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PARSHAS YISRO

תשפ"ד PARSHAS YISRO BRAZIL RAV

THE PINKY FINGER WHICH WON US THE TORAH

Two metamorphic cosmic events that changed the world forever and whose ripple effects even today are the driving force and foundations of universal history, were met with enormous opposition and controversy. They are the creation of Man and the giving of the Torah to *Am Yisrael*. By both of them we find that the heavenly angels vehemently disapproved of their actualization. However, if we closely examine them we will discover a common thread is woven between them in a very deep way that can be life changing for all of us now if we take it to heart.

The *gemarah* in Shabbos 88b relates

ואמר רבי יהושע בן לוי בשעה שעלה משה למרום אמרו מלאכי השרת לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא רבונו של עולם מה לילוד אשה בינינו אמר להן לקבל תורה בא אמרו לפניו חמודה גנוזה שגנוזה לך תשע מאות ושבעים וארבעה דורות קודם שנברא העולם אתה מבקש ליתנה לבשר ודם מה אנוש כי תזכרנו ובן אדם כי תפקדנו ה' אדנינו מה אדיר שמך בכל הארץ אשר תנה הודך על השמים אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא למשה החזיר להן תשובה אמר לפניו רבונו של עולם מתיירא אני שמא ישרפוני בהבל שבפיהם אמר לו אחוז בכסא כבודי וחזור להן תשובה.

When Moshe *Rabbeinu* ascend *Har Sinai* to receive the Torah, the *malachim* complained to Hashem "What is a human born creature doing amongst such spiritual beings"? Hashem answered them that he came to receive the Torah. They retorted back "The Torah is so precious that it was hidden as your treasure for 974 generations and You are just handing it over to mere flesh and blood! Give it to us who is more worthy than Man". It was then that Hashem said to Moshe "Answer them back on your behalf". Moshe responded I fear that they will consume me with their fiery breath. Hashem said to Moshe "Then hold on to my throne of glory and answer them".

The give and take that transpired between Hashem, the *malachim*, and Moshe with the issue to whom the Torah should be given, is very cryptic and mystifying. We want to present an interpretation based on a similar event that happened at the time of creation. *Chazal* say (Sanhedrin 38b) that when Hashem was about to create Adam *Harishon* He first consulted with newly created *malachim*. They asked what will be the nature of his deeds. Hashem answered, כך וכך מעשיו, indicating that his performance will not be perfect. The *malachim* opined that then it is not worth creating Man. Hashem responded to their decision by stretching out to them His finger and שרפם, burnt them up.

This episode poses a difficulty in another *Chazal* on the *passuk* (Bereishis 1,27) נעשה אדם Let us make Man. Who is the plural us referring to? *Chazal* answer they are the *malachim* that Hashem asked from them their opinion on the issue of creating Man in order to teach us the *middah* of humility to ask advice even from those who are inferior to you. However, from the

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previous *Chazal* where Hashem was angered by their response which opposed His will, he destroyed them which is the antithesis of humility?

We will answer with another *Chazal* (Succah 28). During the time of Yonasan Ben Uziel's learning of Torah עוף הפורח עליו מיד נשרף כל any bird that would fly over his head immediately נשרף was burnt from the fire that emanated from his Torah. A novel interpretation to this *gemarah* is that the word נשרף doesn't mean in this context **burnt** but rather it is referring to an angel who is called שרף. There are lower and higher angels. The lowest level of a *malach* is called a עוף. The angel שרף is on a much higher level who stands by the כסא הכבוד. The *Chazal* are relating here the greatness of Yanason Ben Uziel's Torah learning by saying that if a עוף who is a lower level of *malach* flew directly over his head while learning it would have automatically been elevated to the level of שרף.

With Man's positive thoughts, speech, and actions the building of spiritual worlds brimming with Hashem's presence and light. He elevates creation even holy *malachim* to higher levels. Man gets reward for the slightest movement of his body if the intention is pure for the sake of glorifying Hashem's Name. There is a famous *maaseh* with the *Rebbetzin* of the Vilna Gaon and her friend which proves this point clearly. Rav Shach ztl read the story himself from the record Book of the Vilna *Chevera Kaddisha*. The *Rebbetzin* and her friend made a pact between themselves that whoever departs from this world first will return to the one still living and report back from the Next World. Her friend died first and after *shivah* returned to the *Rebbetzin* in a dream. She told her if she remembered the time that they worked together on a *zedakah* project of collecting money and they kept missing a rich person who promised to give them a large sum. One day they were walking in the street and you the *Rebbetzin* noticed him standing on the other side just ahead of us. You picked up your hand and pointed with your finger excitedly gushing "There he is there he is". We quickly went to where he was standing and reminded him of his generous pledge to their cause and on the spot he gave us the money. "I want you to know" said her friend, "that even though we both received mitzvos and reward for collecting the *zedaka* money from this rich person, your reward for merely stretching your finger in his direction to facilitate the completion of the mitzvah brought you incredible extra rewards besides mine.

It is only because man is a הולך that he possesses the power to sanctify and elevate creation through his correct moral choices. In contrast a *malach* is called an עומד since his position is fixed and he lacks *bechirah*. It is only through man that a *malach* can be elevated as we saw from the episode of Yanasan Ben Uziel.

Now let us revisit the *gemarah* of the creation of Man and the burning of the *malachim* who responded no to Hashem's wish. Hashem stretched out His בינה ושרפם. Hashem did not **burn** the *malachim* out of anger but rather demonstrated before them the truth that only through man who is created in the צלם אלקים, even with the slightest movement of his pinky, he can elevate you *malachim* to higher levels. The word "שרפם" conveys that he

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upgraded them to the *madraigah* of *seraphim* angels, a lofty level which they could only have reached through a *Yid* who possesses the *Tzelem Elokim*.

With this interpretation we no longer have a contradiction in *Chazal* that the purpose of Hashem consulting the *malachim* when creating man was to teach humility. Hashem's reaction to their negative response was not one of anger, but rather a proof why they should agree with Him. Without man a *malach* can never be elevated but with him a *malach* can become even a *saraf* angel.

Now we can also understand the cryptic conversation between Hashem, Moshe, and the *Malachim* at *Matan Torah*. When the *malachim* saw Moshe in their presence to receive the Torah, they said that Man will fail and fall short of Hashem's expectations. Hashem told Moshe להם תשובה to answer their claim. This can be interpreted to mean that Hashem told to Moshe "Respond with the same answer that I gave to the *malachim* when I was creating Man on the sixth day. Only a *Tzelem Elokim* through the power of Torah can elevate the creation even the holy *malachim*. Moshe was afraid to respond with this answer because they might not believe him that Man is empowered with such an incredible gift. Hashem told Moshe to hold on to the *Kisay Hakvod* and then give that same answer while you hold on to the *Kisay*. Hashem was telling Moshe that the proof of Man's superiority over *Malachim* is that he can touch the *Kisay Hakavod* but a *malach* cannot. The reason being that *Chazal* say the *neshamos* of *Am Yisrael* are carved from the *Kisay Hakavod*. The form of *Yaakov Avinu* is engraved on the *Kisay Hakavod*. This is why *Bnei Yisrael* alone can elevate and sanctify the world, a privilege not granted even to *malachim*.

With the above we can understand a deeper meaning in the *minhag Yisrael* that when they pick up the *Sefer Torah* after reading it, the *Kahal* says וזאת התורה אשר שם משה לפני בני ישראל and they point with their pinky finger to the open parchment that is raised in the air. The reason why *Yisrael* received the Torah and not the *malachim* is because Moshe proved to them that *Am Yisrael* can elevate everything in the world even with a tiny movement of a pinky. This ritual of "Hagbah" is the explanation of the *passuk* זאת התורה אשר שם משה לפני בני ישראל This is the Torah that Moshe was successful to place before *Bnei Yisrael* and **not** the *malachim* who also claimed it as theirs. The reason being - על פי ה' - "אצבע קטנה" demonstration was first used by Hashem in the creation of man which defeated the claim of the *malachim* not to create him. However, at *Matan Torah* it was ביד משה the same reasoning of Man's superiority over the *malachim* was given over to Moshe *Rabbeinu* to prove to the *malachim*, and he too was successful to win the case in favor of *Am Yisrael* אחוז בכסא וחהזר תשובה.

Gut Shabbos Gut Chodesh

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