

**MORASHAH**  
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*Parashat HaShavuah Series*

**Of God and Man**

At the end of *masechet Sota* we read an interesting response to a Mishnah. The Mishnah says:

תלמוד בבלי מסכת סוטה דף מט עמוד ב

משמת רבי - בטלה ענוה ויראת חטא.

"When Rebbe (R. Yehudah HaNasi) died, humility and the fear of sin were nullified."

That is to say, they no longer existed.

Rav Yosef responds in the gemara:

אמר ליה רב יוסף לתנא: לא תיתני ענוה, דאיכא אנא.

Rav Yosef said to the Tanna who had recited the Mishnah, "Don't say that humility ended with Rebbe, for there is me!"

Rashi, explaining R. Yosef's words *de'ika ana* (there is me) – *Sheani anvaton* – "for I am a humble character".

It is interesting that elsewhere in the Talmud, in tractate Pesachim, we read about this same R. Yosef:

תלמוד בבלי מסכת פסחים דף סח עמוד ב

רב יוסף ביומא דעצרתא אמר: עבדי לי עגלא תלתא. אמר: אי לא האי יומא דקא גרים, כמה יוסף איכא בשוקא

R. Yosef used to order a young calf be prepared for him for Shavuot – for he said: "If it weren't for this day, (the day of the giving of the Torah at Sinai) consider how many Yosefs there are already in the marketplace".

In other words, were it not for this day on which the Torah was given, on which I've built my skill and reputation, I'd just be another Joe on the street.

Obviously, then, this self-proclaimed "humble character" doesn't see himself as just another Joe on the street. He views himself as having special talents and abilities.

Is R. Yosef a hypocrite? Further, if he is a hypocrite, why would the Talmud want to include this discussion? It should be embarrassing to the Rabbis!

Rav David Halvini, the *Reish Metivta* of the UTJ's rabbinical school, the Institute of Traditional Judaism, often speaks of the partnership between Man and God and the rabbinic idea that *Yemei Tov*, the Holidays, represent Man and Shabbat represents God. Obviously,

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Man did not participate in the creation of Shabbat, for it was God who rested after finishing the Creation.

But God gave Yom Tov to Man; for to know when Yom Tov falls, we go to the Beit Din and they decide – the dates of the Holidays are completely in Man's hands.

That dichotomy falls away when it comes to Pesach. It belongs neither to Man alone, nor to God.

The Passover Haggadah asks – *Pesach zeh mishum ma? Mishum shepasach haKBH* “Why is this sacrifice/holiday known as Pesach? It is because HaShem passed over the houses of the Children of Israel”. In other words, it is called Pesach because of God's actions.

But the Haggadah also asks *Matzah zo mishum ma? Why do we eat this matzah?...*

על שום שלא הספיק בציקם של אבותינו להחמיץ עד שנגלה...

ויאפו את הבצק אשר הוציאו ממצרים עגות מצות כי לא חמץ

... “It was because the dough of our ancestors had no time to rise before they were redeemed by God...”

Who made Matzah? Man. Who “Passed Over”? God.

Pesach is therefore the direct result of and symbolizes a partnership between Man and God.

Now if Man claimed to be the primary partner, that would be hubris. Can we compare ourselves as equals to God? Certainly not. We may be partners with the Creator, but we are the smaller, weaker partner. Yet we are still a partner!

And so we return to the apparent hubris of R. Yosef who claimed that humility was alive and well in him, even after Rebbe's departure from this world. If humility means having no self-esteem, if it means seeing yourself as nothing more than dust and ash, then R. Yosef, who did not consider himself “just another Joe”, couldn't be considered humble.

But if humility means recognizing your own value, but at the same time always recognizing the value of others; if it means recognizing your own strengths, but also recognizing the strengths of others and appreciating the sources of your value, then indeed R. Yosef was a model of humility.

It is known that the Kotzker Rebbe told his Hasidim to carry two pieces of paper, one in each pocket. On the first should be inscribed *bishvili nivrah haOlam*, “the world was created for me” (quoted from Mishnah Sanhedrin). On the second should be inscribed the words of Abraham: *va'ani afar va'efer* “and I am but dust and ash”.

On Shabbat HaGadol, the Sabbath that celebrates our preparation for Pesach and our historical and future redemption, may the partnership between ourselves and God reflected in the holiday, bring us all to *invetanut*, a humility that celebrates our value even as the lesser partner.

*Shabbat Shalom and hag kasher v'sameach!*

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