

Parsha Ponders

Shemos | Jan 16, 2025 | 16 Teves 5785

Fateful forefather fenagling¹

ויאמר עוד אלקים אל משה כה תאמר אל בני ישראל יקוק אלקי אבותיכם אלקי אברהם אלקי יצחק ואלקי יעקב שלנחי אליכם זה שמי לעולם וזה זכרי לדור דור: לך ואספת את זקני ישראל ואמרת אליהם יקוק אלקי אבותיכם נראה אלי אלקי אברהם יצחק ויעקב לאמר פקד פקדתי אתכם ואת העשוי לכם במצרים

G-d said further to Moshe: "Thus shall you say to the Children of Israel: Hashem, the G-d of your forefathers, **the G-d of Avraham, the G-d of Yitzchak, and the G-d of Yaakov**, sent me to you. This is My Name forever, and My remembrance from generation to generation. Go and gather the elders of Israel and say to them: Hashem, the G-d of your forefathers appeared to me, **the G-d of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov**, saying, I have surely remembered you and what was done to you in Egypt"²

Everyone knows the episode of the burning bush. Hashem appeared to Moshe in a vision and told him that he would be the one to redeem the Jewish people from their bondage in Egypt. What's interesting is we find back-to-back verses where Hashem describes Himself as the G-d of our forefathers. More interesting is we find an inconsistency. First, Hashem describes Himself as the G-d of Avraham, the G-d of Yitzchak, and the G-d of Yaakov. The second time, however, He simply calls Himself the G-d of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, without repetition. Why the inconsistency?

Perhaps this can be related to a story told over by our Sages³. Eliyahu HaNavi used to frequent the study hall of Rabbi Yehuda HaNassi. One Rosh Chodesh, Eliyahu didn't show up. The next day, Rabbi Yehudah HaNassi asked Eliyahu why he didn't come. Eliyahu said that besides coming to the study hall, he has a job up in heaven. Every day he wakes up Avraham, washes his hands, has him pray, and puts him back to sleep. He then does the same for Yitzchak, and then for Yaakov. Since Rosh Chodesh was such a long set of prayers, it became so late that he didn't bother coming.

Someone then asked, why do this in such an inefficient manner? Why not wake up all the forefathers at once, wash all their hands, have them all pray, and then put them all back to sleep? This way, even on Rosh Chodesh, it wouldn't be so late. Eliyahu responded that if all three forefathers would pray at once, Moshiach would surely come. The time right now isn't proper, so Eliyahu has no choice but to inefficiently wake them up one at a time.

We can say then that the first verse we started with is referring to the future, ultimate redemption. As it says, "from generation to generation". Since the time is not yet ripe for the ultimate redemption, Hashem didn't put His name simultaneously together with the three forefathers. However, the second instance is referring to the redemption from Egypt. Hashem was conveying that Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov already got together and prayed that the Jews be freed from their bondage and slavery. Tell the Jewish people that Hashem has surely remembered them.

May Eliyahu, speedily in our days, get the three forefathers together to help bring about our ultimate redemption.

Good Shabbos

¹ Based on a *devar Torah* by Rav Asher Weiss, found in Minchas Asher parshas Shemos

² Exodus 3:15-16

³ Bava Metziah 85b