

## A Thought on Parashas Tetzaveh 'They will know...'

By Jeremy Richards

In Memory of my Dear Parents, a"h

L'ilui Nishmos Yitzchok Ben Nachman Halevi a"h and Yenta Bas Yisroel a"h

לעלוי נשמת יצחק בן נחמן הלוי ע"ה ולעלוי נשמת יענטע בת ישראל ע"ה



**וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהָיִיתִי לָהֶם לְאֱלֹהִים: וַיֵּדְעוּ כִּי אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיהֶם  
אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לְשִׁכְנִי בְּתוֹכְכֶם אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיהֶם: (שמות כ"ט:מ"ה-מ"ו)**  
I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel and I will be their G-d.  
They will know that I, the L-rd, am their G-d, Who brought them out of the  
land of Egypt in order that I may dwell in their midst; I am the L-rd, their G-d.  
(Shemos 29:45-46)

On the words, “וידעו כי אני ה' אלקיהם” - “They will know that I, the L-rd, am their G-d...” - the Netziv (R. Naftoli Tzvi Yehudoh Berlin) writes, in his ‘Ha’amek Davar’:

“This is an additional promise, that they will know and understand that I, the L-rd, am their G-d, and this is a higher level, as is explained earlier [on the pesukim in Shemos] 6:7 and 16:6. This idea is also in Pirkei Avos, 3:18 –

חֲבִיבֵינּוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁנִקְרָאוּ בְּנִים לְמָקוֹם. חֶפְזָה יִתְרָה נֹדַעַת לָהֶם  
שְׁנִקְרָאוּ בְּנִים לְמָקוֹם, [שְׁנִנְאָמַר (דְּבָרִים יד:א), בְּנִים אֶתְּם לֵה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם.]  
“Beloved are the people Israel, for they are described as the children of the Omnipresent;  
it is indicative of a greater love that it was made known to them that they are described  
as children of the Omnipresent, as it is said: ‘You are children to Hashem, your G-d.’”

The explanation of this is as follows: those who are called ‘children [of Hashem],’ but are not informed of this by the posuk, that is to be beloved, but a higher level of love is when they are informed [by the posuk] that they are called the children of the Omnipresent. This is what Hashem promised here, that, in addition to it being so [that He, the L-rd, is their G-d], they will also know and perceive that it is so.”

We see, then, that it is an altogether more exalted blessing to be granted an awareness of Hashem and His favour, in addition to merely being an unwitting beneficiary. The Netziv, above, cites two other places where Bnei Yisroel are similarly blessed with this additional advantage:

The first:

**וְלָקַחְתִּי אֶתְכֶם לִי לְעָם וְהָיִיתִי לָכֶם לְאֱלֹהִים וַיֵּדְעֶתֶם כִּי  
אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם הַמוֹצִיא אֶתְכֶם מִתַּחַת סְבֻלוֹת מִצְרַיִם: (שמות ו:ז)**  
And I will take you to Me as a people, and I will be a G-d to you,  
and you will know that I am the Lord your God, Who has  
brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. (Shemos 6:7)

and the second:

**וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן אֶל־כָּל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עֶרֶב וַיֵּדְעֶתֶם כִּי ה' הוֹצִיא אֶתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם:  
וּבִקְרַת וַיֵּרְאוּ אֶת־כְּבוֹד ה'... (שמות ט"ז:ו-ז)**  
Moshe and Aharon said to all the children of Israel, [In the] evening,  
you shall know that the L-rd brought you out of the land of Egypt.  
And [in the] morning, you shall see the glory of the L-rd... (Shemos 16:6-7)

In the first posuk, Hashem has just enumerated the four expressions of redemption with which He will redeem Bnei Yisroel from Mitzrayim. In the second, Hashem has just described how Bnei Yisroel will be blessed with a miraculous daily supply of מן in the desert. It is interesting to note the three instances we can now list where Hashem chooses to grant Bnei Yisroel the special gift of knowing about Him and His beneficence:

1. Redemption from מצרים (6:7)
2. The miracle of the מן (16:6)
3. The משכן, and ה' dwelling among Bnei Yisroel (29:46)

Here are three examples of the most profound and impactful Divine favour towards the Jewish People, and on each occasion Hashem reveals His wish that His people will know what He has done for them. It is clear that Hashem considers our knowledge of His involvement in our lives to be a key factor in our relationship with Him, and an important and necessary response to things He does for us.

Returning to the words of the Netziv, and his comment that "וידעו" - "they will know" - represents "מעלה" - "a higher level." Not only is the Jewish people's ability to recognise Hashem's existence and His involvement in their lives an additional gift and blessing; rather, it also indicates that Bnei Yisroel have personally reached a loftier spiritual point. The Netziv expands on this in his commentary to Shemos 6:7, on the words "וידעתם כי אני ה'":

"(This is) another promise, and a fifth expression after those above (i.e. the four expressions of redemption), for those will gain great prominence in the mind until they reach the level of "וידעתם", "you will know." That is, 'Dveykus' (cleaving) to and knowledge of Hashem...and the thing is clearly understood that this will not be achieved until some time after the previous level, as in the case of the previous expressions, which were also not reached all at the same time, but rather one after the other, and this one was not until the time of receiving the Torah and onwards. It is important to know that, regarding this promise, the explanation is not that all the Jewish people would rise to this level, for it is impossible that a whole nation of people could become fully rooted in the knowledge of Hashem. Rather, the explanation is that there will be amongst you many people who reach a high level..."

The Netziv continues, explaining that the reason for the four cups at the Pesach Seder is to mark the fact that the four expressions of redemption (והוצאתי...והצילתי...וגאלתי...ולקחתי) indicate increasingly higher spiritual levels through which the Jewish people passed, and that a fifth cup can be added to signify the expression, "וידעתם". (He notes and rejects an opinion that the institution of a fifth cup is based on the expression "והבאתי" - Shemos 6:8) The Netziv writes that since there is "no obligation" for all of Israel to reach the level of "וידעתם", this fifth cup is therefore "מצוה ולא חובה" - deserving of a mitzvoh if performed, but not a firm obligation.

We may well wonder which would be more likely to imbue people living through those miraculous times with the knowledge of Hashem and a clear perception of His actions here on earth: being rescued from מצרים with multiple signs and wonders, the daily receiving of מן from heaven, or the planting of Hashem's שכניה amid the people.

With regard to the latter, the truth is, the very words "וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל" - "I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel" (Shemos 29:45) - raise fundamental questions in respect of how we experience Hashem, how we 'know' Him. Little children are taught to sing "*Hashem is here, Hashem is there, Hashem is truly everywhere,*" but what does that mean? Can we even say such a thing? The very idea of Hashem descending into the physical world to dwell in a material structure of finite dimensions is bizarre in the extreme. It implies that Hashem is, somehow, here with us in our world; but is He indeed close by, or is He completely beyond our reach, beyond even our imagination? The closeness of Hashem to man is known in English as '*immanence,*' and His distance from us, or 'beyondness,' is called '*transcendence.*' Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm discusses these concepts at length in his 'The Religious Thought of Hasidism.' (part 1: G-d and Providence).

There is a good reason why one of the names the Rabbis gave to Hashem is 'מקום,' 'Place.' Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin writes, in his 'Nefesh HaChaim' (Gate 3, citing Bereishis Rabboh 68:9):

"שהוא מקומו של עולם ואין עולמו מקומו"  
 "...because He is the Place of the world, but His world is not His place."

Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin expands on the characterisation of Hashem as "מקום" - 'Place.' Without Hashem, he writes, as the place on which the universe stands, the universe could not exist. "If not for His will to be the Place for the worlds, the universe would most certainly be non-existent." (Gate 3, Chp.2)

The midrash cited above is actually quoted by Rashi, in Parashas Ki Sisso. Moshe Rabeinu has just asked Hashem, "let me know Your ways, so that I may know You... Show me, now, Your glory!" (Shemos 33:13,18) In response, Hashem says, "הִנֵּה מָקוֹם אֵתִי" - "Behold, there is a place with Me..." (Shemos 33:21) and Rashi explains:

ומדרשו, על מקום שהשכינה נשם מדבר ואומר "המקום אתי" ואינו אומר "אני במקום", ששקדוש ברוך הוא מקומו של עולם ואין עולמו מקומו (ב"ר סח:ט):  
 "...but its midrashic meaning is that [God] is speaking of the place where the Shechinah is, and He says: "The place is with Me," but He does not say: "I am in the place," for the Holy One, blessed is He, is the place of the world [i.e., the world is within Him], but the world is not His place [i.e., the world does not encompass him] (Bereishis Rabboh 68:9)."

Moshe Rabeinu came closer than anyone else, closer than any other prophet, to knowledge of Hashem:

וְלֹא-קָם נָבִיא עוֹד בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל כְּמֹשֶׁה אֲשֶׁר יָדָעוּ ה' פָּנִים אֶל-פָּנִים:

"And there was no other prophet who arose in Israel like Moshe, whom the L-rd knew face to face..." (Devorim 34:10)

Yet, even to Moshe, Hashem made it clear (according to the midrash, above) that He is beyond and outside of our physical existence and experience: "שֶׁהַקְדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מְקוּמוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם וְאִין עוֹלָמוֹ מְקוּמוֹ".

Rav Dessler notes that the Mishkon is referred to with two names: 'משכן' denotes a place where Hashem and Bnei Yisroel draw close to each other through meeting to learn Torah, and 'מקדש' denotes holiness, transcendence. Mishkon is joy in the presence of Hashem, while Mikdosh evokes feelings of lowliness and awe in the face of Hashem's grandeur and His distance from us. Nevertheless, writes Rav Dessler, these two are really one: "אבל משכן איקרי מקדש ומקדש עיקרי משכן" - "but Mishkon is called Mikdosh, and Mikdosh is called Mishkon." (Michtav Me-Eliyahu 4:294 and Strive for Truth part 5 pp.220,221)

These profound nuances and complexities in our understanding of our proximity to Hashem are the reason why, ultimately, it is always upon the experience of His direct involvement in our lives that we build our faith and connection:

יִדְעוּ כִּי אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לְשִׁכְנִי בְּתוֹכְכֶם...  
 "They will know that I, the L-rd, am their G-d, Who brought them out of the land of Egypt." (Shemos 29:46)

This is confirmed by Rabbi Shimon Schwab:

"Our entire emunah is based on ... אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם... I am Hashem, your G-d, Who has taken you out of the land of Egypt... (Shemos 20:2 [Yisro], Devorim 5:6 [Vo'eschanan]) Yetzias Mitzrayim is something to which we can relate, because we, as a nation, actually experienced how HaKadosh Baruch Hu personally redeemed us from Mitzrayim."  
 (Rav Schwab on Prayer, p.548)

Perhaps it is for this reason that in all three places where Hashem promises that the Bnei Yisroel will 'know Him,' (see above) Hashem always invokes Yetzias Mitzrayim together with that assurance:

וְלִקְחֹתִי אֶתְכֶם לִי לְעָם וְהִיְתִי לְכֶם לֵאלֹהִים וַיִּדְעֹתֶם  
 כִּי אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם הַמּוֹצִיא אֶתְכֶם מִתַּחַת סְבִלֹת מִצְרַיִם: (שמות ו:1)

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן אֶל־כָּל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
 עֲרֹב וַיִּדְעֹתֶם כִּי ה' הוֹצִיא אֶתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: (שמות ט"ז:1)

יִדְעוּ כִּי אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם  
 אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לְשִׁכְנִי בְּתוֹכְכֶם אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: (שמות כ"ט:1)

May we indeed merit the gift of truly knowing 'ה', together with the special blessing of perceiving His involvement in our lives.



Good Shabbos,

Jeremy