

## So that you may relate in the ears of your son and your son's son that I made a mockery of Egypt. (10:2)

Relating the events preceding and surrounding the Exodus is more than a lesson in Jewish history. As the seminal event in world history, it demonstrates Hashem's mastery over nature to all. Thus, it has become a lesson in Jewish theology and dogma. Hashem is the Creator of the world and the G-d of history. As He wrought the miracles in Egypt thousands of years ago, He continues to control and guide the events of the world (history) to suit *Klal Yisrael*. Nations have come and gone. We are still here and will continue to maintain our presence as long as it is His will. While the Torah emphasizes "son and son's son," it refers to all people. When we relate the events of the Exodus, our own faith is increased. The Exodus was the beginning, and it taught that all "beginnings" are generated by Hashem. Thus, our belief in Hashem is intensified and our trust in Him becomes stronger, lending to a state of calm in the comforting knowledge of what will be.

The holy Piaseczna Rebbe, *Horav Kolonymus Kalman Shapira, zl*, quotes the well-known *pesukim* in *Parshas Ki Sisa* (Shemos 33:18-22) in which Moshe *Rabbeinu* requests of Hashem, "*Hareini na es Kevodecha*, 'Show me now Your glory.'" Moshe requested a deeper and greater sense of perception, so that he could comprehend the full extent of G-dliness, so that he could grasp how Hashem conveys the flow of His holy influence to every part of the universe. Hashem's reply was: "*V'ra'eesa es Achorai u'Panai lo yeirau*, 'You will see my back, but My face may not be seen.'" In other words, the fullness of Hashem's essence is beyond anyone's grasp. As the commentators explain, Hashem told Moshe that hindsight/introspection is the only way to comprehend Hashem's actions to any extent.

Hashem did agree to show Moshe "something." He said, "Behold! There is a place near Me; you may stand on the rock. When My glory passes by, I shall place you in a cleft of the rock; I shall shield you with My hand until I have passed. Then I will remove My hand and you will see my back." Simply, this means that a human can no more survive a direct confrontation with the Divine than a person's vision remains unharmed if he stares directly at the sun. Hashem would place Moshe in the cleft of a rock or a cave in order to shield him from the brilliance that was beyond his ability to bear. He could only experience a "dulled" degree of revelation, because this is all (even) he could tolerate.

The Rebbe asks a profound question: Did Hashem want to show Moshe His glory, or did He not? If He wanted to reveal His glory to him, He should have done so. If He did not, why go through the cave/cleft experience? He could have said, "No, I am not showing you anything because it is too much."

The Rebbe explains that Hashem was essentially hinting to Moshe that he should inform *Klal Yisrael* that they must engrave on the wall of their hearts the belief that, even when life will be so bleak and the Divine concealment (*Hester Panim*) will be so intense that many might be driven to

lose hope, to give up, they should remember the cleft that Moshe had seen. We must remember that we will always have “something.” It will never be completely dark. If we look hard enough, with complete faith and trust, we will see a shimmer of light, a glimmer of hope. It is never completely dark. Something will always emanate and illuminate, giving us hope to go on.

*Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita*, relates a vignette that he heard from the *Slonimer Rebbe* (the *Yesod Ha'Avodah*), which demonstrates that an illuminating perspective always exists. Unless we look for It, however, it will escape us. It is this hidden light that is the glimmer within the concealment. A couple came to the *Rebbe* and presented a tragic predicament which weighed heavily on their daughter, whose husband had met with an untimely death. Since the couple did not yet have children, their young, widowed daughter was destined to *yibum*, levirate marriage. The problem was that her brother-in-law (who was obligated either to do *yibum* or to perform *chalitzah*) was only four years old. Thus, the earliest he could do *chalitzah* (removal, alternative to *yibum*, which basically revokes the obligation to marry the brother-in-law) would be in nine years, upon his *bar mitzvah*. Meanwhile, their daughter must wait and could not remarry. This, they felt, was too much for her to endure.

The *Rebbe* listened and, with a stroke of brilliance, explained to them that actually she was “fortunate.” “Imagine, if you will, that a Heavenly decree was proclaimed concerning your daughter, precluding her from entering into marriage before she reached the age of thirty. Every young man that she would meet would somehow not be right, or she would not impress any young man. During these years of waiting, her sisters would become frustrated, as the rumors suggesting that ‘something is amiss in the family’ would become stronger each year that she was not married. The entire family would suffer, because no one would ‘think’ that she was not getting married simply because she had not yet met Mr. Right.” People have the “habit” of assuming the worst when, in fact, a simple explanation clarifies whatever ambiguities might exist.

This is what the *Piasceznar Rebbe* meant when he taught that even within the greatest *hastarah*, concealment, a light exists. We just have to look harder to uncover it. *Rav Zilberstein* relates the story of *Horav Mordechai, zl*, the *Tzaddik* of Cracow. A couple was blessed with a son after a number of years of a childless marriage. They raised this son with great *mesiras nefesh*, devotion and self-sacrifice. The father was a devout Torah scholar who would study *Talmud* nightly next to *Mordechai's* (boy's name) crib, so that the *niggun*, tune, of his learning would inspire the young child.

This incident took place during the Cantonist period (1827) when Czar Nicholas called for the forced conscription of Jewish boys between the ages of 12-25 (many as young as 6 years old). Canton referred to military camps, where these boys were assigned to live in preparatory institutions until they were ready to serve in the army for 25 years, during which time their commitment to Judaism was all but forgotten. To be kidnapped by the government (which was usually the case) meant assured spiritual extinction. When their son was a lad of 7 years old, the government took *Mordechai*. The couple's grief was unspeakable. Nonetheless, as faithful Jews,

they did not lose hope, believing that by some miracle their precious son would be returned to them. This changed when, after a year, they had no word. It was as if their son had vanished from the face of the earth. They maintained their prayer vigil, never waning in beseeching Hashem that He rescind His decree and allow their son to return home. The father went so far as to pray to Hashem that He take his (the father's) life in exchange for his son's life. (While this practice is highly unusual, it is cited in the preface to the *Shvus Yaakov*, in which the venerable author related that when he took ill as a young *yeshivah* student, his father went to the *bais hamedrash*, opened the *Aron HaKodesh*, and pleaded with Hashem to take his life instead of his son's life. Hashem listened.)

Forty years passed, the father was now an old man, having aged prematurely due to his son's captivity. Four decades of grief and anxiety will do that. The father now had his own problems, having been framed by the government (a very common practice, especially against Jews, during that dark period in history). Apparently, the government felt that the father's subversive activities (studying and teaching Torah) warranted a visit to their dungeon, where he would not remain very long, since he was immediately found guilty and sentenced to die. On the day designated for his execution, a guard entered the cell and asked if he had a final request. The father was in the midst of learning a passage in the *Talmud*. He was engaged in a difficult topic and he remembered that the *Rashba* has a lucid explanation of the *Talmud* which would clarify the issues that were troubling him. So he asked the guard, "Could you go to a synagogue and bring back a *Rashba*?" The guard agreed, and, within a few hours, he was back with the volume that the father was seeking. The father picked up the volume lovingly and could not wait to return to his learning, with the same tune that he had always chanted when learning, the tune that he would hum as he sat and learned next to Mordechai's bed.

Suddenly, a loud cry emanated from the guard's mouth, "*Tatte! Tatte!*" The guard recognized the tune to which he had listened forty years ago. The father took a quick look at the guard's right earlobe and saw the dark mole with which his son was born, and he knew that his forty years of waiting were over. Their reunion was short-lived, as the father was taken to be executed. The son, however, left the Czar's army and returned to his roots. He studied diligently night and day, achieving extraordinary heights in Torah erudition. He became the saintly *Horav Mordechai HaTzaddik m' Cracow*.

Even within the *hastarah she'b'soch ha'hastarah*, concealment within the concealment (in the darkest of periods), Hashem is certainly present. *Gam mei achorei hadevarim hakashim*, "Even behind the difficult things that you are going through, I am standing."