

Hashem's Feminine In-dwelling Presence

Haftorah Bo

Yirmeyahu 46: 13-28

Thank G-d, at the end of this haftorah Hashem showed me an allusion to the evolvement of the three levels of Hashem's Feminine In-dwelling Presence: "Daughter," "Sister" and "Mother." Both each individual Jew and the history of Israel go through these stages of development. While in exile, we correspond to the lowest level of "Daughter" – the sefirah of malchut. As we settle the Land and infuse it with Torah learning we rise to become "Sister" – the six middle sefirot from yesod to chesed. Finally, we will reach the highest level of "Mother" with the building of the Temple b"H. This corresponds to the highest sefirot of chachma, binah & da'at. The light of women is undergoing a parallel development from being held back as "Daughter" until the time when the woman will become "Her husband's crown" (Mishlei 12:4), reflecting the light of Hashem's feminine Indwelling Presence in the Temple!

The Connection between the Haftorah and the Torah Reading

This week's *haftorah* describes the punishment G-d visited upon Egypt by means of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. The downfall of Egypt is a result of its animosity and cruelty towards Israel. This parallels *Parashat Bo*, which includes the last three plagues in Egypt, and the Exodus of the Jewish people, preceded by emptying of Egypt from all its fallen sparks (*Berachot 9b*), (*B'er Mayim Chaim, Parashat Lech Lecha*, Chapter 15).

Yirmeyahu compares the Babylonian attack to locust (*Yirmeyahu 46:25-26*). This parallels the first plague described in our weekly Torah reading. Rabbi Dovid Siegel explains how the plague of locusts served the perfect vehicle through which to remember Hashem's revelations in Egypt. After the end of the plague the Torah testifies, "There did not remain one locust throughout the entire Egyptian border." (*Shemot 10:19*). According to *Kli Yakar*, from then on, locusts would never be found in the Land of Egypt, even when they infested the neighboring countries. Yirmeyahu compared the Babylonian invasion to locusts in order to remind Egypt that they hadn't learned their lesson from the total absence of locusts in Egypt. Therefore, Hashem sent Babylon to punish them for their perpetual mistreating of the Jewish people.

Likewise today, any nation that is unkind or threatening to Israel in any way will meet its punishment. From this, we can infer that the more the USA encourages Israel to build and develop, the more it will prosper! Towards the end of the Parasha, B'nei Yisrael set out on their journey of freedom from the Egyptian exile towards the Land of Israel. Similarly the haftorah concludes with redemption of B'nai Yisrael from exile.

Pack Your Belongs O Daughter Who Lives in Egypt

Yirmeyahu cautions the Egyptian women, "O you daughter who lives in Egypt, make ready your belongings for exile, for Noph shall become waste and desolate without inhabitant" (*Yirmeyahu 46:19*). A careful reading of this verse reveals that it did not state "Egyptian daughter" but rather

“daughter who lives in Egypt” which may also allude to the Jewish woman who lives in the exile represented by Egypt. An alternative translation of the verse substitutes the place Memphis for Noph (*New American Standard Bible, 1995, English Standard version 2001*).

We lived in Memphis, TN for two and a half years. Although the Jewish community there was warm and welcoming, the sense of *gashmiut*, (attachment to the material) was very strong. Baruch Hashem many of the Jewish daughters and their families from Memphis has since packed their belongings and joined us in Israel.

Exit the “Daughter” of This World and Cleave to the Eternal Divine

The Chassidic book called *Bat Ayin* compares the “Daughter” to this world, and the “Son” to the World to Come. He explains that we all have a yetzer hara called “Pharaoh” who wants to throw the “Son” in the Nile while keeping the “Daughter” alive (*Shemot 1:22*). This represents our tendency to forget about the World to Come, while focusing only on this physical world. We have a mitzvah to remember the Exodus from Egypt every day in order to remember the war with “Pharaoh” – the yetzer Hara for the pleasures of this physical world. Remembering the Exodus serves to imprint in our consciousness the liberation from this “Pharaoh” so that we will merit the true pleasures of the World to Come (*Bat Ayin, Rabbi Avraham Dov of Avritch, disciple of Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev*). It is our every day life challenge to exit Egypt and its addictions, so we can experience true spiritual liberation. Rabbi Itamar Schwartz explains in the book *Bilvavi*, that the main purpose of our existence is to cleave to Hashem. We need to overcome the yetzer hara of “Pharaoh” not only for the sake of the Coming World, but also to be deeply in touch with Hashem within this physical world. Because of the vital importance of experiencing Hashem’s closeness, the yetzer hara called “Pharaoh” strongly blocks our spiritual connection, by distracting us with all the “important things” we are involved with in this world. A person can even learn Torah and pray without being connected to Hashem. Therefore, we need to constantly remind ourselves before Whom we stand. A computer screensaver with “I set Hashem before me always” would be a great way!

The Feminine Evolvement from “Daughter” to “Mother”

The *Sefat Emet* explains that the moment of the Exodus, when *B’nei Yisrael* became the vessel for Hashem’s service; we reached the level of “Daughter.” According to Kabbalah, the feminine aspect of Hashem’s presence in this world evolves from “Daughter” during the Exodus of Egypt to become “Sister” and finally culminates by becoming “Mother.” By receiving the Torah, we reached the level of “Sister.” After we repented from the dancing around the Golden Calf we forged a new path that led to the building of the Mishkan (tabernacle). It is on Sukkoth, when we dwell in the holy Sukkah, reminiscent of the Temple, that we reach the highest level of “Mother.” It is only through repentance that we reach the highest level of redemption that leads to the building of the Temple. Therefore, the three levels of the feminine development are manifested in the three pilgrim festivals (*Sefat Emet on Shemot, Parashat Pekudei, Year 5652*).

Hashem Calls Out to the Feminine Aspects of Israel, “Fear not Ya’acov!”

Our *haftorah* ends on a promising note for Israel. No matter how the other nations may destroy each other, Hashem assures Israel not to fear. “You fear not, O Ya’acov My servant, and be not dismayed,

O Israel! for behold, I will redeem you from afar and your children from the land of their captivity, and Ya'acov shall return and be quiet and at ease, and there shall be none who disturb his rest. You fear not, My servant Ya'acov, says Hashem, for I am with you, for I will make a full end of all the nations where I have driven you..." (*Yirmeyahu* 46:27-28). The name Ya'acov is mentioned three times in these verses and in the entire haftorah. Whereas, the name "Yisrael" refers to the masculine, the name "Ya'acov" refers to the feminine aspect of Israel. (*Rashi, Shemot* 19:3). Perhaps, we may infer that Hashem mentioned the name Ya'acov three times in order to empower the three feminine aspects of the Jewish people. We are gradually called forth to rise from "Daughter" to "Sister" and finally culminate in the highest aspect of becoming "Mother." The first "Ya'acov" describes the redemption from the land of captivity and corresponds to "Daughter" – This is the Exodus from Egypt and the physical aliyah to Israel that takes place in our time. The second "Ya'acov" "Shall return and be at ease" without anyone to disturb his spiritual rest, refers to receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai and becoming "Sister." The Hebrew word for being at ease (*sha'anan*) is connected with dwelling in the tents of Torah (*Yalkut Shimoni, Mishlei* 932). Today, this is reflected by the strengthening of Torah learning, specifically for women. The third and final "Ya'acov" refers to the building of the Mishkan. Here, Hashem assures "Ya'acov" that He will be with him as it states, "Built for Me a sanctuary, so that I will dwell within them (*Shemot* 25:8). May we merit to heed Hashem's calling "Fear not, My servant Ya'acov," so that we may rise from our cosmic exile, reaccept the Torah and finally rebuild the Holy Temple in our Land.