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Maimonides Kehillah – April 6, 2024

This Dvar Torah is being presented l'zecher nishmot Avraham ben Dovid Rafael, a”h, Brenda’s father and Tzemach ben Yosef, a”h, my father. May our constant memories of them be uplifting, impactful, and meaningful.

The Midrash in Shmot Rabba comments on the phrase: HaChodesh HazeH Lachem – “this new month shall be to you” with an interesting verse from Shir HaShirim – “Kol dodi hineh zeh ba” – the sound of my Beloved, behold, is approaching. This might, at first glance, seem like a strange juxtaposition. Is the Midrash using the common word of “zeh” to teach us a lesson? Or does the word “zeh” only serve as a hyperlink from one verse to the other and there is another lesson to be learned from the two verses?

The Sfas Emes provides the following interpretation. The commandment to establish Rosh Chodesh is the first communal Mitzvah. The combination of this Mitzvah of controlling the calendar and by extension the moadim, the holy days, and the Halachic details of the korban Pesach, the Passover offering and the associated activities involving Seder night, create the “magic” key of Geulah/redemption for our bondage in Mitzrayim and our long-standing Exilic experience.

When Hashem shares the Voice of Torah, the kol Torah, with the Jewish people, HaShem provides a way to shatter the shackles of slavery and rise to the level of Revelation. Again from Shir HaShirim Rabba, the phrases of MeDaleg al HeHarim (There He comes leaping over mountains), Mekapetz al Hagevaot (bounding over hills), Hinay ZEH omed achar cotlaynu (there He stands behind our wall) refer to the following formative historical events:

- Hineh ZEH omed achar kotleynu (there he stands behind our wall) – refers to Midbar Sinai
- Mashgiach min HaChalonot (gazing through the window) – refers to HaShem descending onto Har Sinai
- Maytitz min HaCharachim (peering through the window) – refers to HaShem speaking all the Devarim to us
- Anah Dodi vAmar Li (my Beloved spoke to me) – refers to “Anochi HaShem”

vAmar Li points to the “kol”, the voice of HaShem. The interrelationship of renewal in terms of the months and HaShem’s voice in terms of HaShem speaking the Torah to us teaches us a formative lesson. The Torah contains with it the seeds of renewal – each time we confront the Torah, each time we return to the Torah, there is a freshness, a newness. Our connection to the Torah is so strong that, as the Gemara teaches us in Pesachim 85b, that even a Mechitzah shel Barzel – a metal barrier wall, cannot mute the Kol of Torah.

Adds the Maharal in his Payrush Tiferet Yisrael on the giving of the Torah: the Torah has always been ready for us to accept with the proviso that we prepare ourselves through our proper and thoughtful actions in this world.

Regardless of where we find ourselves as Jews b’chol dor vador, the Torah and the potential for Geulah is with us. We see that as well in the Pasuk – hineh ZEH omed achar kotlaynu – behold, it (the Torah) stands with us even through we are behind a barrier (i.e., in Galus).

Continues Shmot Rabba: from the earliest time that HaShem decided to invest in this world, HaShem established the pattern of new months and new years. And when HaShem chose us, the Jewish People, HaShem established for us a new Month that symbolizes redemption. This means that, in addition to HaShem being a MeChadesh BeTuvo Maasei Bereishit each day, there are present within the fabric of the world, special times that can be redemptive. The beauty of a Torah life is that we, as Jews, can reach for these redemptive opportunities ourselves.

This explains the difference between the Rosh Hashana in Tishray which is a universal Rosh Hashana and the Rosh Hashana in Nisan (HaChodesh Hazeh lachem Rosh Chadashim) which is a New Year for the Jewish people alone. How do we bring the renewal of this Rosh Hashana about? Through our efforts – as the Gemara in Rosh Hashana 7a explains – Chadash v’Havay korban miTeruma Chadasha – Renew the year and bring an offering from the new collection of Shkalim. We perform the Mitzvah of collecting the coins and we utilize those funds to bring a korban to HaShem.

The fact that HaShem provided us with the responsibility to renew the months and establish the precise times of the Moadim proves that we, as a Jewish people, exist above and beyond the framework of Time and we have the potential and responsibility to rule over Time.

What an awesome responsibility – to control our Time and control our Holy Days. What an awesome gift – to be given the opportunity to refresh and renew ourselves on a monthly basis,

based on Rosh Chodesh, or even on a daily basis, if we follow HaShem's lead of renewing the World each and every day.

There are many voices and sounds that we hear every day. There are the sounds of battle, the sounds of the marketplace, the sounds of politics, the sounds of family time around the Shabbos table. But what do we say in the Tefillah of Yamim Nora-im? Within the cacophony of noise, within the assault from all sides of opinions and differences, within all the uncivil discourse that we might experience is the "kol demamah dakah" - that soft, still sound. What is that Kol?

It is "Kol Dodi Hineh Zeh Ba" -it is the soundtrack of a life lived according to our Torah and our Masorah. It is a life lived with the awareness of the potential for Geulah. It is a life lived with dreams of helping the Jewish people make this world a better place – l'Takayn Olam B'Malchut Shakai.

Both Avraham Leidner and Seymour Hefter, of blessed memory, each dreamt big dreams on behalf of the Jewish people. R. Avraham grew up in Poland and experienced the pain of persecution before escaping to America and, with tremendous bitachon and Emunah, built a life of Torah and Avodah. He heard the Kol Dodi Hineh Zeh Bah. My father may have grown up in the Lower East Side but his eyes always looked to the Higher Good Side. He devoted his life to Jewish Community service and fervently believed in bringing the Kol Demama Dakah to all Jews regardless of their background or experience. He also heard the Kol Dodi Hineh Zeh Bah.

As we enter the Chodesh of Nisan (of Nes/miracle) this coming week, may we merit to retune our audio receptors to the Kol Dodi streaming channel. May we take the opportunity afforded by this coming month's focus on redemption and renewal and channel that awareness into positive and constructive action on behalf of Am Yisrael – the Jewish people. May we see the return of our hostages B'karov B'yamaynu and see our soldiers home with their families for Seder night. May the loudest Kolot we hear this coming month be the niggunim of Seder night and in particular – Peduyim L'Tzion B'rina – Bring the redeemed back to Tzion in joy!