

of Plato and Aristotle, the philosophical concept of God that is removed from this world. They know of a creator, but not of a Master of this world and a Father to His people. The descendants of Yefet, the progenitors of what would become the Greek tradition, develop a conception of God that is remarkable in the degree to which it portrays God as He related to mankind during the era of Noach, in the mode of *Elokim*. It is only through the children of Shem, Avraham and his descendants, that God will be known in a more personal way, i.e., as Hashem.

We can now better appreciate what we've discussed above concerning the Tower of Bavel. Throughout the incident, there is only reference to Hashem — never *Elokim*. The Torah is telling us that this is not a vindictive punishment of Man, reflecting God's ire. In fact, the opposite is the case. As we've learned, the point of God's actions at the Tower of Bavel is to clear the path for Avraham. It is Hashem's desire to resume His relationship with mankind that prompts His reaction to the tower. It allows for the emergence of Avraham, through whom all of mankind would be blessed.

UNNAMED WOMEN

If we examine Chapter 13 of *sefer Shoftim*, we will notice a puzzling detail. Unlike most cases of Biblical narrative, here the heroine of this story is not identified by name. This aberration requires explanation.

The first clue to understanding this unusual phenomenon is the fact that the text stresses the fact that we know the name and place of Manoach, her husband. The prophet writes:

ויהי איש אחד מצרעה ממשפחת הדני ושמו מנוח ואשתו עקרה ולא
ילדה.

(*Shoftim* 13:2)

By contrast, we know neither the name nor place of his wife. This is very interesting when we consider the fact that we are told that the name and place of the angel are unknown:

ותבא האשה ותאמר לאישה לאמר איש האלקים בא אלי ומראהו
 כמראה מלאך האלקים נורא מאד ולא שאלתיהו אי מזה הוא ואת שמו
 לא הגיד לי.

(Ibid., 6)

That is to say, there is a contrast between Manoach on the one hand and his wife and the angel on the other. This is a crucial point in the context of the entire story. The person who is on the same wavelength as the angel is clearly the wife of Manoach, and not Manoach. It is very understandable that the wife of Manoach and the angel are described in similar terms, and that Manoach is described in the opposite way.

There is a second interesting aspect to the story of the wife of Manoach that will shed light on this issue. There is a striking resemblance between this chapter and the narrative that relates the visit of the angels to Avraham and their prediction of the birth of Yitzchak. From the pious woman who is barren to the prediction delivered by the angel to the growth of the *na'ar* and his being blessed by God, the stories are strikingly similar.

This gives us a very interesting perspective on the story of Shimshon. When we consider the life of Shimshon, we cannot help but be struck by the tragedy of his life. He is removed from his family and people, geographically and emotionally. Everyone must have viewed him as a traitor who consorted with Philistine women and caroused with Philistine friends of a very low caliber. He appears to be involved in one questionable situation after another.

As outside observers, reading the narrative, we can appreciate that all of this is a ruse to defend the Jewish people against their Philistine oppressors. We can see the brilliance of his plans to attack the Philistines in such a way that there is no retaliation against *b'nei Yisrael*. We are made aware, by the text, that it was all a means of saving his people. Shimshon's motivation is described in the following terms:

ויאמר שמשון...אותה קח לי כי היא ישרה בעיני. ואביו ואמו לא ידעו כי
 מה' היא כי תאנה הוא מבקש מפלשתים...

(Ibid. 14:3–4)

His choice is not predicated on desire; rather, it is based on what he sees as right. It is a plot to save the Jewish people from their enemies. The difference between his true nature and how he is perceived is alluded to by his riddle and his joke — two means by which people tend to reveal their inner selves.

The famous riddle of Shimshon (that is clearly of great importance to him) is very telling:

מהאכל יצא מאכל ומעז יצא מתוק.

(Ibid., 14)

This is the very essence of his inner self. On the surface he is *az* and an *ocheil*. He seems to be a destructive force, bitter to his people. Yet the results of his actions are a source of sweetness and life for them.

Similarly he reveals his inner self through his joke. He declares:

בלחי החמור חמור חמרתים בלחי החמור הכיתי אלף איש.

(Ibid. 15:16)

The *chamor*, as it appears to the uninitiated, is Shimshon — judging by his actions. Here he indicates, with a pun for emphasis, that the *chamor* has produced piles of corpses. Indeed this is the result of his actions. What is more, its jawbone that is associated with death (as it is from a dead *chamor* and is the cause of the piles of corpses) is the source of the life-giving water:

ויצמא מאד ויקרא אל ה' ויאמר אתה נתת ביד עבדך את התשועה
הגדלה הזאת ועתה אמות בצמא ונפלתי ביד הערלים. ויבקע אלקים את
המכתש אשר בלחי ויצאו ממנו מים וישת ותשב רוחו ויחי על כן קרא
שמה עין הקורא אשר בלחי עד היום הזה.

(Ibid., 18–19)

This is a powerful icon for the life of Shimshon. He is ostensibly dead to the Jewish people, but in truth he is the source of death for the Philistines and a source of life for *b'nei Yisrael*.

In the end, the greatest blow he strikes on behalf of his brethren

is produced through his own death (ibid. 16:30). Once again, the central theme in the life (and death) of Shimshon is that of sacrifice.

Given this, it is clear that the image that best conveys the essence of Shimshon's life is Yitzchak. Yitzchak represents the concept of a person being a sacrifice.

There are two other places in Tanach where the central woman in the narrative is anonymous. They are the mothers of the resurrected children (brought back to life by Eliyahu and Elisha, respectively).

If we examine these two episodes carefully, we will notice several interesting points. First, the two events are clearly related to each other. The resurrection that is orchestrated by Elisha clearly echoes that which was performed by Eliyahu. Secondly, they are both related, thematically and linguistically, to the story of Yitzchak. In the story of the mother that is associated with Elisha (*Melachim II*, ch. 4), we find many echoes of the story of Sarah and Yitzchak.⁴ Some of the instances of this phenomenon are the following:

ויאמר ומה לעשות לה ויאמר גיחזי אבל בן אין לה ואישה זקן. ויאמר
קרא לה ויקרא לה ותעמד בפתח. ויאמר למועד הזה כעת חיה את חבקת
בן ותאמר אל אדני איש האלקים אל תכזב בשפחתך. ותהר האשה ותלד
בן למועד הזה כעת חיה אשר דבר אליה אלישע.

(*Melachim II* 4:14–17)

Similarly, it is significant that the son is referred to in familiar terms:

ויגדל הילד ויהי היום ויצא אל אביו אל הקצרים.

(Ibid., 18)

The child is also referred to as a *na'ar* as well as a *yeled*, much like Yitzchak. The related story of Eliyahu's resurrection of the child (*Melachim I*, ch.17) also contains echoes of the story of Sarah and Yitzchak.

The comparison to the story of Yitzchak is clear enough. Throughout Tanach, he represents the concept of resurrection as he is brought back from the dead at the *akeidah*. This is, of course,

the central feature of these episodes: the two sons are brought back from the grave (in some sense).⁵

It is now clear that these three narratives have much in common. They present their heroines anonymously. They revolve around a mother who is compared to Sarah. Their sons resemble Yitzchak. All of these similarities suggest the possibility that they share a common message, and that there may be a common reason that their central characters remain unnamed.

We might suggest that the central issue that all three sources share is the following: In all three cases the point is made that it is specifically the heroine who has the correct vision and is to be followed.

We have already seen that it is the wife of Manoach who is entrusted with the instructions regarding Shimshon. Her husband is commanded to follow the directions that he receives from her.

In the case of the woman who supported Eliyahu, she rebukes him regarding the fate of her son:

ותאמר אל אליהו מה לי ולך איש האלקים באת אלי להזכיר את עוני
ולהמית את בני.

(*Melachim I 17:18*)

Eliyahu accepts her words and acts accordingly.

The story concerning Elisha is even more striking. After the death of her son, the following exchange takes place.

ותבא אל איש האלקים אל ההר ותחזק ברגליו ויגש גיחזי להדפה ויאמר
איש האלקים הרפה לה כי נפשה מרה לה וה' העלים ממני ולא הגיד
לי.

(*Melachim II 4:27*)

The mother is presented as knowing the proper course of action to the exclusion of Gechazi and even Elisha.

We can conclude that all three of these women share two key elements: their respective relationships to Sarah and the fact that they are the ones who know the proper course of action and are supposed to be obeyed by the heroes of the story. That second aspect, in turn, is directly related to the first.

As we noted above, one of the central aspects of the narrative

of Sarah is that she is the first to reverse the curse of Chavah. Whereas Chavah is told, “And he will rule over you,” (*Bereishit* 3:16) concerning Sarah it says:

כל אשר תאמר אליך שרה שמע בקלה.

(Ibid. 21:12)

Given this perspective, we can understand that the unifying theme in these three narratives is the fact that these three righteous women show the correct spiritual path much as Sarah did. They are the ones to guide the men that they interact with. They fulfill the role of *ezer kenegdo* that was intended for Chavah, which she failed to live up to.

In light of this, it is understandable that they are described as they are. They are the models of the *ishah*, the quintessential woman, as she was meant to be. Before she failed in her mission, Chavah was called *ha'ishah* — the name Chavah is a response to her sin (as we explained in *Parashat Bereishit*). They are, therefore, referred to as *ha'ishah* in these texts.

A RIGHTEOUS MAN IN HIS GENERATIONS

This parashah raises the troubling question of how to understand the character of Noach. How do we understand the relationship between his obvious greatness and his shortcomings?

Chazal hint at a framework for dealing with this issue. The Midrash comments:

... אמר רבי ברכיה חביב משה מנח, נח משנקרא איש צדיק נקרא איש אדמה, אבל משה משנקרא איש מצרי נקרא איש האלקים...

Rabbi Berechyah said: Moshe is more beloved than Noach. Noach was first called a righteous man, and then he was called the man of the land. However, Moshe was first referred to as an Egyptian man and then as the man of God.

(*Bereishit Rabbah* 36)

This suggests that the first of the keys to unlocking the mystery