

“This time I have sinned: Hashem is the Righteous One, and I and my people are the wicked ones.” (9:27)

The plague of hail brought Pharaoh to his knees – at least momentarily. He openly conceded his iniquity and lauded Hashem's righteousness. This seems like a formidable confession coming from the archetypical man of evil, the Pharaoh of Egypt, a spiritually bankrupt country steeped in licentiousness and evil. This *vidduy*, confession, does not seem to coincide with Chazal's maxim in the *Talmud Eiruv* 19a: Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish says, “The wicked, even when standing at the gates of *Gehinom*, Purgatory, refuse to repent.” How are we to reconcile Pharaoh's statement with Chazal's acknowledgment of the weakness of a *rasha*, wicked person?

Horav Pinchas Friedman, Shlita, quotes *Horav Shimon, zl, m'Ostrapolia*, who asserts that even in Pharaoh's supposed confession, there lay concealed an insidious undertone reflecting Pharaoh's true intent. The *Chassidic* Masters explain that on an esoteric level, the sins we commit while we are in exile continue to create a barrier within Hashem's Name, *Yud- Kay- Vav- Kay*. Our *galus*, exile, will conclude when there is complete unity, when the letters of Hashem's Name are unified and His Name is whole.

This idea is alluded to by Pharaoh's declaration: *Hashem HaTzaddik* – “*Yud, Kay*” – *Va'ani V'ami Ha'reshaim* – “*Vav- Kay*.” Five words – two on one side, connoting the first two letters of Hashem's Name, with the word *Ani*, I, referring to the evil Pharaoh, serving as a separation to the second set of letters, designating the *Vav-Kay*, last letters of Hashem's Name. In other words, Pharaoh's statement was anything but a confession. It represented the nadir of arrogance. He proudly proclaimed that *Ani* “I,” am preventing the unification of Hashem's Name, and, thus, the end to the exile. Pharaoh, like so many other evil people, hid his poison deep within his most meritorious statements. A snake is a snake, and the truly wicked do not repent, even at the gates of Purgatory, where there is no hiding from the punishment. While the concept of *pirud*, creating a fissure, within Hashem's Name and its ensuing effect on our exile has profound mystical commentary, *Rav Friedman* attempts to render a pragmatic, “down to earth” elucidation. Prior to performing a *mitzvah*, we recite a preparatory prayer, *L'Shem yichud*, “For the sake of the unification,” which concludes with the words: *I'yacheid Shem Yud- Kay-Vav- Kay, b'yichuda shlim b'shem kol Yisrael*; “To unify the Name – *yud-kay- with Vav- Kay* – in perfect unit, in the name of all *Yisrael*.”

In order to understand the underlying meaning of this prayer, which seems to be a sort of motif concerning *mitzvos* and their observance, *Rav Friedman* cites *Horav Yissachar Dov, zl, m'Belz*, who explains Moshe *Rabbeinu's* dialogue with Pharaoh concerning who was to leave Egypt for their three-day religious experience. Pharaoh asked Moshe, *Mi va'mi ha'holchim?* “Which ones are going?” Moshe responded, “With our youngsters and with our elders shall we go, with our sons and with our daughters.” Pharaoh's response was, “Not so; let the men go” (*Shemos* 10:8-11).

We see from their interchange that a sharp difference existed between Pharaoh's perspective on who should leave to serve Hashem and that of our leader, Moshe. The *Belzer Rebbe* explains that one of the primary foundations of our continued existence is *chinuch ha'banim v'habanos*, the education we provide our sons and daughters. Otherwise, they will become estranged from Hashem, His Torah, and His *mitzvos*. Without *Torah chinuch*, *Klal Yisrael* has no future.

Understandably, the *yetzer hara*, evil-inclination, and its corporeal assistants, the *reshaim* of every generation, seek every way to create a *pirud*, split, between the generations. If parents are unable to transmit Torah to their children, religious observance will soon dissipate, and the Jewish People will become one more nation that has disappeared into historic oblivion.

Thus, Pharaoh insisted that only the men leave Egypt. If the children had remained in Egypt, the parents' experience would have had little impact on their lives. Moshe replied that it does not work that way. In the Jewish perspective, children have greater precedence concerning education than their parents. They are the future. Thus, they must share with their parents in the religious experience.

There is one more ingredient to be added to this thesis. In his commentary, *Likutei Shas*, the *Arizal* explains why *Halachah* concurs with the opinion of *Bais Hillel* (*Yevamos* 61b) that in order to fulfill the *mitzvah* of *Pru u'revu*, "Be fruitful and multiply," one must father a boy and a girl. *Ish, ishah, ben, bas*, four words – esoterically allude to Hashem's Name. Therefore, one who has a son and daughter has merited to unify Hashem's Name.

We now understand why, even after Pharaoh conceded *Hashem HaTzaddik*, Hashem is righteous, he added the *Va'ani*, "And I," in order to breach Hashem's Name. This is why he refused to allow the children to leave Egypt. He was intent on maintaining the *pirud*, gap, between the generations, so that Hashem's Name not be unified.

We are engulfed in a battle with the *yetzer hara* and its minions, with our children, the focus of our fight. **Judaism that is not transmitted to the next generation has failed.** We must recognize the various ploys that the *yetzer hara* employs in its battle to engender a generation gap, to turn the next generation off. Our goal must be to provide and make use of every opportunity to avail ourselves and our children closer ties, a deeper bond, so that Hashem's Name be unified, and that the *galus* in which we live will finally come to an end.

Concerning the often quoted *pasuk* in *Devarim* (29:20), *Hanistaros l'Hashem Elokeinu, v'haniglos lanu u'levaneinu*, "The hidden (sins) are for Hashem, our G-d, but the revealed (sins) are for us and our children forever," the *Arizal* explains *nistaros*, hidden, as reference to our relationship with Hashem that is covert: *yiraah*, fear; *ahavah*, love. Only Hashem knows our true love for and fear of Him. The *niglos*, active *mitzvos* which we practice overtly are the legacy we bequeath our children. The *Admorim* of *Belz* applied this *Arizal* as an exhortation to perform *mitzvos* openly, proclaiming our faith and commitment, so that our children will see, learn and emulate. The *nistaros* are for G-d. The *niglos* are for our children. They ensure our future.

Returning now to the preparatory prayer of *L'Shem yichud*, we apply the above. The purpose of *kiyum hamitzvos*, *mitzvah* performance, is to actively, openly, display our allegiance to Hashem. By doing this, we are maintaining and strengthening the chain of the generations, the chain that heralds back to Sinai. Thus, we are *me'yached*, we unify, the *Shem*, Name, of *Yud-Kay* – which represents man and woman/father and mother – with the *Vav-Kay*, the letters representing son and daughter, the next generation of Jews, so that we will one day see an end to this bitter exile.