

VA'ERA - 2 THE PLAGUES AND CONTROL OF THE SPIRITUAL NECK

During the servitude of Israel - the Egyptian sorcerers had catapulted Par'o and Misrayim into an elevated spiritual location. This place is anthropomorphically described as the nape of the spiritual neck - It is hinted to - in the name Par'o which retains the identical letters as ha'oreph - 1 There - they would siphon off holiness destined for Israel insuring their continued power and the subjugation of Israel as slaves. 2 Mystically this spiritual place is associated with the Aharayim DeBinah. 3 Armed with this understanding - we can begin to appreciate four of the Torah's terms -Teven (straw); Yaroq (green line, vegetable); Dam (blood); Herev (sword); that are associated with this spiritual level - 4 The Zohar cites a verse in Yishaya that parallels the smiting of Egypt with the healing of Israel. 5 We will review the teaching of the Sages regarding both the plagues wrought against Egypt and the redemption of Israel in relation to the four terms noted. The Torah and our Sages have thus coded via these terms the struggle to use and control this spiritual level located at the back of the neck. Both the destruction of Egypt and the redemption of Israel would take place at the point where teven, yaroq, dam and herev - are associated spiritually. Finally, we will discuss the secret behind the related custom during the Maggid portion of the Haggadah to take from the Kos Yayin - spilling it sixteen times into a broken vessel while reciting three prophetic plagues, the ten plagues of Egypt and their acrostic D'aSaKH-ADaSH-Be-AKHB taught by R. Yehuda. 6

THE TEVEN AND THE YAROK

It was apparently the intent of God for the initial confrontation between Moshe and Par'o to result in Egypt no longer supplying Teven - literally straw - to Israel. 7 The slaves would have to gather it on their own. In their complaint to Moshe - Israel asserted that by removing their ability to use the Teven of the Egyptians it was tantamount to Latet Herev Beyadam - giving Egypt a sword to kill us. 8 The second confrontation through the narrative of the Mateh or staff - in the swallowing of the serpents - sets up a clash between the otot - signs of God and the magic of the Egyptians. The Talmud teaches that the chief sorcerers of Egypt - Yohni and Mamre who were also the sons of Bil'am 9 had at this point commented to Moshe - Teven you are bringing to Aufarayim? Normally understood as - Why bring sorcery to a place steeped in magic? To this Moshe responds that he is bringing Yaroq literally vegetables to the Shuq Yaroq or the vegetable market. 10 This pivotal spiritual junction coded Teven and Yaroq had been under Egyptian control. The Talmud describes the husk of creation - Tohu - in terms of the ability to access a Qav Yaroq - a green line from which darkness emerges - encircling the world. 11 This was the level from which Egypt was siphoning off spiritual sustenance fueling the Husk of Egypt. It is admitted as such - in the response of Moshe to the sorcerers. Egypt is the market of the Yaroq -not literally vegetables - but rather stating that it is the place that this green line is being controlled. The Talmud inquires as to where Esther - can be sourced in the written law? The Gemara answers that she is associated with the concealment of the face of God during exile as the verse in Devarim hints - VeAnokhi Hester Astir Panai. Furthermore - another Talmudic source admits that Esther -was known as Hadassah - literally myrtle - as she had a green complexion. 12 This is a coded message that during the exile of Misrayim - Par'o and the sorcerers - had accessed this green line - an elevated but accessible spiritual place. Finally, the Hartumim told Moshe that they controlled the Teven which is related to this same level also known as Tevunah. 13 We know that Tevunah is the mystical term for the back or lower portion of Binah or the place from where Misrayim ruled. 14 It appears to me that Moshe had initiated for the control of the Teven straw by Misrayim- to cease. Israel worried that this would allow Egypt to gain access to an even more elevated level of Binah itself. These levels are both coded in the term Yaroq. This is the secret of the declaration made during our recitation of the Haggadah. Admittedly - On all other nights and surely during the Egyptian exile we are at best able to possibly consume she'ar yeraqot - other greens or only the lower lights of tevunah. This is reflected in the expansion of the name AHYH or the bloods (numerical Dam or 44 - see below) that were being siphoned at the neck by Egypt. However, on this night we have access even to the elevated lights coming from Binah. These include the simple value of AHYH x 10 in the secret of the limited 210 years of exile) which we can access via the consumption of maror or higher-level greens or yeraqot. 15 If you remove our ability to access the Teven that the Egyptians are siphoning and providing us - then the next stage will be giving them access to the full expression of the name AHYH numerically 10 x 21 or 210. This is comparable to giving over the sword or Herev -also numerically 210 to Par'o. So, in essence Israel expressed this concern to Moshe and claimed "By stopping the straw or Teven of Egypt - you are now giving them access to an even higher level associated with the sword - which you have placed into their hand? The Divine plan had it that Israel regains access to this pivotal spiritual region - via the additional labor of attaining their Teven - and via gaining access of the Yaroq back from the hold of Egypt thru the otot of the Mateh - The judgement must turn now upon Egypt - the Husk must be broken in the same manner it was built. Israel begins to gather in their own Teven - Moshe via the Mateh - brings judgement - his Yaroq upon Egypt in the secret of Abraham's war against the four kings. - The latter which is recorded in Sefer Beresheet - in the secret of - VaYareq Et Hanikhav 16 This is the stage for Israel to make use of the green line to bring judgement upon the enemies of God.

THE BLOOD AND THE SWORD

R. HaAri teaches that the spiritual DNA of the pivotal junction that had been under the control of Misrayim is associated with (impure) blood. As the spiritual back of AHYH or Aharayim DeBinah - is expressed through the expansion and extended letters of the name AHYH - A' AH' AHY' AHYA which is numerically Dam or blood. 17 We know that there are five colors of impure blood. 18 We learned above that the exile of Israel and that of the Shekhina 19 are found within Esther - This descent of Israel is referenced at a time when the Shekhina is so to say tameh via the five bloods that render her spiritually impure. The Talmud teaches (that in order to rectify this spiritual descent) she during her own exile did the bidding of Mordekhai - and showed the dam niddah - 20 one of the five reddish colors of impure blood to the Sage. 21 This represented a Tikun of the blood. As the Talmud teaches - though Esther was green there was a thread of Hesed upon her. 22 This is a reference to the purification of the Shekhina and the 5 bloods (hasadim) of purity. Rashi

cites the Midrash that it was in the merit of two commandments related to blood that Israel was redeemed. 23 The source verse in Yehezqel admits that the blood had been used by Misrayim to control Israel - as it is written - Mitboseset Bedamayikh - You wallowed in your blood - 24 In order to gain freedom - Israel must make use of the bloods - as Yehezqel continues - And I said to you - In your blood you shall live. And I said to you - In your blood you shall live. 25 It is rectified via the blood of Milah and the blood of Pesah - which according to the Haggadah of R. N. Shapira represented the control of the Male and Female aspects of the blood. 26 As is written in Zekharya - Through the blood of your covenant I will have released your prisoners from the pit in which there is no water. 27 At this point - it is important to recall that Moshe had been informed that the Divine Name AHYH will be the one associated with redemption from the husk of Misrayim - specifically via the coded message AHYH Asher AHYH. 28 Furthermore the Torah describes that the redemption came Bizro'a Netuah via God's extended arm. 29 The Haggadah explains that Zo HaHerev - this refers to the sword of God as it is written in Sefer Yirmiyah - And his sword was drawn in his hand, leaning over Jerusalem. 30 Moshe had used the Teven bringing the Yaroq upon Egypt via the pathway of AHYH arousing God's Herev - This was the necessary pathway to break the opposing power of the Herev of Par'o and his Hartumim - Israel was correct in their assertion that the destructive forces of Misrayim had gained access to a Herev - The Torah describes the ability of the Egyptian sorcerers to transform their staffs into serpents Belahetehem or via their spells 31 According to the Talmud this was magic involving the sword found at the entrance of Gan Eden -32 - Ve'et Lahat HaHerev -when God stationed the Keruvim with their revolving sword blades. 33 It was necessary to effectuate the destruction of the forces of Egypt removing their sword - replacing it with the sword Hashem - through which we were redeemed.

THE PLAGUES AND SPILLING THE WINE

According to R. HaAri -The plagues visited upon Egypt were not random punishments - but were deliberate acts with intent to break their husk which had been nourishing from the holiness of Israel. The Mishna teaches that the patterns formed by ten plagues would take course over a period of 12 months. 34 Many have surmised that the reason for the acrostic of D'aSaKH-ADaSH-Be-AKHB was to highlight a pattern formed of three groups of three plagues. The first two in each triad were forewarned while the last coming unannounced. The initial plague of each triad is preempted with Moshe stationed by the King giving an early morning warning. The second in each triad is forewarned by Moshe in front of the palace. The first triad is performed by Aharon while the last is via Moshe. At the start of each triad - there is a reminder that Egypt should thereby know God. According to R. HaAri however the plagues represent strikes upon the complete structure of the husks of Egypt. This structure which was built in three triads needed to be conquered in a parallel spiritual pattern. 35 The Midrash asserts that the simanim or acrostic of R. Yehudah were engraved upon the staff of Moshe. 36 In the Haggadah Bet Avraham Bet Aharon it teaches that the Hartume Misrayim included sorcerers who via their kishuf had sought to enslave Israel permanently. 37 The numerical value of these three sorcerers Bil'am, Yohni and Mamre is 501 the same numerical value as the total acrostic 501 of R. Yehuda. 38 So the acrostic is not merely a pattern reference of the plagues but represents the attempt to dislodge the hold of the sorcerers on Israel. It is also apparent that this is the secret behind the central word in the expression of redemption - AHYH Asher AHYH - The numerical value of asher- also 501 to break the hartume misrayim via the acrostic of R. Yehuda. 39 R.Y. Semah in his glosses to Peri Es Hayim writes that he heard from a scholar in the name of R. Hayim Vital that (on the night of Pesah) he would pour out wine from the Kos Sheni - the second cup of wine - into a broken vessel. 40 The custom is to pour out the wine - 16 times as this is reminiscent of the 16 blades that the sword of Hashem is fashioned. 41 The husks to be broken are actually 16 - the first three Dam, Esh, and Vetimrot Ashan are the prophetic plagues of the future mentioned by Yo'el the Prophet; the next ten correspond to the ten plagues which are to break the husks of Egypt - while the acrostic of R. Yehuda broken up into three is to weaken the structure of the Hartume Misrayim via sharpening the Herev Hashem. 42 While wine is also spiritually sourced in Binah the root of the green line 43 - it exits via the cup or Kos numerically Elohi'm or holy Malkhut to strike the broken vessel - 44 reminiscent of the husk of Egypt. These sorcerers Bil'am and his sons are later confronted by the makakh Hashem with his sword on the road to do the bidding of balaq- 45 The sword of Hashem would finally wield itself in cutting down these sorcerers in the war against Midyan - And they killed Bil'am Ben Be'or with the sword. 46 In order to participate in qorban Pesah one must be prepared individually - by having rectified his own blood via Dam Milan - 47 Each year at the Seder table - we - those who have rectified the spiritual aspect of blood - can then proceed to activate the sword of Hashem - as the verse in Yishaya teaches - The sword of Hashem is full of blood. 48 As we spill the wine into the broken vessel -activating the sixteen bladed sword - we must realize that our actions are to help - retain control of the pivotal access point at the nape of the spiritual neck.

Shabbat Shalom

Victor Bibi