

Vaeyrah - Rabbi Lerner - January 15, 2012

The Four Languages of Geulah

6:6-8 "Therefore, say to Bnei Yisrael I am Hashem, and I will take you out - **Vehotzaisi** - from the under the burdens of Egypt; I shall rescue you - **Vehitzalti** - from their service; I shall redeem you - **Vega'alti** - with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. I shall take you - **Velakachti** - to Me for a people and I shall be a God to you..." These pasukim are the famous four languages of redemption. In the Gemorrah in Pesachim, **Rashi**: the halachah in the Mishnah says we must drink four cups of wine, even if one is very poor - paupers must be provided with enough money to purchase enough wine for the four cups. It is four to commemorate the four languages of Geulah from these pesukim. I will take them out, I will save them, I will redeem them, and I shall take them to me as a people. These are the four languages of redemption.

Torah Temima: the Gemorrah Yerushalmi Pesachim has a different version: the four cups commemorate the four Ge'ulos, four redemptions. While all of the classic sources and commentaries discuss the four cups, they always say it is to commemorate the four **languages** of redemption; but here it doesn't say the word languages, but **redemptions**. This is a major distinction. If you use the original source in Gemorrah Bavli, it is essentially just one geulah containing different shades of redemption, different nuances of the same redemption. But if you say it is four different redemptions, it has more impact.

Baal Haturim: the four languages of geulah parallel the four kingdoms that will enslave the Jewish people later in history - Bavel, Persia/Media, Greece, and Rome. The Gematria of these four words adds up to the phrase "this poor person should be given enough money for four cups of wine (Zeh Awni Beyisrael...)."

Abarbanel: What do the four languages of Geulah mean? In order to understand them, you must go back to the beginning of the enslavement in Shmos. In 1:11 it says that they placed upon them Sorei Misim - taskmasters - to afflict them with their burdens, and they built the storage cities of Pison and Ramsay. The first enslavement stage was these taskmasters - people who taxed the Jews unfairly, placing heavy financial burdens on them. The first step of redemption was financial relief, where the taxes stopped. The second enslavement in 1:13 was *Farech*, back-breaking labor. The second redemption was to relieve them of the severe slavery, the cruel physical tasks they were forced to perform. The third enslavement was the killing of our children - this parallel is *Ga'alti* - Hashem stops the killing - these were the tenth plague and the splitting of the sea - the plague stopped the killing of the babies, and perpetrators of the murders then drowned in the sea. So we see an escalation of taxes to physical labor to murder, and the first three redemptions paralleled these. The fourth redemption was being chosen as God's people, giving them the Torah, allowing them to reach the highest level of a total spiritual redemption.

Rabbeinu Bachya: The first language of redemption, *Vehotzaisi*, was when Hashem announced to Moshe that they would be free of slavery, but would still be under the iron fist of Egypt - they would have complete freedom from all of the work. We see this as the guarantee of being free of the enormous burden of Egypt - they will not be physically oppressed while still living in Egypt - the work stopped long before they left Egypt; it stopped early on, on Rosh Hashanah, early into the plagues - that is when the hard work stopped. The next level, *Vehitzalti*, means they are free to leave the country; they are still considered prisoners if they cannot leave the country - this occurs after the tenth plague. The third lashon, *Vega'alti*, is the splitting of the sea - only after that point did they feel redeemed; they sang the Shira as new Ge'ulim. It was freedom from psychological slavery - when a slave goes out, he does not

feel truly redeemed because he is concerned that the master can go after him to recapture him; the master might have been forced to let him go, but he might go after him again to return him to slavery. This is in fact what the Jews feared was happening when the Egyptians went after them. They were physically free, but were still worried that they could end up as slaves once again. After the Egyptians drowned, the Jews realized that they were finally, truly liberated and they could breathe easily; then they sang Shira. The fourth language of *Velakachti* is when we were taken to be God's people at Har Sinai; that is when we were given the Torah.

Sforno: from the day the plagues began, the subjugation quieted down and ground to a halt immediately. *Vehitzalti* was at the end, after the tenth plague, when they left and went to the first transit place; it is when they actually left the borders of Egypt. The other two languages of redemption have the same meaning as expressed by Rabbeinu Bachya.

Netziv: It is very logical that you cannot take people so immersed in slavery and suddenly transform them into free Jews who consider themselves royalty, ready to receive the Torah. They cannot make a leap that easily. Therefore, there has to be a slow process of building blocks to gradually take them up to feel like free people who can then accept the Torah willingly. We were so involved in the physical world (at the wrong end of it) during the slavery, but slowly Hashem took us up to the level needed for us to receive the Torah. The first language indicated that we stopped building the pyramids, we stopped the work, around the plague of locusts. In 8:12-14 when the lice begin, the magicians cannot replicate the plague for the first time, and they admit to Pharaoh that there is a supernatural power beyond them; Pharaoh, however, did not listen to them - he ignored his own sorcerers. So for the first three plagues, there is no drop of respite yet for the Jews; Hashem has not lifted them out of the oppressive burden; Pharaoh is not impressed - the first two plagues his magicians replicate, and the third plague he ignores. Finally, with the fourth plague of wild beasts, in 8:22 he begins to give in - he says the Jews can worship within the land; he does not yield and let them go out of the land, even though he promises that he will. In 8:26, Moshe prays for the plague of Arov to end, but Pharaoh doesn't seem to change dramatically. However, there is a significant change detected in Pharaoh's attitude. Hashem lifts them out of the most oppressive part of the slavery after Arov; Pharaoh realized there is something to this God after all. This is why in 8:28 it says he did not release the nation, the Am - for the first time he is shaken and he yields on some of the severity of the slavery - he refers to them as an Am, a nation, a more respectful term. At the seder we group the plagues into three groups as per Rabbi Yehudah, to parallel the three phases of redemption. After the first three, there was no release from slavery, but there was a slight change in Pharaoh's attitude. After the hail in 9:34-5, he refuses to send out the Jews, calling them Bnei Yisrael - Pharaoh now elevates them from the word Am to that of Bnei Yisrael, a far more respectful name. With the last four plagues he continues to refer to them as Bnei Yisrael, a term of nobility; at this time there is no more work for the Jews. This is when we have *Vehitzalti*; we are completely saved from the work. Nothing happened after the first three; he then took away the heavy burden for the next three. Each group of plagues resulted in less and less slavery.

Minchas Asher (Reb Weiss): the Gemorrah says that at the seder, if one wanted to drink more wine between the first and second cups, or the second to third, one is allowed. However, from the third cup to the fourth one is not allowed to eat or drink anything. Many people think that redemption means you began as a slave who was not allowed to live in the land of your choice, and, then you were finally no longer oppressed; you were free to live as you please. According to these opinions, you would only need three cups of wine because you are completely free of labor and can go to whatever land you want; these people don't need the fourth lashon of geulah. The first three are about physical redemption. But once you are physically free, you must connect that to the spiritual freedom, the fourth lashon, the fourth cup - physical freedom is nothing without the spiritual freedom - that was the real goal of the exodus.

That is why there cannot be a break between the third and fourth cups. You must get to the fourth cup after the physical freedom, because the main redemption is the redemption of the soul - we thank Hashem for redeeming our souls, that is the final redemption.

The fifth cup: *Vehayvaysi*. This is the Cos Shel Eliyahu according to many, including the Vilna Gaon. **Rav Schlessinger** quotes the **Maharal**: only the Baal Habayis drinks a fifth cup - it is about parnassa - he should get the bracha of being able to support his family in a proper way. This is reflected in hallel hagadol (Hodu Lashem Ki Tov) that we say every shabbos and yom tov, as well as at the seder, where we praise Hashem for a long list of wondrous things He did for us. In this Hallel it talks about the creation of the world, the great miracles in Egypt and at the Sea, in the Midbar, against the Canaani nations, and ends with Hashem giving parnassa to all humans. Hallel Mitzrayim was a one time event, a miraculous event; but that is not what the world is all about; it is a natural world. The natural world, *Vehayvaysi*, is about supporting one's family in the land in a natural way - we praise Hashem for supporting all of us in a hidden, natural way, with covert miracles. We thank Hashem not just for the miraculous manner that He exhibited in Egypt. The fifth lashon is commemorating the transition to a natural way of life, with covert miracles, for which we thank Hashem.