

Maamarei Mordechai

הסבר לפי ממש פשוט

Parshas Yisro 5786

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Moshe prepares the nation to receive the Torah.

וּמֹשֶׁה עָלָה אֶל־הָאֱלֹקִים וַיְקַרְא אֵלָיו ה' מִן־הָהָר לֵאמֹר כֹּה תֹאמַר לְבֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל וְתֹגִיד לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

“And Moshe went up to the Lord, and Hashem called out to him from the mountain, saying, ‘So shall you say to Beis of Yaakov, and tell over to Bnei Yisroel.’” (Shmos 19:3).

This pasuk uses two dichotomies. It uses the term Elokim and Hashem and it uses House of Yaakov and Children of Yisroel. The former was addressed previously. (M'M Bereishis 5786). The latter will be addressed here.

Hashem named Yaakov, Yisroel, when he returned from Padan Aram. “Your name shall not be called, Yaakov further, because with Yisroel shall be your name.’ And He called his name Yisroel.” (Bereishis 35:10). The pasuk writes לֹא־יִקְרָא שְׁמֶךָ עוֹד, putting the עוֹד “further” after the clause when grammatically correct would be to put it after יִקְרָא “called” to modify that verb. It could have read, “Your name shall no longer be called.” As is, it literally reads, you shall not be called Od Yaakov. Yosef famously said, אֲנִי יוֹסֵף הֵעוֹד אֲבִי חַי “I am Yosef, further, my father is alive?” What Yosef meant is explained in M'M Parshas Vayigash 5786 (that Yaakov believed in Yosef and the dreams while the brothers disowned him as a brother). The word is הֵעוֹד “the Od” and it’s also grammatically in the wrong place to modify “alive.” The correct grammar is seen when the Torah uses that language by the brothers, וַיּוֹסֶפוּ עוֹד שָׂנֵא אֹתוֹ “And they added further adversary to him.” Next pasuk says, “And I dreamed another (od) dream.” Yosef was saying My father “the od” is still alive! My father who saw your added (od) adversary while I had more (od) dreams, is alive. This “od” was predicted earlier.

Yaakov encountered a man at the Yabbok River. The Toray says, “Not Yaakov, shall it be said Od is your name, because with Yisroel, because you are a prince / straight with the Lord and with men, and you shall prevail.” (Ibid 32:29). Many translate the word “struggle” or “strive” based on the verse, וַיֵּשֶׁר אֶל־מַלְאָכָה וַיְכַל “And he was prince to the Messenger, and he prevailed.” (Hoshea 12:5). It is easy to see how one would want to translate it as “struggle” because of the “prevailing.” The previous pasuk says, “In the womb he supported his brother,” a play on words of heel – in Bereishis it says he *grabbed* the heel (Bereishis 25:26), here it says he was a heel to his brother – “and in his power the Lord ministered.” (Hoshea 12:4). Gemara cites two opinions that are either it relates to ministering with, like Malakhei Hashareis – Ministering Angels, or it relates to prince, and it is a prophecy of the Nasi and Reish Galusa (Exilarch). (Chullin 92a). The word yisra does not mean “struggle” anywhere else in Tanakh. Further, Hoshea says, “to the Messenger” not with the Messenger. If it meant he was struggling with the malakh it

would have said with. Hoshea recalled that Yaakov's life was about him being second and supportive (a heel to his brother, giving his brother food when he came in exhausted, sitting in tents minding the herd while Eisav worked the fields). Hashem gave him angels to minister over him while he traveled out of Eretz Canaan. And he became like a prince to them; he earned his status by being straight with Lavan.

The pasuk about Yaakov's name in the narrative of the Yabbok River is out of place. It really reads, "And the man said to Yaakov, what is your name?" (Bereishis 32:28). Because it brought up the name, the Torah says that Hashem said, "No, do not say Yaakov Od..." (Ibid 32:29). That really happened after the man left. (Ibid 32:30). Plug in that Hashem appeared to Yaakov in ibid 32:29. The Torah says, "And Hashem appeared to Yaakov Od when he came from Padam Aram" (ibid 35:9); it was not at Beis El, that the previous pesukim refer to prior to the {פ} break (ibid 35:1-8). It was at this incident, at the Yabbuk. Hashem told him he will not be Yaakov Od, he will also be Yisroel. The pesukim of ibid 32:29 is identical to 35:10. Yisroel was given to Yaakov when he created a nation.

Yisroel indicates a unified nation. They are Bnei Yisroel when they went down together to Egypt. (Ibid 1:1). Yaakov remains the name for when they are referred to as tribal, individuals. And Bnei Yisroel were leaving with exalted and raised hands. (Ibid 14:8). Contrast that with "And Yosef's sons that were born to him in Egypt...to the House of Yaakov that came to Egypt were seventy." (Bereishis 46:27). It calls it the house of Yaakov, not only because he was alive, but because the household was fractured when Yosef's children were born. They are called Bnei Yisroel when entering Eretz Canaan, prior to Yosef's dreams. (Ibid 32:33). But after the dreams, they are called sons of Yaakov. (Ibid 34:7). They are again Bnei Yisroel after Yosef reveals himself and forgives them. (Ibid 45:28).

Balaam delineates the difference between Yaakov and Yisroel quite expressly. He was told to curse Yaakov and invoke wrath against Yisroel. (Ibid 23:7). "Who counted the dust of Yaakov or a quarter of the number of Yisroel?" (Ibid 23:10). "He does not probe the evil of Yaakov and does not see the failures in Yisroel." (Ibid 23:21). "There is no divination in Yaakov and no soothsaying in Yisroel." (Ibid 23:23). "How good are your tents Yaakov, and your dwellings, Yisroel." (24:5). "The way of stars from Yaakov, and the scepter rises from Yisroel." (Ibid 24:17). They are not synonyms for each other. Instead, each time Balaam mentions the tribes separately and then addresses them as a nation. The tribes produce like dust (as promised to Avraham), Hashem probes individual evil, the individual tribes do not practice divination, the tribes set up their tents (houses), and the stars promised to Avraham are from his grandchild, Yaakov. The nation is too numerous, even a quarter of it; Hashem does not see the failures of the nation as a whole, the nation is not under any spell, the nation dwells in a land, and kingship (the scepter) rises from the nation as a whole.

Hashem told Moshe, "Say to the House of Yaakov." Tell each tribe. And there will also be instruction, "and tell over to the Bnei Yisroel," for the entire nation. The tribes prepare and then the nation comes together as a whole. Each tribe has to prepare on its own, knowing its own people, camping in its own place, and ready to listen to their own tribal leaders. Then they combine as one, one lev, to hear Hashem's Torah.