purim and Pesach." Why does Rashi mention Pesach, which falls in *Nissan*, when the gemara is clearly discussing Adar, the month in which Purim falls? Rather, Rashi is pointing out that if we wish to properly understand the nes (miracle) of Purim, we must understand the nissim (miracles) of Pesach as well. Through an understanding of *Pesach* we will be better prepared for the simcha (joy) of Purim.

The navi (prophet) refers to yetzias Mitzrayim (the Exodus from Egypt) as the birth of Am Yisrael (the יום הולדת " Jewish people), calling it, אותך, Your birthday" (Yechezkel 16:4). This birth, like every birth, required a period of pregnancy before it could take place. This pregnancy, like every pregnancy, was divided into three stages: the first trimester, the second trimester, and the third trimester. The three stages of Am Yisrael's pregnancy correspond to parashas Shekalim, parashas Zachor, and parashas Parah, three of the four special Torah readings read during Adar and Nissan. After passing through these three stages of pregnancy, we arrive finally at parashas HaChodesh, which represents התחדשות (renewal) and birth.

Parashas Shekalim, which corresponds to the first trimester, discusses נתינה (giving). When a person gives willingly, it is an expression of the love he has inside. Love is expressed practically through זריזות (zeal) and desire to give. In nature, זריזות is represented by water, which is constantly flowing, as well as constantly giving of itself in order to help others grow. Avraham

Avinu (our Father) is called "אוהבי. the one who loved Me," as it says, "זרע אברהם אוהבי, The seed of Avraham, who loved Me" (Yeshayahu 41:8). In תפילת גשם (the Prayer for Rain), recited on Shemini Atzeres, we refer to Avraham as " אב נמשך אחריך כמים, The Patriarch who followed You like water." This is the first stage of pregnancy, corresponding to Avraham Avinu, middah corresponding to the (characteristic) of זריזות, corresponding to the act of נתינה. זריזות is the message of parashas Shekalim, represented by the act of giving willingly.

However, when a person gives and gives with no restraint, he can reach a level of forbidden נתינה, a level of forbidden התקרבות (closeness). When the Torah עריות (forbidden discusses relationships), it says, "חסד הוא, It is an abomination" (VaYikra 20:17). In order to prevent over-זריזות, one must practice זהירות (watchfulness). זהירות is an expression of fear; when one is afraid, he proceeds with In nature, זהירות caution. represented by ashes, as one who fears something will destroy it to its very foundation as soon as he gets the chance. Yitzchak Avinu, whose "ashes" lie under the כסא הכבוד (Throne of Glory), is the Patriarch who represents זהירות is the message of parashas Zachor, when we fulfill the obligation to remember evil, remain wary of it, and to ultimately destroy it.

However, too much זהירות is also not good. One needs to find the proper balance between זהירות and זריזות, and to combine them harmoniously. The proper synthesis of זהירות and זריזות is נקיות (cleanliness). This is the message of parashas Parah, which discusses the process of purification from טומאה (impurity), leading the person to a state of כהן. The כהן (priest) takes מים חיים (water from a flowing source), representing זריזות, and

mixes in the ashes of the פרה אדומה (red heifer), representing זהירות. The proper mixture of water and ashes, זהירות and זהירות, creates a state of נקיות. This is parashas? Parah.

Once we arrive at a state of נקיות, we are prepared for התחדשות. Just as these three states set the stage for our birth as a nation with yetzias Mitzrayim, which was in the merit of the זריזות of Avraham Avinu, the זהירות Yitzchak Avinu, and the נקיות of Yaakov Avinu, so too did they lay the ? groundwork for our rebirth as a nation in the days of Mordechai and Esther (Yalkut Shimoni, Tehillim 102).

How were we reborn in the days of Mordechai and Esther? Haman? knew that he could not rely on physically overcoming Am Yisrael in order to defeat them, but that he must destroy them spiritually as well. Therefore, Haman drew lots, as if to suggest that Hashem had set the date for the destruction of the Jews, not Haman. Chazal tell us that the shock this caused was so powerful that tragedies immediately began to ? take place: women would go up to the roof to lay out clothes to dry and fall to their deaths; men would go to draw water and simply fall into the well. This only deepened the sense of shock and abandonment.

This continued to happen until Mordechai pointed out that, although Haman was correct that our lot looked dismal, the Jewish people ? also have power over lots, as the כהן גדול (High Priest) would draw lots on Yom Kippur. If the Jewish people could change Purim to Yom? HaKippurim, to teshuva (repentance) and willingness to change, they? would regain power over chance and be reborn. The *gemara* in *Niddah*? (31a) says that in the first trimester of pregnancy, the fetus grows in the lower part of the womb; in the second trimester, the fetus grows in the middle part of the womb; in the final trimester, the fetus grows in the upper part of the womb. When it comes time for the child to enter 3

the world, he flips upside down and comes out. In other words, every birth requires a הפיכה (a flipping over). This is exactly what happened to the Jewish people in the time of Mordechai—"תהפוך הוא, And it was flipped" (Esther 9:1). Since we flipped over spiritually, through tefillah (prayer), teshuva, and kabbalas hamitzvos (acceptance of the commandments), our fortune changed and we were born anew.

This is *Chazal's* message in the aforementioned *gemara* in *Taanis*: If we learn from the miracles of *Pesach* about how we were born a nation originally, in the merit of the זריות, and זהירות, and נקיות of the Patriarchs, we will understand how we were born again in the time of *Mordechai* and *Esther*.

Eretz Yisrael was divided up among the twelve tribes and acquired by lots as well. In Shacharis, we say, " אשרינו מה טוב חלקנו ומה נעים גורלנו ומה יפה חלקנו ומה נעים גורלנו ומה יפה, Fortunate are we! How good is our portion, how pleasing is our lot, and how wonderful is our inheritance!" If our lot is pleasing,

then automatically our inheritance must be wonderful as well. Today, we find ourselves again in a situation where we must be born anew. This can only be accomplished by acquiring זהירות and זהירות, and finding the proper balance between them, bringing us to מהתחדשות.

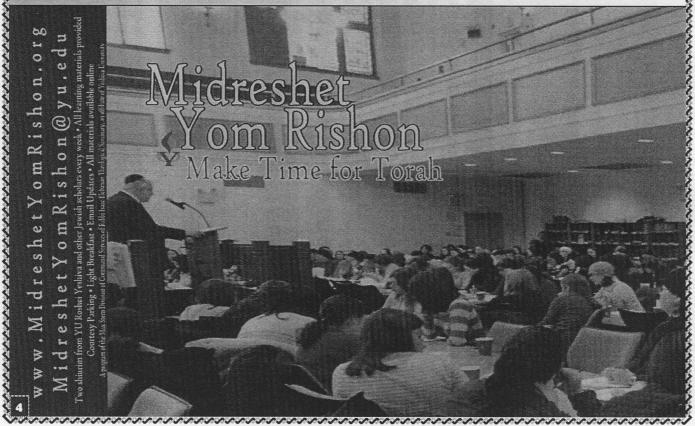
We are promised, " הן גאלתי אתכם אחרית כראשית, I will surely redeem you at the end as at the beginning" (Kedushah of Shabbos Mussaf, Nusach Sefard). Twice we have been born as a nation during the month of Nissan: once when we left Egypt and once in the days of Mordechai. Esther says in the וצומו עלי אל תאכלו ואל " Megillah, תשתו, And fast for me, do not eat and do not drink" (Esther 4:16). The Gra points out that Esther's order not to eat or drink is superfluous, as she has already ordered the nation to fast. Rather, the Gra explains that it was Pesach, and Esther was ordering them to forgo the obligation to eat matzah and to drink the ארבע כוסות (the four cups of wine). We are further promised that the third

geulah (redemption) will also take place in Nissan: " בניסן נגאלו, בניסן ענאלו, דעידין ליגאל They were redeemed in Nissan, they are destined to be redeemed in Nissan' (Rosh HaShanah 11a). The way to be redeemed is to be rebern.

If we make an effort to better ourselves, to strengthen our *emunah* and to serve as role models in our daily actions, we can be born anew this year and merit " אורה ושמחה, Light and gladness, joy and honor" (*Esther* 8:16).

Adapted from a *shiur* given by R' Goldwicht Compiled by a student

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