



RABBI EPHRAIM

SPRECHER

Faculty, OU Israel Center

G-d's Tzimtzum - Harbinger of the Exodus

Prior to the Exodus from Egypt, Moshe cries out to Gd, "...why have You done evil to this People...?" (Shemot 5:22) Hashem replies to him "and I appeared to Avraham, Yitzhak, and to Yaakov as KEIL SHADAI..." (Shemot 6:3) What did Gd mean by this statement?

Moshe could not comprehend why the cruel Egyptian slavery was intensifying after Gd had promised him that redemption was near and he would become the redeemer of the Jewish People. Thus Gd responded with His Divine Name of KEIL SHADAI. The root of this Name of Gd is DAI which means sufficient and enough. Gd has placed precise limitations on every aspect of Creation and He has

constrained and limited Himself, as it were, to allow the world to exist.

In Kabala this concept is called SOD HATZIMTZUM which means the Secret of Exact Limitations. Gd was conveying to Moshe that every aspect of the Egyptian oppression was under His direct control and every part of it had a purpose. The increase in the harshness of the Egyptian slavery that Moshe complained about was in reality the harbinger of redemption. Because redemption is a gradual and unfolding process.

We are required to emulate Gd's ways as the verse states "and you shall go in His ways" (Devarim 28:9). My Rebbe Rav Pam explains that there is an aspect of this SOD HATZIMTZUM embodied in Gd's name of SHADAI that has great relevance to Torah Teachers (TT). Because a Torah Teacher may feel that by teaching Baali Tshhuva, he may be limiting his own opportunities for personal spiritual growth. The teacher



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would much rather teach a shiur that would allow him to attain higher levels of Torah Study. Why should he teach on an elementary level when he could be teaching advanced Talmud with Tosfot? Teaching on a lower level seems to be a sacrifice of talent and intellectual creativity.

The answer to this is SHADAI – we must emulate Gd, Who's essence is limitation for the benefit of mankind. So too, a Torah Teacher, like Gd, must be willing to LIMIT himself in order to build a future of the Jewish People by teaching Baali Tshuva. Could there be a greater expression of “and you shall go in His ways” than that?

Tehillim 89 states “The world is built on Chesed.” Gd is called in Kabala Ein Sof – without any limitations. Yet He has limited Himself, in order to create a world whose very purpose is Chesed, to give us the awesome opportunity to earn Olam Haba by completing Gd's unfinished world.

Our task in life is to emulate Gd, which is especially relevant regarding acts of Chesed such as relinquishing time, money, and even Torah study for the benefit of others. But how much must we be willing to give of ourselves for our fellow Jews? To answer this profound question Rav Pam would quote Mishlei 16:9, “A person's heart will plot his way, and Gd will set his steps on the right path.” If a person truly labors for the sake of Gd, he will be worthy of Divine Assistance to do what is right, as the Talmud in Shabbat 104 elaborates. ■

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