

PORTION	DATE	HEB DATE	TORAH	NEVIIM	RENEWED
Va'era	13 Jan., 2018	26 Tevet 5778	Exod.6:2-9:35	Ezek. 28:25-29:21	Luke 11:14-22

Last week, Hashem called Moses at Mount Sinai to lead His people out of Egypt. Moses said that he could not do that and asked for someone else to send. After a week of objection, Hashem agreed to send Aaron as a mediator. Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and demanded to release Israelites from bondage. Instead of releasing them from bondage, the Pharaoh placed harsher bondage to the Israelites. In turn, the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron.

Now, Moses appears in front of Hashem and says, “Why have You done this evil to this people? Why is it that You have sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your Name, he has done evil to this people; neither have You delivered Your people at all.”¹ Hashem responds, “I am YHWH. And I appeared to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Yaakov, in and as El-Shaddai, but by My Name YHWH was I not known to them?”²

The Sages teach, after receiving commands to bring out Israelites from Egypt, Moses thought it would be an easy task. That all he had to do was what Hashem said and the Pharaoh would let them go. In other words, Moses thought he would demand the release of the Israelites and the Pharaoh would meekly submit to his demands. The Scripture describes Pharaoh’s reaction, “Who is this Hashem that I should obey His voice to let Yisrael go? I know not Hashem, neither will I let Yisrael go.”³ And the Pharaoh increased the burden on Yisrael. And the people complained against Moses and Aaron.

From the perspective of the Pharaoh, it is easy to assume the following: 1. He saw Israelites all over his country infiltrating all aspects of Egyptian lifestyles. As long as Israelites remained in Goshen, the Egyptians were not concerned. But when the Pharaoh saw the Israelites everywhere, he realized a nation was growing within his country. 2. He was frightened that the Israelites would turn against them if there was a war against Egypt. Thus, he had the right to protect his country.

This week’s parashat contains seven plagues sent to Egypt. The word, Pharaoh in Hebrew is written as פרעה, the outside letters spell פה, “mouth,” while the inside letter spell רע, “evil.” Thus, Pharaoh is the evil mouth. The Sages say: “All exiles are called by the name of ‘Egypt’, for they cause distress to Israel.”

Pharaoh spoke to his people: “Come, let us deal wisely with them, lest they multiply...” The first of the two words “lest they multiply,” פן ירבה (pen yir•be), begins with a *pei*. Two verses later, we find: “But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied.” In these two verses, the words כן ירבה (“the more they multiplied”) are identical with the words פן ירבה (“lest they multiplied”) except that the *pei* of פן is replaced with a *kaf* in the word כן (“the more”). The form of the *kaf* is an empty mouth, a toothless *pei*. The secret of breaking the teeth of the wicked is expressed in Psalms: “You have broken the teeth of the wicked.”⁴

80		1		
Gematria	Pictograph	Ktav Ivri	Ktav Ashurit	Book Type

The letter *pei* is the 17th of the aleph-bet. It has a numeric value of 80. The pictograph for *pei* looks like a mouth, whereas the classical Hebrew script (Ketav Ashurit) is constructed of a *kaf* with an inverted *vav* or an ascending

¹ Exodus 5:22-23

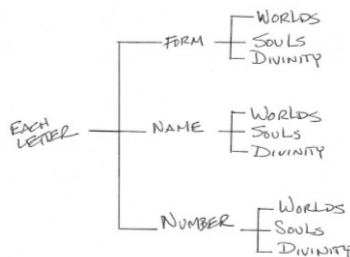
² Exodus 6:2-3

³ Exdodus 6:2

⁴ Psalms 3:7

yod. It also has a hidden bet as can be seen in Ketav Ashurit. This shape of the letter is required when a *sofer* (scribe) writes Torah scrolls, *tefillin*, or *mezuzot*.⁵

The letter *pei* has a meaning of mouth. It follows *ayin* which means ‘eyes’, thus suggesting that eyes (understanding, know, experience) before verbal expression. The Kabbalah teaches the letter *pei* is composed of two letters: *kaph* (כ) and *yod* (י). Since it follows *ayin*, they believe *ayin* is the gateway to reality, the mouth is what brings reality into being. This is alluded in the Scriptures in Genesis 2:7. The Onkelos renders *nefesh chaiya* (“a living soul”) as *ruach memalla* (“a speaking spirit”). Hashem’s speech creates reality, and since man is made ‘in the image of Hashem’, the sages reasoned that it was the power of speech and reasoning that differentiate between man and animal.



Baal Shem Tov teaches that each letter exists in three dimensions: Worlds, Souls, and Divinity. “Worlds” refers to the physical/human dimension; “Souls” to the spiritual; and “Divinity” to the Divine dimension. Arizal (classical Kabbalah) teaches as Vessels, Sparks, and Lights. Each of these dimensions has three facets – its shape, its name, and its numerical value.

So far, we have discussed ‘Worlds’ in Form dimension. Let us go in a little deeper to each dimension and its three categories.

FORM: A mouth containing a tooth; the white space within the *pei* forms a hidden *beit*.

- Worlds – the mouth of the wicked; disease results from the evil mouth.
- Souls – the power of speech; the 32 teeth in the mouth correspond to the 32 pathways of wisdom.
- Divinity – The “mouth” of Hashem reveals the Torah through the mouth of Moses; the “death of the kiss”; the secrets of Torah from Hashem’s mouth to be revealed in the future.

NAME: Mouth; here (present).

- Worlds - Here – the awareness of physical time and space; “Blessed is He who spoke and the world came into being.”; Speech – the power to enter the “here and now”; All Creation singing its song.
- Souls – “Knowledge is hidden in the mouth”; the power of curse and blessing.
- Divinity – Immanence; Sitting in the sukkah; the Oral Torah; Traveling the odyssey of life by the Mouth of Hashem; The “Kiss” of Hashem.

NUMBER: Eighty; *yesod* – the power of marriage.

- Worlds – “Eighty years to might.”; 80,000 chisellers of rock in the building of the First Temple.
- Souls – 80 tractates of *baraitot*; 80 ten thousand Israelites under the age of 20 left Egypt.
- Divinity – The age of Moses at the Exodus; The power of soul to contact Divinity; The discovery of the hidden light in Torah through pronouncing it orally.⁶

⁵ http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Grammar/Unit_One/Aleph-Bet/Pey/pey.html

⁶ The Hebrew Letters, R' Yitzchak Ginsburgh, p. 252

Pharaoh can argue that he was trying to protect his country from possible invaders within his country. He already knew the prophecy regarding the Israelites. He could have told the Israelites to leave his country as they came to Egypt as guests. Instead, he tried to wipe out their identity through genocide.

Therefore, Hashem removed *yod* from *pei* to make *kuph*. Pharaoh tried to ‘bite’ the numbers of Israelites but Hashem made his threat ‘toothless.’ The numerical value for *yod* is ten, thus the 10 plagues. Hashem as always applied ‘measure for measure.’ We will see later that this does not apply only to us but even to the righteous.

The Midrash teaches that when Moses was putting on the Pharaoh’s crown. The advisors to the Pharaoh designed a test if Moses understood the implications of his actions. He placed a piece of gold and a glowing piece of coal before Moses and waited to see what would happen. Their logic was that if Moses picks up the gold, it would imply that he understood its value of being a king and he would be killed. If he picks up the coal, he would be spared since he was unable to differentiate between the gold and a glowing piece of coal.

Moses began to reach out for the gold when an angel pushed his hand aside and he grabbed the coal. Moses then put it in his mouth which burned his lips and tongue to cause a permanent speech impediment as a consequence.

Later, when Hashem commissioned Moses to speak to the children of Israel, he objected to Hashem that he was *kevad peh* and *kevad lashon* (heavy of mouth and tongue; “slow of speech and tongue” in NIV). Hashem said to him, “Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who give him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, YHWH?”⁷ Hashem was then angry with Moses for his reluctance and decreed that “because of your words” he would not be permitted to be a *kohen* (priest), but his brother Aaron would.

Moses’ question of “Why have You done this evil to this people?” is interesting as the question itself is two-fold. As we have discussed previously, Moses is asking on his failed mission sent by Hashem would cause harsher oppression to the Israelites. He is also accusing of Hashem for sending him to rescue Israelites was chosen hastily. The answer to the first question is that Moses thought his mission would be “a piece of cake.” All he had to do was petition to the Pharaoh to release Israelites. Instead, the Pharaoh increased burdens on the Israelites. And the people accused him of harsher slavery was caused by him. The second question was accusing Hashem, “See, I was right. You sent the wrong man for the job. If Hashem sent the right person, the Pharaoh would not have caused harsher punishment to the Israelites and he wouldn’t be accused of wrongdoing by the people.”

Hashem responds, “I am YHWH. And I appeared to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Yaakov, in and as El-Shaddai, but by My Name YHWH was I not known to them?” Why is Hashem saying that the forefathers did not know who He was. After all, He appeared to Abraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov in Genesis 15 and afterwards. The Zohar teaches that when He appeared to them, He was Elokim. And the forefathers did not know him as the attribute of Mercy.

It is important that Hashem does not pick people to serve Him in random. He has chosen Abraham because of his faith from his childhood and even during his trials and tribulations his faith did not falter. Yitzchak, while he never left Canaan, his faith in Hashem revealed unwavering faith in Hashem when he was offered as a burnt sacrifice. Yaakov’s trials and tribulation did not cause him to fall away from Hashem. Instead, his focus was on asking Hashem what he should do even before entering Egypt, and sending Judah to establish a yeshiva before his arrival.

⁷ Exodus 4:10-11

As we learned from previous parashat, Abraham had the attribute of Mercy (Chesed), Yitzhak as the Judgment or Strength (Gevurah), and Yaakov as the Beauty (Tiferet). Thus, Hashem appeared to them as the Judgment as Elokim. But they did not know the name, Hashem. The commentators believe the forefathers knew the Name as El Shaddai known as the Almighty, and Hashem appeared to them as the attribute of Din (Judgment). Only to Moses, did the Hashem reveal Himself as YHVH, The Ineffable Name. The Zohar continues that Moses has the attribute of Knowledge (Da'at).

In Chapter 6 verse 1, Hashem says to Moses, “Now shall you see what I will do to Pharaoh.” The word ‘now’ in Hebrew is Atah (עַתָּה). What is the significant of the word? Hashem answered Moses question and future generations who would ask, “Who are you?” Hashem is saying to Moses that He has been waiting for this moment, the moment for Moses to reach ‘rock bottom’ that there is a delusion: that there is Elohim and Havayah.

Verse 6-7 alludes to the four ascending levels in our relationship with Hashem:

“I will free you” – This refers to shunning evil. By shunning evil, we become free agents, unencumbered by its oppressive grip on us.

“I will save you from their servitude” – This refers to doing good, i.e., actively performing Hashem’s commandments. Only by actively engaging in good deeds can we be saved from backsliding into enslavement to evil.

“I will redeem you” – This refers to studying the Torah, since the Torah is the means by which we access Hashem’s infinity even while in this finite world, and thereby are redeemed from the limitations of nature.

“I will take you to Myself” – This refers to clinging to Hashem Himself, whose essence transcends all the finite and the infinite.⁸

We will take further steps to explain 10 phrases of redemption taught by Kabbalah. In verse 6, there are 3 phrases:

1. I will take you out
2. I will save you
3. I will redeem you

In verse 7:

4. I will take you

In verse 8:

5. I will be to you

Each of the phrases is followed by the pronoun, “you.” These words are written the same form with Hashem saying a verb beginning with the letter vav [ו], and ending with tav-yod [תִּי]:

Verse 6:

⁸ The Book of Exodus, The Lubavitcher Rebbe, p. 39

1. I will take you out Ve-ho-tze-ti (וְהוֹצֵאתִי);
2. I will save you Ve-hi-tzal-ti (וְהִצַּלְתִּי)
3. I will redeem you ve-ga-al-ti (וְגַאֲלִתִּי) ve];

Verse 7:

4. I will take you ve-la-kach-ti (וְלִקַּחְתִּי);

Verse 8:

5. I will bring you ve-he-ve-ti (וְהֵבֵאתִי).

As we can see, each phrase added “you.” That is why there are those who say that perhaps we should drink 5 cups instead of drinking 4 cups during the Seder. That is how Jerusalem Talmud teaches. But, the Maharal of Prague and others speak of a 5th cup of redemption in verse 8.

Now if we read the verses again, we see that there are 2 more phrases that contains pronoun “to you” [לָכֶם]. In verse 7 says, “And I will be a Hashem to you.” And in verse 8 says, “And I shall give it to you.” This is a pair of phrases that go together: Hashem is saying, “I take you as my people and I will be your Elohim, I was and will be your Elohim.”

Adding “to you” makes 7 redemptions.

Now, there are 3 additional phrases that do not have a prefix letter *vav*, but all of them do have the letters *tav-yod* at the end, meaning that Hashem is referring to Himself. First is in verse 3, “I did not make Myself known” [נֹדַעְתִּי no-da-ati]. In verse 4, “I established My covenant” [הִקְמַתִּי ha-ki-mo-ti] In verse 5, “I have heard,” [שָׁמַעְתִּי sha-ma-ti] These phrases end with *tav-yod*.

So, we can see a division of 3 and 7. Like this week’s parasha, there are 7 plagues, and 3 plagues in parashat Bo. In the first one (verse 3), Hashem is referring to His actions as relating to the Patriarchs, but these phrases also refer to what Hashem is destined to do for their children. They don’t start with the letter *vav*. They are: Noda-ti [I had made known], Hakimo-ti [I have upheld], Shama-ti [I have heard].

And then it says, “Therefore,” which in Hebrew is lamed-chaf-nun [לִכֵּן la-chen] which as multiples of 10, *lamed* is 3 [times 10], *kaph* and *nun* are 7 [times 10]. So, this is another division [into 3 and 7], “Therefore tell the children of Israel, I will take you out from under the yoke of Egypt” and then follow 7 phrases of redemption. This is a beautiful structure of 10 phrases, divided into 3 and 7.

We can see clearly this to the Ten sefirot. The fact that “I had made known,” that I myself, “I am who I am,” is stated using a reflexive verb, this is the source of *da’at* [knowledge] in *keter elyon* [the supernal crown]. “I will uphold,” Rashi says, is the Resurrection of the Dead because it says “to them [the Patriarchs themselves]” “my covenant,” to the Patriarchs of the World.

Meaning, that they themselves will rise, and they will see the exodus from Egypt, and the future redemption as well. It says that the Resurrection of the Dead originates in *chochmah* [wisdom], “Wisdom shall give life...,” and “They shall die, but not in wisdom.” Then, “And I have heard,” in both phrases we find the word “and,” but, in the second one [And I have heard], we find an explicit pronoun “I.”

“I” alludes to “vessels” in the language of Kabbalah. Both uses the word “and,” so they are a pair, like Abba and Ima [the father and mother principles], which are like two companions that never separate. “I heard”, is always Ima [the mother], *binah* in Kabbalah.

And in addition, this phrase has the word, “I” which even more reflects the “being” of Ima [mother]. Aba is considered nothingness and Ima is being. So, the first three are very clear.

Then, let us explain these in a different manner. The four phrases of redemption are always corresponded with the 4 letters *Havayah*, (*yod, hei, vav, hei*), by themselves, or to any other model with 4 elements in it, i.e., 4 directions, 4 primal elements.

But, here we see that there are 7 phrases. And the 7 must correspond, in order, to the sefirot. So, “I will take out,” and “I will save,” must correspond to *chesed* [loving-kindness] and *gevurah* [might]. And, “I will redeem,” redemption is the revelation of *yesod* Ima in *tiferet Z’'a* [foundation of the mother principle, in the beauty of the small countenance].

“I will save” is separation. The exodus itself, taking out, is a kindness from Hashem. The fact that Hashem saves us. “To save” also means to separate, a revelation of His might. The fact that He redeems us, that is the revelation of *yesod* Ima in *tiferet Z’'a*,

After that, we said that there are two phrases that go together, they are “I will take,” and “I will be.” “I will take you as my people,” and “I will be your Elohim.” These are *netzach* and *hod* [victory and acknowledgment], they are a pair. Then there is another pair at the end, which are “I will bring,” and “I will give.” To bring, or to come is *yesod* [foundation] in Kabbalah, and the final giving of the land of Israel, “to them, an inheritance, I am Havayah” the final words of the verse, the final giving of the land of Israel to Israel, for all generations, that is *malchut* [kingdom]. May we merit all these phrases of redemption.