

SICHA SUMMARY

Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 25

Vayeshev - Yud-Tes Kislev

The Conflict:

The 19th of Kislev often coincides with the parshah of Vayeshev which is dominated by the narrative of Yosef's descent into Egypt.

How does this relate to the 19th of Kislev which is a celebration of the Alter Rebbe's freedom from Czarist imprisonment?

The Explanation:

The Midrash characterizes Yosef's descent into Egypt as a prelude to his dominion over Egypt. The word the Torah uses to describe Yosef's descent, *hurad*, is related to the word for conquering and dominion. Thus Yosef's exile was necessary in order to achieve a dominion over the negativity Egypt represented. Similarly, the Alter Rebbe's incarceration was a necessary constriction that produced his greatest contributions to Chassidic thought after his release. As the Rebbe Rashab said, the Alter Rebbe's imprisonment is reminiscent of the Sage's statement, that the olive only produces its oil when crushed.

To expand: Redemption can come in three stages: 1) Through confrontation. By waging war and overwhelming the enemy, one can gain peace, but it is a limited peace, still vulnerable to the enemy which lies dormant. 2) Through transcendence. By developing one's own strength and reputation, the enemy does not approach for battle. Yet this peace is also uneasy, for the enemy remains intact in its own locale, he has not been transformed. 3) Through embedding within the enemy, and transforming it from within. By introducing an infinitely higher power within the space of the enemy, the enemy undergoes a transformation and identifies with the higher power, leaving no room for recidivism.

These three stages correspond to the forefathers, the tribes, and Yosef. The tribes choose to be shepherds, divorced from the world, because they knew that if they were to confront it, they would be unable to transform it, leaving them vulnerable to its influence. Thus, they could only achieve a modicum of peace through confrontation, so they avoided it. The forefathers transcended the trappings of the world;

they were unaffected by its influence, but they also could not change it from within. Yosef was able to be fully embedded in Egyptian society, even to be viceroy and direct much of the political and economic aspects of the kingdom, and not only retain his own spirituality, but also introduce the Divine reality into the Egyptian realm.

Thus, Yosef descended into Egypt, and by doing so, he conquered it.

The same can be said about the Alter Rebbe's imprisonment. By descending into the most constrictive place of the Czarist empire, the Alter Rebbe was able to display to the Czar's ministers and officials the Divine truth he embodied, bringing that truth into the lowest dimension, thus conquering the darkness with the light of Chassidus.

The above is also reflected in two of the main ideas expressed in Shaar Hayichud

Vihaemuna: 1) That the Divine creative speech pervades the created being; and 2) that the tzimtzum, G-d's self-contraction to make space for creation is not literal. On the one hand, the fact that G-d's speech suffuses all existence lends that existence a validity. G-d has, so to speak, conformed His speech to animate the particulars of each unique creation. But the fact that G-d's contraction is not literal, but rather His Essence continues to exclusively fill all reality, leads to the conclusion that even the existence that seems legitimate (because of G-d's speech) is actually itself G-dliness. As the verse states, "there is nothing beside for Him." Thus, because G-d "descends" into the particulars of existence, He displays how creation itself is nothing aside for Him. True dominion and peace comes from descending into the very trappings of the enemy itself.
