



BEHIND THE MASK

The Torah warns that G-d may leave the Jewish people and conceal His face from them. But Rashi sweetens the pill and tells us that this isn't literal. Consolation in the concealment.

TEACHER'S MANUAL



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A. The Light Within the Darkness.....1

The Torah foretells of a time when the Jewish people will abandon G-d and He will in turn abandon them: "I will abandon them and hide My face from them." Rashi explains that "hide" means "as if I do not see their distress." (Source 1)

The Rebbe asks: What does Rashi add here? The verse is understandable on its own. Furthermore, how does Rashi know this is only "as if" and not a complete concealment?

The Rebbe explains that when reading the verse a question arises: Now that G-d has abandoned the Jewish people, what does the end of the verse - that He will hide His face - mean? Isn't He already gone? Rather, when a person leaves someone, they can still look on from a distance. Here, the verse is telling us that in addition to "abandoning," G-d will also hide His face.

Why are the Jewish people deserving of such a harsh punishment?

G-d is following the "measure-for-measure" doctrine (Source 2). Being that the Jews abandoned G-d, He too will abandon them.

And on this, Rashi says that from the wording "and I will hide My face" rather than "I will cover My face", we learn that the intention is not to completely cover His face in a way that He would not see them. On the contrary, He will continue to watch them from a distance, but He will do so in a hidden manner.

This provides us with great comfort. In difficult times for the Jewish people, when we are suffering and afflicted, it may seem as if G-d does not see our distress. However, the truth is that He is present and shares in our sorrow.

Since G-d's withdrawal is in response to the Jewish people's abandonment of Him, as soon as we repent, G-d will return to us.

B. The Jews' Counterclaim.....9

There is an ongoing debate between the Jewish people and G-d about who should make the first step in reconciliation. G-d says to the Jews, "return to Me," and then "I will return to you." The Jewish people counter,"return us to You, O G-d," and then "we will return." (Source 3)

Here, the debate focuses on who is responsible for the current situation. G-d accuses the Jews of abandoning Him, and therefore He had to leave them. However, the Rebbe presents the counterargument from the Jews to G-d: G-d is to “blame” because the distancing only occurred due to Him taking Moses away from them.

Moses was a unique and highly effective leader, both spiritually and physically. Thanks to him, Israel received manna from heaven to eat, a well of water to drink, and clouds of glory to preserve their clothes in the desert (Source 5). If Moses had continued to lead them, they argue, the distancing would not have occurred.

Introduction

In this lesson, we will explore what causes G-d to seemingly abandon the Jewish people, leading them to become downtrodden among the nations. We will also discuss what we can do to change this situation, and restore the closeness between us and G-d.

השיעור לפרשת ניצבים - וילך

משיחת שבת פרשת וילך, ה'תשמ"ב, בלתי מוגה
תורת מנחם – התוועדויות תשמ"ב כרך א' עמוד 34

A. The Light within the Darkness

In the Torah reading of Vayelech, towards the end of the Torah, Moses parts from the Jewish people and appoints Joshua to lead in his stead. Moses notes that this day is his 120th birthday, and prepares them for the upcoming battles they will face when they conquer the Land of Israel. Do not fear these battles, he tells them, because G-d is with you. Moses goes on to tell them that G-d told him what the future will bring: dark days will come when G-d will abandon the Jewish people and they will be prey for the nations.

Source 1 Deuteronomy 31:16-17

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G-d said to Moses: Behold, you are about to lie with your forefathers, and this nation will rise up and stray after the deities of the nations of the land, into which they are coming. They will abandon Me and violate My covenant which I made with them.

My fury will rage against them on that day, and I will abandon them and hide My face from them. They will be consumed, and many evils and troubles will befall them. They will say on that day, "Is it not because our G-d is no longer in my midst, that these evils have befallen me?"

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה הִנֵּה שֹׁכֵב
עִם אֲבוֹתֶיךָ, וְקָם הָעָם הַזֶּה וְזָנָה
אַחֲרֵי אֱלֹהֵי גִזְרֵי הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר
הוּא בָּא שָׁמָּה בְּקִרְבּוֹ, וַעֲזָבוּנִי
וַהֲפֹר אֶת בְּרִיתִי אֲשֶׁר כָּרַתִּי
אִתּוֹ.

וְחָרָה אַפִּי בּוֹ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא,
וְעִזְבֹתִים, וְהִסְתַּרְתִּי פָנַי מֵהֶם,
וְהָיָה לְאָכֹל, וּמִצָּאָהוּ רָעוֹת
רַבּוֹת וְצָרוֹת, וְאָמַר בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא:
הֲלֹא עַל כִּי אֵין אֱלֹהֵי בְּקִרְבִּי
מִצָּאוֹנִי הָרָעוֹת הָאֵלֶּה.

Rashi

Student's
pg. 1

And I will hide my face from them: as
if I do not see their distress.

וְהִסְתַּרְתִּי פָנַי. כְּמוֹ
שֶׁאֵינִי רוֹאֶה בְּצָרָתָם.

If the Torah is the book of all books, then Rashi is the commentary of all commentaries. Every Jewish school child learns Rashi's commentary on the Torah. Rashi—an acronym of his name, Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki—lived in France 950 years ago, and was the first to write a commentary on the entire Torah that would help even a child understand. Rashi became popular very fast, and Rashi quickly becoming the teacher of generations of Jewish children.

The Rebbe developed a new method of analyzing Rashi. He emphasized that every word in Rashi is precise, and every interpretation and example is exact.

In this address, the Rebbe analyzes a Rashi and learns remarkable lessons from it.

>> The Rebbe

Doubly Hidden

Student's
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A. Even without Rashi's comment, the words "I will hide My face" are perfectly understandable to the beginner student. Why then does Rashi find it necessary to make an extra clarification here?

B. Why does Rashi write "as if I don't see their distress?" From where does he derive that the concealment is only "as if"?

צריך להבין: א. גם לולי פירוש רש"י, מבין הבן חמש למקרא את פירוש התיבות "והסתרת פני" (שהקב"ה יסתיר את פניו) - ואם כן, לשם מה צריך רש"י להוסיף ביאור בתיבות אלו?

ב. מדוע כותב רש"י "כמו שאיני רואה בצרתם" - הרי בפסוק לא נכתב הלשון כ' הדמיון, ואם כן, מאין לו לרש"י לחדש שזהו רק "כמו שאיני רואה בצרתם", בכ' הדמיון בלבד?!

On the fact of it, the verse is quite clear. G-d says that because of the sins of the Jews He will hide His face from them. No further explanation is needed. Firstly, why does Rashi come to explain something so simple? And if he is explaining, why do it in such a cryptic manner? Instead of explaining that G-d will hide His face, he writes "as if I do not see their distress." How does Rashi know it is only "as if?" Perhaps G-d is actually hiding his face ...

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The explanation is as follows:

When the beginner student studies the verse "My fury will rage against them on that day, and I will abandon them and hide My face from them," they have a question:

"Abandon" means that G-d is leaving the Jews, G-d forbid, and going somewhere else. If so, how is it possible that G-d will "hide His face" from them, if He is in another place?

If G-d is together with the Jewish people,

והביאור:

כאשר הבן חמש למקרא לומד את הפסוק "וחרה אפי בו ביום ההוא ועזבתים והסתרת פני מהם" - מתעוררת אצלו קושיא:

"ועזבתים" פירושו - שהקב"ה עוזב את בני ישראל, חס ושלום, הולך למקום אחר, ואינו נמצא ביחד עם בני ישראל. ואם כן, מה שייך לומר "והסתרת פני" כאשר הוא נמצא במקום אחר לגמרי?!

בשלמא כאשר הקב"ה נמצא באותו מקום ביחד עם בני ישראל, שייך שיהיה מעמד ומצב של "הסתרת פני", היינו, שעם היות

Student's
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then He can hide His face from them. But if He has already *left* them, how is it possible to say "I will hide My face from them"?

Rashi is therefore compelled to explain that the verse means "as if I don't see their distress."

Even when G-d has abandoned them and is in another place, it is still possible that He is watching them. And in this case, the verse is telling us that in addition to abandoning them, G-d will also hide His face from them — meaning "as if I don't see their distress."

When you are in a room next to someone else, you can hide your face. But when you have already moved to another room, there is nothing to hide! You are in a different place. Therefore, Rashi explains that the meaning here is that even when I am in a different place, it will appear as though I do not see what is happening with you. Because even when a person is in another place, he can still look at what is happening with his child in the second room. And here, G-d says that it will be in such a way that not only have I 'left them'—I am not next to them—but that 'I will hide My face.' It will appear as though I am not even watching from afar what is happening with them.

Mutual Abandonment

Student's
pg. 2

This point requires clarification. Why is there such a severe punishment of abandonment in our case?

The previous verse states: "G-d said to Moses: Behold, you are about to lie with your forefathers, and this nation will rise up and stray . . . they will abandon Me."

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G-d's punishment is always commensurate to the transgression, a point the beginner student is already familiar with from the verse "for with

שהוא נמצא ביחד עמם, הרי הוא מסתיר את פניו מהם; אבל כאשר הוא נמצא במקום אחר - מה שייך לומר "והסתירתי פני מהם"!!

ולכן מוכרח רש"י לבאר את פירוש הכתובים - "כמו שאיני רואה בצרתם", באופן הבא:

גם כאשר הקב"ה נמצא במקום אחר (משום ש"ועזבתים") - יתכן מעמד ומצב שהוא מביט ומסתכל עליהם וכו', ויתכן מעמד ומצב של "הסתירתי פני", "כמו שאיני רואה בצרתם" (כדלקמן).

אבל עדיין צריך להבין הא גופא - מדוע בפסוק זה ישנו עונש חמור כל כך עד ש"ועזבתים"!!

והביאור בזה:

בפסוק שלפני זה נאמר "וקם העם הזה וגו' ועזבני", ומאחר שהנהגתו של הקב"ה היא באופן של "מדה כנגד מדה", כפי שהבן חמש למקרא למד כבר את הפסוק "כי בדבר אשר זדו עליהם", ובפירוש רש"י: "במים דמו לאבדם והם

Student's
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the thing that they plotted, He came upon them." Rashi explains, "the Egyptians plotted to destroy the Jews through water, and they were themselves destroyed by water." This is the concept of "measure for measure."

Therefore, it is clear that the appropriate punishment for the Jewish people abandoning G-d is that G-d should abandon them, measure for measure.

נאבדו במים", שזהו כללות
הענין של "מדה כנגד
מדה",

הרי מובן בפשטות
שהעונש על ההנהגה של
"עזבני" הוא - "ועזבתים",
"מדה כנגד מדה".

Measure for measure is a moral and legal principle that is one of the leading concepts in the Torah, and it is considered a fundamental principle in understanding the Torah's doctrine of reward and punishment. The essence of this principle is that G-d acts and repays people in the same manner in which they behave.

One of the prototypical examples of this is the Egyptians. They tried blocking the rise of Moses and the redemption of the Jewish people by drowning the Jewish infants in the waters of the Nile, and ultimately, at the splitting of the Sea of Reeds, the Egyptian army drowned in the waters of the sea.

The Torah recounts that when Jethro arrived in the desert to meet Moses, Moses told him what had happened during the Exodus from Egypt and about the drowning of the Egyptian army in the Sea of Reeds. Jethro responded that they died in the same way they had killed the Jewish infants.

Let us read this in the words of the Torah:

Source 2 Exodus 18:8,10-11

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Moses told his father-in-law about everything that G-d had done to Pharaoh and the Egyptians for Israel's sake and about all the hardships they had met along the way and how G-d had saved them.

Jethro said ". . . Now I know that G-d is greater than all the deities, for with the thing that they plotted, He came upon them."

וַיְסַפֵּר מֹשֶׁה לְחֹתָנוֹ אֵת כָּל אֲשֶׁר
עָשָׂה ה' לְפָרְעֹה וּלְמִצְרַיִם עַל
אוֹדֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵת כָּל הַתְּלָאָה
אֲשֶׁר מָצְאָתֶם בְּדֶרֶךְ וַיֵּצֵאֵם ה'.

וַיֹּאמֶר יִתְרוֹ... עַתָּה יָדַעְתִּי כִּי
גָדוֹל ה' מִכָּל הָאֱלֹהִים כִּי בִדְבָר
אֲשֶׁר יָדוּ עָלֵיהֶם.

Rashi

Student's
pg. 3

For with the thing that they plotted, He came upon them: The Egyptians plotted to destroy the Jews through water, and they were destroyed by water themselves.

כִּי בְדִבְרֵי אֲשֶׁר יָדוּ
עָלֵיהֶם. כְּתִרְגֻמוֹ
— בְּמִים דָּמּוּ
לְאִפְדֵּם וְהֵם נֶאֱכָדוּ
בְּמִים:

Jethro was impressed that G-d had punished the Egyptians measure for measure.

In our case as well, it is understood that if the Jews abandon G-d, He will abandon them in return - measure for measure.

>> The Rebbe

Concealing, But Still Seeing

Student's What is Rashi's source that it is only "as if I
pg. 3 don't see their distress?"

Student's The verse uses the words "I will *hide* My face
pg. 4 from them," and not "I will *cover* My face."
This compels us to explain that it is only "as
if I don't see their distress"

There is a difference between "hiding" and "covering." When one covers one's face, this doesn't only affect other people, who can no longer see the face. It affects the face itself as well—it is covered.

By contrast, when one *hides* one's face, only others are affected, by not being able to see the face. The face itself, however, remains unaffected, it is not covered.

We find an example of covering the face with Moses. When Moses descended from Mt. Sinai, he had to wear a mask to cover his face. This didn't merely hide his face from others, it covered his face itself.

When Moses descended from Mt. Sinai with the second tablets, his face radiated light. When Moses noticed this, he placed a veil over his face to conceal the radiance. Only in specific important instances, when he spoke with G-d or conveyed G-d's words to the Jewish people, would he remove the veil from his face.

הביאור בדברי רש"י "כמו שאני רואה בצרתם":

מאחר שלשון הפסוק הוא "והסתרתני פני מהם", ולא "וכיסיתי פני" וכיוצא בזה - בהכרח לומר שהפירוש בזה הוא "כמו שאני רואה בצרתם", ולא ש"אני רואה בצרתם" ממש חס ושלום.

והביאור בזה:

החילוק שבין כיסוי הפנים ובין הסתרת הפנים הוא - שכאשר מכסה את פניו, נפעל שינוי לא רק בנוגע לזולת (שהזולת אינו רואה אותו), אלא גם בנוגע לפניו, שהם מכוסים כו'; מה שאין כן כאשר מסתיר את פניו, הרי השינוי הוא רק אצל הזולת, שאינו רואה את הפנים, אבל בנוגע לפנים עצמם לא נפעל שינוי כלל.

[ובדוגמת המסווה שמצינו אצל משה רבינו, שזהו ענין של כיסוי הפנים (ולא הסתר בלבד) - הרי זה פועל שינוי בפנים עצמם (לא רק בנוגע לזולת), שהפנים הם מכוסים].

In this case, when Moses placed the veil over his face, it concealed for both sides. The speakers could not see Moses, and Moses' could not see them well.

Student's
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Hence, when the verse says "I will hide My face," Rashi explains that it is "as if I don't see their distress" In reality, G-d does see their distress, but since G-d is hiding his face, it appears to the Jews as though He doesn't see their distress.

This point is also reflected in the precise words of the verse, "I will hide My face from them." The concealment is only towards the Jewish people, to whom it appears as if G-d isn't seeing their distress.

It's like a son who is at a playground and refuses to go home. After the father calls him several times and he refuses, the father says, "I'm going home," and then hides nearby to see what the son will do. Of course, he doesn't stop watching; he just pretends not to observe.

Great Comfort

Student's
pg. 5

This idea provides great solace for the Jewish people. The Jewish people are in exile, and their situation is such that "they will be consumed, and many evils and troubles will befall them." It is so bad that they think that G-d doesn't see their distress.

Rashi clarifies that it is only "as if G-d doesn't see their distress." It only appears so to the Jews, but in reality G-d does care deeply about their distress, and suffers together with them, as the verse states, "in all their pain he too is pained."

After we have studied the rebuke in the portion of *Bechukotai*, and then the rebuke

ומאחר שלשון הכתוב הוא "והסתרת פני" (הסתר בלבד, ולא כיסוי וכו') מפרש רש"י "כמו שאיני רואה בצרתם", היינו, שלמען האמת בודאי שהקב"ה רואה את צרתם, אלא שראייתו של הקב"ה היא באופן של "והסתרת פני", שנדמה לבני ישראל שהקב"ה אינו רואה בצרתם.

וכמובן גם מדיוק הלשון "והסתרת פני מהם", היינו, שההסתר הוא אך ורק כלפי בני ישראל, שנדמה להם שהקב"ה אינו רואה בצרתם.

והנה, בענין זה מצינו נחמה גדולה ביותר לבני ישראל:

כאשר בני ישראל נמצאים בזמן הגלות, ומעמדם ומצבם הוא באופן של "והיה לאכול ומצאוהו רעות רבות וצרות", ועד שנדמה להם שהקב"ה אינו רואה בצרתם - הנה על זה אומר רש"י "כמו שאיני רואה בצרתם", בכ' הדמיון בלבד, היינו, שזהו רק מה שנדמה להם שהקב"ה אינו רואה בצרתם, אלא זהו ענין שנוגע לו בעצמו, וכמו שכתוב "בכל צרתם לו צר".

זאת אומרת: לאחר שלומדים את התוכחה של פרשת בחקותי, והתוכחה של פרשת כי תבוא, ולאחרי זה לומדים

in the portion of Vayelech, where the verse states "I will hide My face," Rashi needs to emphasize that it is only "as if." It appears to the Jewish people as if G-d is oblivious to their distress, but the truth is that "in all their pain he too is pained." G-d Himself is completely distraught and distressed by the distress of the Jewish people.

בפרשת וילך שישנו מעמד ומצב של "הסתרת פני וגו'" - צריך רש"י להדגיש שזהו רק "כמו שאיני רואה בצרתם", היינו, שכך זה נדמה לבני ישראל, אבל האמת היא ש"בכל צרתם לו צר", היינו, שהקב"ה נמצא במעמד ומצב של עצבות ומרירות הכי גדולה בגלל צרתם של בני ישראל.

At times, the Jewish people find themselves in a situation where the curses of the Divine rebuke come to life. Enemies kill and massacre the Jewish people, and the Jews ask, "Where is G-d? Where was G-d on October 7th?"

The answer is twofold:

A. G-d's conduct with the Jewish people follows the principle of measure for measure. When the Jews abandon G-d, then, measure for measure, He acts as if he has abandoned them.

B. It may appear that G-d does not see what is happening. In reality, He is like that father who hides his face but never stops watching. G-d sees and observes every moment, and He Himself is in the greatest sorrow and bitterness over what is happening.

G-d may appear to ignore our suffering, but from His end He is not actually ignoring anything. From the receiving end it appears to the Jewish people that G-d isn't watching them, but the truth is that he is watching very closely, and awaiting our repentance. In fact, the very reason why G-d conceals Himself to the extent that it seems to us as if He is ignoring our suffering is only in order to arouse us to return the G-d.

Mutual Return

The reason we are in exile is only because "I have abandoned you for a short moment," which itself is only because the Jewish people have abandoned G-d. It is therefore clear that when Jewish people return to G-d, G-d's brief "abandonment" of us is immediately terminated.

ומאחר שהסיבה לכך ש"ברגע קטן עזבתיך" היא משום שהנהגת בני ישראל היתה באופן של "עזבני" - מובן בפשטות שעל ידי זה שבני ישראל שבים ופונים להקב"ה (היפך הנהגה של "עזבני"), מתבטל תיכף ומיד העניין של "ברגע קטן עזבתיך".

Since the entire reason that G-d "abandoned" the Jewish people is a measure-for-measure response to the fact that the Jews abandoned G-d, the very act of the Jewish people turning to G-d, asking for forgiveness, and seeking redemption is already enough for Him to return to them.

The basic element of teshuvah (repentance) can be achieved in a single moment. We aren't discussing rectifying the specific offenses and compensating for all the missing good deeds—that is something that takes time. Here we are discussing the basic step of resolving to return to G-d. Since we will return to G-d in an instant, we will instantaneously negate "I have abandoned you for a short moment" and bring our redemption immediately.

ומאחר שכללות ענין התשובה הוא בשעה אחת וברגע אחד [שהרי לא מדובר כאן אודות תיקון הפגמים והשלמת הענינים שחסרו בעבודתו, שזהו ענין הדורש זמן וכו', אלא רק אודות כללות התנועה של "לשוב אל ה'"] - מובן שבשעה אחת וברגע אחד שבים בני ישראל אל הקב"ה, ובדרך ממילא מתבטל תיכף ומיד הענין של "ברגע קטן עזבתיך", ו"מיד הן נגאלין".

In the process of teshuvah, there are two parts. The first part is a 180-degree turn. If until now the person was distant from G-d and didn't care about His word, now they return from their ways and come back to G-d. They make a firm commitment in their heart that what happened in the past is done, but from now on, they will follow G-d's word and cling to His ways. This is a decision that happens in an instant.

The second part is working to fix what was damaged, working to clean the blemishes caused by the sins. This part can take time.

However, when we talk about the sad vicious cycle where G-d abandons the Jew because the Jew abandoned G-d, the very decision to repent and return to G-d is enough to break that cycle—and bring salvation.

B. The Jews' Counterclaim

Who Will Make the First Move?

Source 3 Eicha Rabbah, 5:21

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"Return us to You, O G-d, and we shall return." The Jewish people said before G-d: "Master of the Universe, it is Your responsibility to bring us back." He replied: "It is your responsibility, as it says (Malachi 3:7): 'Return to Me, and I will return to you,' says G-d." They responded: "Master of the Universe, it is Yours, as it says (Psalms 85:5): 'Restore us, G-d of our salvation.'" Therefore, it is said: "Return us to You, O G-d, and we shall return."

הַשִּׁיבֵנוּ ה' אֵלֶיךָ וְנָשׁוּבָה,
אָמְרָה כְּנֶסֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל לִפְנֵי
הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא, "רְבוֹנוֹ
שֶׁל עוֹלָם שָׁלָךְ הוּא הַשִּׁיבֵנוּ".
אָמַר לָהֶם שְׁלָכֶם הוּא,
שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: שׁוּבוּ אֵלַי וְאֶשׁוּבָה
אֵלֵיכֶם, נְאֻם ה'², אָמְרָה לִפְנֵי
רְבוֹנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם שָׁלָךְ הוּא,
שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: שׁוּבֵנוּ אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל³,
לְכָךְ נֶאֱמַר: הַשִּׁיבֵנוּ ה' אֵלֶיךָ
וְנָשׁוּבָה.

The Book of Lamentations closes with the words, "Return us to You, O G-d, and we shall return; renew our days as of old." According to the Midrash, these words encapsulate an ongoing debate between the Jewish people and G-d, centering on the responsibility for initiating repentance.

The Jewish people argue that it is G-d's responsibility to bring them back, as it says in Psalms: "Restore us, O G-d of our salvation." On the other hand, G-d places the responsibility on Israel, quoting the verse from Malachi: "Return to Me, and I will return to you."

Ultimately, the conclusion reflects a compromise, holding both parties accountable: "Return us to You, O G-d, and we shall return; renew our days as of old."

Here, in these verses, the argument shifts to an earlier level—not about who should return to whom, but about who is responsible for the initial estrangement. What we have learned so far is G-d's version, where He says, "You left Me, and therefore I left you."

But the Jewish people say to Him: "It is You who left us first. You took Moses away from us!"

>> The Rebbe

G-d Started...

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The Jewish people can even present a "claim" against G-d: The reason why they could reach the point of abandoning G-d was because of Moses's absence. As the verse states, "G-d said to Moses: Behold, you are about to lie with your forefathers, and this nation will rise up and stray after the deities of the nations of the land . . . they will abandon Me." If G-d would not have taken Moses away from them there could never have been any abandonment of G-d.

Moses is the faithful shepherd of the Jewish people, and it is guaranteed that a true shepherd will not abandon the sheep of his flock.

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If so, Jews can rightly claim, why was Moses taken from them? Had he remained with them, they could never have abandoned G-d!

If Moses had entered the Land with them and continued to lead them there, the Jewish people argue, none of this would have happened. He would have guided us correctly, we would have continued to serve G-d, and everything would have been good.

The People Need a Leader

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Every Jew possesses a spark of the soul of Moses. In addition, every Torah scholar is termed "Moses," as the Talmud states, "Moses, you have spoken well."

יתירה מזו: טענת בני ישראל היא, שעצם האפשרות שהנהגתם תהיה באופן של "עזבני" - הרי זה בסיבת העדרו של משה רבינו, וכמו שכתוב בפרשתנו "ויאמר ה' אל משה הנך שוכב עם אבותיך וקם העם הזה וזנה אחרי אלהי נכר הארץ גו' ועזבני", אבל אם הקב"ה לא היה לוקח מהם את משה רבינו, לא היה יכול להיות "עזבני"!

משה רבינו הוא "רעיא מהימנא", רוען של ישראל, וישנה ההבטחה שרועה אמיתי "לא יעזוב את צאן מרעיתו",

ואם כן - טוענים בני ישראל - מדוע לקחו מהם את משה רבינו, הרי אם משה רבינו היה נמצא עמם במשך כל הזמן, לא היתה אפשרות כלל שתהיה ההנהגה באופן של "עזבני"!!

ואין זה מספיק מה שבכל אחד ואחד מישראל ישנו ניצוץ של משה רבינו, וכמבואר בתורה אור⁴ שכל תלמיד חכם נקרא בשם משה, כמובא בגמרא "משה שפיר קאמרת"...

Source 4 Talmud, Sukkah 39a

Student's Rav Safra said to Rava: "Moses, did you really
pg. 8 say that?!"

אָמַר רַב סַפְרָא לְרַבָּא: מֹשֶׁה
(כְּלוּמַר, הִנֵּה אָדָם גָּדוֹל כְּמֹשֶׁה
בְּדוֹרוֹ) וְכִי יָפָה אָמַרְתָּ?!

In one of the debates between Rav Safra and Rava, Rav Safra called Rava "Moses," intending it as a compliment, indicating that he is a great man, the leader of the generation.

From this, the Alter Rebbe derives in Torah Or that every Torah scholar is called Moses, because when he studies the Torah the light of G-d shines within him, along with the spark of Moses our teacher.

However, if in every Jew there is a spark of Moses, and every Torah scholar is called Moses, then what is the argument?

>> The Rebbe

Student's But the spark of Moses is insufficient, because
pg. 8 it does not exist in a revealed manner for every Jew, and realizing that we all have a Moses within us requires hard work. Moses commanded us the Torah, but we need to toil hard to study it, because our inner Moses isn't revealed. Therefore, we need the actual physical Moses in order to negate the possibility of us abandoning G-d.

כִּי עֲנִין זֶה אֵינוּ בְּגִילּוֹי אֶצֶל כָּל אֶחָד
וְאֶחָד מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל, וְצָרִיכִים לְהִתְיַגֵּעַ עַל
זֶה כּו', זֹאת אוֹמֶרֶת, אִף עַל פִּי ש"תוֹרָה
צוּה לָנוּ מֹשֶׁה גו', אִף עַל פִּי כֵן בְּהִכָּרַח
לְהִתְיַגֵּעַ בְּלִימּוּד הַתּוֹרָה, מֵאַחֵר שֶׁאֵין
זֶה בְּגִילּוֹי וְכו' - וְלָכֵן, צָרִיכִים אֶת מֹשֶׁה
רַבֵּינוּ בְּפוּעַל, כִּי דוֹקָא עַל יְדוֹ נִשְׁלַלֵּת
הָאִפְשָׁרוּת שֶׁל "עֲזוּבִי".

The Jews argue that it's not enough to have a spark of Moses. They need a person in whom that spark of Moses is revealed! Therefore, they require Moses himself. Only he has the strength to ensure that the Jews do not abandon G-d.

Physical and Spiritual Effect

Student's Moses's effect on the conduct of the Jewish
pg. 8 people was not only on spiritual affairs, but
Student's also on physical matters. It was in Moses's
pg. 9 merit that the Jewish people were given the manna, "bread from heaven," as well as the

וּפְעוּלָתוֹ שֶׁל מֹשֶׁה רַבֵּינוּ בְּנוֹגַע לְהַנְהִיגָתָם
שֶׁל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִתְּבַטָּאת (לֹא רַק בְּעֵנִינִים
רוּחָנִיִּים, אֲלָא) גַּם בְּעֵנִינִים גְּשְׁמִיִּים -
שֶׁהָרִי בִּזְכוּתוֹ שֶׁל מֹשֶׁה רַבֵּינוּ נִתֵּן לְבְנֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן - "לֶחֶם מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם", וּבִזְכוּתוֹ

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water and clouds of glory after the passing of Aaron and Miriam. The Talmud states that the latter two miracles returned in the merit of Moses, and based on this it explains the verse "I cut off the three shepherds in one month."

ניתנו להם מים וענני הכבוד (שעל ידם נפעל הענין של "שמלתך לא בלתה מעליך") - לאחר פטירת מרים ואהרן, כמאמר רז"ל⁵ ש"חזרו שניהם בזכות משה", ועל זה נאמר "ואכחיד את שלשת הרועים בירח אחד".

Source 5 Talmud, Taanit 9a

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Rabbi Yosi, son of Rabbi Yehuda, says: Three good leaders stood by Israel: Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. And three good gifts were given through them: the well, the cloud, and the manna.

The well was in the merit of Miriam, the pillar of cloud was in the merit of Aaron, and the manna was in the merit of Moses. When Miriam passed away, the well was removed, as the verse states, "And Miriam passed away there," and the subsequent verse states, "and there was no water for the people." The water returned in the merit of both Moses and Aaron.

When Aaron passed away, the clouds of glory were removed, as it is written: "And the Canaanite king of Arad heard." What did he hear? He heard that Aaron passed away and the clouds of glory were removed, and he thought he had permission to fight against Israel. The water and clouds both returned in the merit of Moses.

When Moses passed away, all the gifts were removed, as the verse states, "and I will destroy the three shepherds in one month." But did they all die in one month? Miriam passed away in Nissan, Aaron in Av, and Moses in Adar! Rather, it teaches that the three good gifts given through them were nullified, and they were all removed in one month.

רבי יוסי ברבי יהודה אומר: שלשה פרנסים [מנהיגים] טובים עמדו לישראל בצאתם ממצרים, ואלו הן: משה ואהרן ומרים. ושלש מתנות טובות נתנו משמים על ידם, ואלו הן: באר המים, וענן הכבוד, והמן.

הבאר נתנה לישראל בזכות מרים, ועמוד ענן – בזכות אהרן, והמן – בזכות משה.

ועל כן כאשר מתה מרים נסתלקה הבאר, שנאמר: "ותמת שם מרים", ונאמר אחריו: "ולא היה מים לעדה", וחררה הבאר לישראל בזכות שניהן, משה ואהרן.

מת אהרן נסתלקו ענני כבוד, שנאמר: "וישמע הכנעני מלך ערד", מה שמועה שמע – שמע שמת אהרן ונסתלקו ענני כבוד, וכסבור שאין לישראל עוד הגנה משמים ולכן נתנה לו רשות להלחם בישראל. חזרו שניהם – הבאר וענני הכבוד – בזכות משה.

מת משה נסתלקו כלן, שנאמר: "ואכחיד את שלשת הרועים בירח אחד", וכי בחדש אחד מתו שלשת הרועים? והלא מרים מתה בחדש ניסן, ואהרן באב, ומשה באדר! אלא, מלמד שעם מות משה נתבטלו שלש מתנות טובות שנתנו על ידן, ונסתלקו כל המתנות בחדש אחד – ולכן נראה להם כאילו מתו כלם יחד.

This shows us, in Jewish history, that Moses had great power—not only to influence the Jews to maintain their spiritual state, but also to provide for their physical needs.

>> The Rebbe

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The Jewish people argue that if not for “behold, you are about to lie with your forefathers”—the passing of Moses their faithful shepherd, they could never have “abandoned” G-d. If so, their abandonment is G-d’s fault!

The conclusion from this is that we need Moses with us in the physical sense. In this way he can also care for the physical needs of the Jewish people.

וזוהי טענתם של בני ישראל - שלולי הענין של "הנך שוכב עם אבותיך", הסתלקותו של משה רבינו - רוען של ישראל, לא היתה אפשרות כלל להנהגה באופן של "עזבני". ואם כן, הרי זה באשמתו של הקב"ה!

ועל פי זה מובן שצריכים את משה רבינו בפועל כפשוטו, ובאופן שעל ידו נמשכים גם הענינים הגשמיים של בני ישראל.

משיחת שבת פרשת וילך, ה'תשמ"ב, בלתי מוגה
תורת מנחם - התוועדויות תשמ"ב כרך א' עמוד 34

Key Points:

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- The Torah warns that in the future, G-d will abandon the Jewish people and hide His face from them.
- Why does the Jewish people deserve such a severe punishment? "Measure for measure"—because they abandoned G-d, He abandons them.
- Rashi explains that the concealment will only be an outward appearance. G-d will in fact continue to watch over the Jewish people and feel their suffering.
- This provides great comfort: even in difficult times, G-d always keeps an eye on His people and is present with them in their distress.
- As soon as the Jewish people return to G-d, He will immediately return to be with them.
- G-d claims that the reason for the distance is the abandonment by the Jewish people, but their argument is that this all happened because G-d took Moses from them. If Moses had continued to lead them, the distance would never have occurred.

Student's **Takeaway:**
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Even during times of concealment, the darkness is not complete. G-d continues to watch over His children, feeling sorrow and pain in their distress. He waits for us to take the first step and return to Him, and in an instant, He will return to us.