

Parashat VaYeilech

Parashat VaYeilech describes G-d's final admonitions to Moses before his death. Amongst these is the following:

“And G-d said to Moses: ‘Behold, you [now go to] lie with your ancestors, and this people will rise up and go astray after the strange gods of the land into which it is entering, and they will forsake Me and abrogate My covenant that I made with them. Then My anger will flare up against them, and I will abandon them and hide My face from them. They shall be ready prey; and many evils and troubles shall befall them. And they shall say on that day, “Surely it is because our G-d is not in our midst that these evils have befallen us.” Yet I will keep My face hidden on that day, because of all the evil they have done in turning to other gods.’”¹

You already know what our sages said concerning the verse “and there did not arise in Israel another prophet like Moses”²—that in *Israel* no such prophet arose, [but there did arise a comparable prophet amongst the gentiles, i.e., Balaam].³

According to the sages, G-d granted Balaam the gift of prophecy in order to test the gentile nations. Had they not had a prophet similar to Moses, they could argue that they did not accept G-d's sovereignty the way the Jews did because they had no leader of the stature the Jews did. G-d therefore gave them a prophet of similar stature to Moses, but the gentile nations still did not take advantage of this, and chose instead to remain distant from G-d.

Both Moses and Balaam personified *da'at*, the former in holiness, and the latter in evil.

As we know, *da'at* is the *sefirah* of consciousness. *Chochmah* and *binah* refer to abstract intellect, while *da'at* is the faculty of intellect that interprets *chochmah* and *binah vis-à-vis* their relevance to the individual. Moses, the transmitter of the Torah, our glimpse into G-d's mind, is the spiritual force that grants us Divine consciousness, and thus personifies holy *da'at*.

Evil *da'at* is simply all types of consciousness that are not G-d-oriented, from the simply self-centered to the overtly antagonistic.

At first, the good [*da'at*] and the evil [*da'at*] were intermixed because of the sins of Adam and Abel, but afterwards this was rectified and Moses was born embodying the good and holy [*da'at*] alone. This is the mystical meaning of the verse [describing Moses' birth:] “And she [Moses' mother] saw him, that he was good.”⁴

[As a result of this,] Balaam was separated from him, counterbalancing him as [the embodiment of] evil *da'at*. This is the mystical meaning of the phrase [Balaam uses to describe himself:] “knowing the supernal knowledge.”⁵

¹ Deuteronomy 31:16-18.

² Deuteronomy 34:10.

³ *Bamidbar Rabbah* 14:20.

⁴ Exodus 2:2.

⁵ Numbers 24:16.

Indeed, Moses' generation is called "the generation of knowledge," for their consciousness was defined by their of knowledge of G-d. Counterbalancing them was the mixed multitude, whose consciousness was defined by evil knowledge.

As we know, a "mixed multitude" of gentiles left Egypt together with the Jews. Moses converted these converts to Judaism on his own, without consulting G-d on this. Oral tradition tells us that this multitude was in fact not ready for this spiritual leap, and caused much trouble during the forty-year trek in the desert. Specifically, we see here that they did not make the change from worldly/self-oriented consciousness to Divine consciousness.

To explain: [the mixed multitude embodied] the sparks of [holiness present in] the seminal emissions that issued from Adam during the 130 years [he abstained from marital relations with Eve], as explained elsewhere, and were not yet rectified.

Wasted seminal emission is the archetypal form of self-indulgence and self-orientation. Although Adam separated from his wife because he did not wish to bring children into the world that would suffer the fate of death that his sin had introduced, his misplaced altruism was in fact selfish in motivation. *He* did not want to experience the suffering brought about by *his* sin; his actions were not motivated by concern for what G-d wanted in the world: a world of human beings that—it is true—were not on the same level as mankind had been intended to be at, but who would rise to the challenge of rectifying the world nonetheless.

The result of Adam's selfish self-imposed estrangement from his wife was the proliferation of selfish, non-G-d-directed energy in the world.

Moses desired to take them out [of the realm of evil] before their time and rectify them then [i.e., in his time]. The Egyptian exile was for both of them [i.e., the Jews and the mixed multitude], for it was spiritually [the exile of] supernal *da'at*, as we have explained previously regarding the mystical meaning of the verse "descend there,"⁶ and Israel and the mixed multitude were both manifestations of *da'at*. Thus, the numerical value of the words for "mixed multitude" is the same for that of *da'at*.

"Mixed multitude": *erev rav, ayin-reish-beit reish-beit* = 70 + 200 + 2 + 200 + 2 = 474.

Da'at: *dalet-ayin-tav* = 4 + 70 + 400 = 474.

With this, you will understand the meaning of the verse, "Behold, you [now go to] lie with your ancestors, and the people will rise up..." This is one of those verses open to alternative interpretations, for the verb "and will rise up" can apply to what comes before it [i.e., Moses] or what follows it [i.e., the people]. Both interpretations are true. Moses will arise again, meaning that he will be reincarnated in the last generation, and so will the mixed multitude. With this meaning, the verse reads: "and the people will rise up..." referring to the mixed multitude.

This is alluded to in the phrase "into which they are entering [there]," the word for "there" being a permutation of the name "Moses," indicating that Moses will be reincarnated amongst them, inasmuch as they all a manifestation of *da'at*, [as is Moses].

⁶ Genesis 42:2.

“There”: *shamah, shin-men-hei.*

“Moses”: *Moshe, mem-shin-hei.*

Indeed, this reincarnation is a very mysterious thing. The explanation is that there is no generation without some manifestation of Moses, [who returns] in order to complete the generation of the desert, for the generation of the desert will also return and be reincarnated in our, last generation.

This is why in most cases the women of this generation dominate the men—especially the wives of Torah scholars. The reason is that [the men of our generation lived previously and] were present at the incident of the golden calf and did not resist the mixed multitude. Since their wives did not want to contribute their gold jewelry [toward the making of the calf], the women therefore dominate them.

The women, not tainted by the sin of the golden calf, are thus on a superior spiritual level than the men.

In any case, we see that our generation is a reincarnation of the generation of the desert, and that the mixed multitude has also been reincarnated, and Moses is together with both of them.

The continuation of this passage can be similarly interpreted:

In the following passages, the standard translation takes the object of G-d’s scorn in the plural, referring to the people. In the Hebrew, however, the people are sometimes referred to in the plural and at other times collectively, in the singular (as “the people” is a singular noun). This allows for the interpretations we are about to see.

Then My anger will flare up against them, and I will abandon them and hide My face from them: This refers to the mixed multitude, since it is couched in the plural.

They shall be ready prey; and many evils and troubles shall befall them: This is [in the original Hebrew] couched in the singular, and thus refers to Moses. [His suffering as depicted here] is similar to [that of Israel’s redeemer, as described in the verse:] “For he has suffered our sickness and G-d has visited upon him the sins of us all.”⁷

...because of all the evil they have done...: This [being in the singular] again refers to Moses, [the evil he did being] that he accepted the mixed multitude. As it is said, “for your people have corrupted...”⁸

When speaking to Moses of the incident of the golden calf, G-d refers to the mix multitude, who instigated the sin, as “your people, who corrupted” the Jews.

And they shall say on that day, “Surely it is because our G-d is not in our midst...”: [This, too is in the singular, and thus refers to Moses. G-d “not being in

⁷ Isaiah 53:4-6.

⁸ Exodus 32:7.

his midst”] means that his return is not a result of his soul being impregnated with another soul [*ibur*] but is a result of reincarnation. When a person is reincarnated, the soul that enters the new body originates in his own soul-root. In the case of impregnation, in contrast, a soul from a different, soul-root is grafted onto the original soul. This happens with righteous individuals; since they possess a great amount of holiness, and are aware of their various incarnations, they cling to [this other soul] in their thought, aligning their animating soul [*nefesh*] with his soul, their spirit [*ruach*] with his spirit, and their intellectual soul [*neshamah*] with his, [drawing his into theirs].

This grafting of soul to soul does not occur with the ongoing reincarnation of Moses’ soul; his own soul is all that is reincarnated as the leader of every generation. He continues to suffer from generation to generation as he progressively accomplishes the task of rectifying the world’s consciousness, reorienting the minds of both the Jewish people the mixed multitude from self-centeredness to G-d-centeredness.

—translated from *Sefer HaLikutim* and *Likutei Torah*

Parashat VaYeilech [second installment]

In this *parashah*, Moses says to the Jews: “And now, write for yourselves this song and teach it to the Israelites—put it in their mouths—in order that this song remain a witness for the Israelites”¹

According to the basic meaning of this verse, the “song” it refers to is the poem “Give ear, O heavens” that constitutes the greater part of the following *parashah*. However, the sages also understand it as referring to the Torah as a whole, and from this verse is derived the commandment incumbent upon each individual to write a Torah scroll.

Know that it is necessary to have in mind that the five Books of Moses correspond to the five *partzufim*:

The Book of Genesis corresponds to the [upper] thorn of the *yud* [of the Name *Havayah* and the *partzuf*] *Arich Anpin*].

The Book of Exodus corresponds to the *yud* [itself] and *Abba*.

The Book of Leviticus corresponds to the first *hei* and *Ima*. The sacrifices [whose laws are detailed in this book come] to rectify and sweeten the states of Divine judgment that originate in [this *partzuf*].

The Book of Numbers corresponds to the *vav*, the number of Israelites above.

Presumably this refers to the fact that the numerical value of the letter *vav* is 6 and there are 600,000 archetypal souls of Israel. The Book of Numbers contains a number of censuses of the peoples as whole, the army, the Levites, etc.

The Book of Deuteronomy, known as the “repetition of the Torah,” recapitulates and includes everything that was in the preceding books, and corresponds to the final *hei* and *Nukva*.

To summarize:

book	letter of the Name <i>Havayah</i>	<i>partzuf</i>
Genesis	upper thorn of <i>yud</i>	<i>Arich Anpin</i>
Exodus	<i>yud</i>	<i>Abba</i>
Leviticus	<i>hei</i>	<i>Ima</i>
Numbers	<i>vav</i>	<i>Z'eir Anpin</i>
Deuteronomy	<i>hei</i>	<i>Nukva</i>

Following is an alternate system of correspondences, encompassing the entire Bible as “distributed” over the two *partzufim* of *Z'eir Anpin* and *Nukva*. It should be kept in mind that in the traditional reckoning, 1st and 2nd Samuel are considered one book, as are 1st and 2nd Kings, 1st and 2nd Chronicles, and the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Nonetheless, in one instance, as we shall see, the Arizal does consider 1st and 2nd Kings separately.

¹ Deuteronomy 31:19.

Tiferet [i.e., *Z'eir Anpin*] includes the five Books of Moses, and its two arms comprise its five states of *chesed* and the five states of *gevurah*, as follows:

Joshua, Judges, and Samuel [correspond to] *chesed*, *gevurah*, and *tiferet*. First and Second Kings correspond to *netzach* and *hod*. Thus we have the five states of *chesed*.

Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel [correspond to] *chesed*, *gevurah*, and *tiferet*. The twelve [Minor Prophets correspond to] *netzach* and *hod*, this being the mystical meaning of the verse, “His legs are pillars of marble [*sheish*].”² Thus we have the five states of *gevurah*.

The Hebrew for “marble” (*sheish*) also means “six.” The legs correspond to *netzach* and *hod*. Each one being six, the two together are twelve, corresponding to the twelve Minor Prophets.

The books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings manifest *chesed* because they describe the Jewish people more-or-less in their heyday, focusing on their development as a people and the conquests of their kings. The prophetic books, on the other hand, focus on the spiritual lapses and descent of the people, which resulted eventually in the destruction of the Temple and the exile.

Malchut [i.e., *Nukva*] includes the five Scrolls, and its two arms comprise the five states of *chesed* and the five states of *gevurah*, as follows:

The five Scrolls are Esther, Song of Songs, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Ruth.

The five states of *chesed* are the five books of Psalms, and the five states of *gevurah* are Proverbs, Job, Daniel, corresponding [respectively] to *chesed*, *gevurah*, and *tiferet*, Ezra [and Nehemiah corresponding to] *netzach* and Chronicles to *hod*.

The Book of Psalms is traditionally subdivided into five sub-books.

*

Regarding the forms of the letters, and to what extent there is a difference between the ways the Ashkenazim and Sefardim write them, my master [the Arizal] used to say that they all allude to [spiritual configurations] above, for the forms of the letters change to various representations [of these spiritual configurations].

This is particularly true regarding the form of the letter *alef*. The upper *yud* of the *alef* is written [according to the Sefardim] like a *zayin*.

The *alef* is conceived of as being formed of a long, diagonal *vav* with a *yud* above and below it. If the stroke of the *yud* is extended to the right, beyond the stem connecting it to the *vav*, it appears like a *zayin*.

He said that all of this is alluded to in *Tikunei Zohar*.

*

Some people are reluctant to fulfill this commandment [to personally write a Torah scroll], for two reasons:

² Song of Songs 5:15.

The first is that they don't know how to write [like a scribe], and they think that the commandment is to write with their own hand.

Learning how to write Torah scrolls according to Jewish law is complicated, and requires knowledge of the laws, the conventions and traditions to be followed, and artistic skill. However, the commandment may be fulfilled by proxy, and is usually fulfilled nowadays by either commissioning a scribe to write a Torah scroll (for those who can afford this) or participating in the cost of writing one. Also, owning printed copies of the Torah and its commentaries for personal study is considered part of fulfilling this commandment.

The second is that there are no longer in our times people who are well-versed in which words are to be spelled fully and which defectively or which paragraphs are to be left "open" or "closed," as mentioned [already] in the Talmud.³

Many words in Hebrew can be spelled either "fully," using all the letters required by the rules of grammar and precedent, or "defectively," leaving some or all of the "vowel-letters" out. ("Vowel-letters" are letters used to indicate vowels, such as *vav* or *yud*, and these vowels can instead be indicated by vowel-points.)

There are differing traditions regarding which paragraphs in the Torah are followed by a space extending to the end of the line the paragraph ends on (this is called an "open" paragraph) and which are followed by a space only equal to the width of nine letters (this is called a "closed" paragraph).

But my master told [the scribe] Rabbi M. Romi to write a Torah scroll similar to the other Torah scrolls in our country, following the instructions of Maimonides regarding which paragraphs are to be opened or closed, and he did not concern himself with the [other traditions regarding which are to be] closed and opened followed by others who are stringent about this and change things.

He also instructed him to leave blank all the places where the Name *Havayah* occurs, for he wanted to write them himself, with his own hand, after fasting and immersing and while having certain meditations in mind (that will be explained in our discussion of the *tefilin*).

Certain letters in Torah scrolls, *tefilin*, and *mezuzahs* are adorned with "crowns," small lines in the form of the letter *zayin* attached to the top of the letters. These crowns are obligatory on the letters *shin-ayin-tet-nun-zayin-gimel-tzadik*,⁴ and according to some opinions their absence invalidates a Torah scroll from use.⁵ It is customary to make smaller crowns on the letters *beit-dalet-kuf-chet-yud-hei*.

Regarding the form of the crowns over the letters *shin-ayin-tet-nun-zayin-gimel-tzadik* and *beit-dalet-kuf-chet-yud-hei*, he was extremely stringent.

These crowns, as mentioned, must have the form of the letter *zayin*, and they must be centered on the top of the letter, not to the right or left.

The mystical significance of why there are crowns on specifically these letters is explained in the "Gate of Cantillation marks, Vowels, Crowns, and Letters" and in "the Gate of the Vowels."

This is the end of this passage; following is an excerpt from "the Gate of the Vowels," i.e., *Etz Chaim* 8:6.

*

³ *Kidushin* 30.

⁴ *Menachot* 29b.

⁵ *Magen Avraham* on *Shulchan Aruch*, *Orach Chaim* 36:3.

...the 22 letters of the [Hebrew alphabet used in the] Torah, seven of them indicate the vessels of the seven kings [of Edom] and 15 of them indicate the vessels of *Abba* and *Ima*.

Although we are at this point talking about the Breaking of the Vessels, which occurred in the world of *Tohu*, before the development of the *partzufim* of the world of *Atzilut*, the names of these *partzufim* are nonetheless used to refer to the aspects of the *Tohu* from which they will develop.

This is because *Abba* and *Ima* are greater than all of *Z'eir Anpin* and *Nukva*.

Therefore, the former's vessels are alluded to by 15 letters while the latter's are alluded to by only 7.

The indication that *Abba* and *Ima* take 15 letters is the fact that they are alluded to by the letters *yud-hei* of the Name *Havayah*, whose numerical value is 15.

The letters indicating the vessels of *Z'eir Anpin* are *shin-ayin-tet-nun-zayin-gimel-tzadik*. Of the fifteen remaining letters [of the alphabet] that indicate the vessels of *Abba* and *Ima*, six of the indicate the back of these vessels, and they are *beit-dalet-kuf-chet-yud-hei*, as is mentioned in the *Zohar*. The remaining letters, *alef-vav-kaf-lamed-mem-samech-pei-reish-tav*, indicate the front or inner dimension of these vessels.

This is the reason why the letters *shin-ayin-tet-nun-zayin-gimel-tzadik* require three crowns each, while the letters *beit-dalet-kuf-chet-yud-hei* require one crown each, and also why these letters are different from the other letters, that require no crown at all.

The letters *shin-ayin-tet-nun-zayin-gimel-tzadik* allude to the seven kings [of Edom] that died, and from [these kings] the forces of evil were created and issued, as is known. These letters can be combined to form the words *satan az geitz*, meaning, "The strength and mighty power of the insolent [*az*] states of judgment, which descended and became *Satan*, i.e., the forces of evil." And it is known that the *Zohar* states that these seven kings were like sparks that were scattered, "like a blacksmith who hits iron and sparks fly in all directions." This is the allusion in the word *geitz* ["spark"], as in the words of the Talmud, "a spark [*geitz*] that flies out from under the hammer."⁶

We have explained previously that these seven kings took their light from the body of *Adam Kadmon*, under the tuft of the beard, but not higher [than this].

Adam Kadmon ("Primordial Man") is the first Divine emanation after the initial *tzimtzum*. The *sefirot* issue from his various "body" parts.

It follows that they lack the three highest lights, i.e., those of [*Adam Kadmon's*] ears, nose, and mouth. This is why both their frontal and back aspects broke. These [missing lights] are indicated by the three crowns affixed atop these

⁶ *Shabbat* 21b.

letters. For [the crowns] allude to the withdrawal of the light and life-force from the vessels, which are alluded to by the letters themselves. The light remained above them instead of within them, as depicted by the placement of the crowns above the letters.

In contrast, the letters *beit-dalet-kuf-chet-yud-hei* allude to the backs of *Abba* and *Ima*, which descended [rather than broke].

Here, the point is that the vessels of the seven lower *sefirot* of *Tohu* broke because they lacked the stabilizing influence of the intellect, while the three upper *sefirot* of *Tohu*, its intellect, did not break (since intellect is inherently more stable than the volatile emotions); instead, only (1) their backs, or external aspects, (2) “fell.”

We have explained previously that *Abba* and *Ima* are formed from the two lights of the nose and mouth [of *Adam Kadmon*], and thus lack only the light of the ear. Therefore, [when the vessels of *Tohu* broke,] only their backs fell. To allude to the one light they lack [i.e., that of the ear of *Adam Kadmon*] we affix a single crown on each of these letters.

—translated from *Sha’ar HaMitzvot*, *Ta’amei HaMitzvot*, and *Etz Chaim*

