



Geuloh & Tefilloh



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When we ask ourselves, what changes have 'גאולה' (redemption) wrought in our lives, we will fall all over ourselves listing *emunoh*, Pesach, gratitude and so on. Those examples are certainly correct. But there is another area that seems not to be terribly related to the redemption itself and yet is profoundly affected by גאולה, and that is *tefilloh*.

Tefilloh in its strict *halachic* sense is *shemonoh esrei*, no more and no less. *Krias shema* really has no connection to *shemonoh esrei* and could have been said on its own. *Chazal* then instituted two blessings before *krias shema* and one [or two] afterwards, the final one which finishes with גאולה. This ending of גאולה is what mandates the absolute immediacy of *shemonoh esrei* to it. This conjoining of the two is seen as having remarkable power, such as 'not being hurt all day' (Brochos 9a), and being

considered a 'בן עולם הבא'. Certainly, speaking of Hashem as a redeemer is a worthy praise; but *shemonoh esrei* has its own built-in praises. What would this praise of גאולה **before** stepping forward to pray, add? And why not just preface *shemonoh esrei* with any sort of description of Divine might and benevolence; why גאולה specifically? We need to re-examine our understanding of the term 'גאולה'. We tend to think of it as another synonym of 'help', 'aid', or 'saving'. But to leave it at that is to miss its core

point. We find that the term 'גואל' is used in a very personal way. Thus, the person who is the closest relative of a destitute man must redeem him from enslavement, and redeem his property if he sold his inherited land [See Vayikroh 25 in great detail]. By the same token, when Rus came from Moav, her closest relative was asked to be her גואל, and when he refused to be so, it was the next relative, Boaz, who became the גואל. He had to redeem both the land that her husband had lost, and the marriage that had

left him childless. So too, the גואל הדם is the relative closest to the killed person, who is to 'avenge' his blood.

Let us then define גאולה appropriately. When a stranger stretches out his hand for help, he is considered an עוורר. If the person is in desperate need then he may be described as a מושיע or a מציל. All this is if he is a stranger, doing it as an act of benevolence. But when he acknowledges his kinship, and helps as an act of obligation to child, spouse or parent, then he is now described as a גואל. He has not only helped in this particular instance of need, but has declared that he is responsible for that person's welfare.

This adds an incredible dimension to the act of assistance. Imagine a child attacked by a dog, and someone grabs and yanks him to safety. Then imagine the child turning around and seeing that it was his father who had grabbed him. The sense of relief is vastly compounded.

If we examine the *pesukim* listing the various stages of *geuloh* we notice as following:

וְהוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מִתַּחַת סִבְלֵת מִצְרַיִם
וְהִצַּלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם מֵעַבְדֵי תָם
וְנָאֲלַתִּי אֶתְכֶם בְּזֵרוּעַ נְטוּיָה וּבְשִׁפְטֵימַי גְּדֹלִים:
וְלִקְחֹתִי אֶתְכֶם לִי לְעָם
וְהִבֵּאתִי אֶתְכֶם אֶל הָאָרֶץ...
(שמות נ, ו-ח)

The first two phrases denote an act of salvation without any enduring personal relationship. The last two phrases denote personal embracing, without being 'saved'. It is גאולה that is the turning point, where one perceives that the 'saviour' is actually the relative embracing his long-lost kin!

Let us now turn to an understanding of *tefilloh* in its essence. *Tefilloh* is certainly a plea for assistance and help. But that is

not the core purpose of it, for Hashem well knows what our needs are. Rather, Hashem's desire for our *tefillos*, so to speak, is like a parent secretly wishing that the child turn to them for assistance with their homework, because in that act of assistance there is a sense of the fulfilment of parenthood. The fullness of *tefilloh* is not that we ask of Hashem for help, because Hashem is capable and benevolent. Rather, *tefilloh* is essentially realised when we turn to Hashem because we are 'His', and He fulfils the role of 'Father' when He helps us. It is for this reason that בני בכורי ישראל is the term used by Hashem to describe *klal* Yisroel during the

Chazal describe this facet of גאולה as follows:

מי שאינו סומך גאולה לתפלה למה הוא דומה לאוהבו של מלך שבא ודפק על פתחו של מלך, יצא המלך ומצאו שהפליג אף הוא הפליג (ירושלמי ברכות פ' א)

If someone does not place גאולה next to his *tefilloh*, he is like the king's beloved who knocked on the door, and when the king answers the door, he finds that the person has already departed. Thereupon the king also departs. (Yerushalmi Brochos chapter 1)

At first glance we focus on the image of the person who has 'run away'. But the Yerushalmi actually calls him the 'king's

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process. We were not to be perceived merely as a poor downtrodden people looking for pity from a mighty King. We were children being redeemed by the Father who had finally taken us back.

It is for this reason that *tefilloh* has many laws emphasizing that we are standing 'before Hashem'. A stranger is not a second-person relationship; a stranger is 'he', the saviour. Other than the act of benevolence on behalf of the 'other', no bond needs to be formed.

But *tefilloh* is not that type of request for assistance. It is the turning to 'you'- 'my' G-d- to actualise our bond and act as my גואל.

beloved'. This means that when one has started with גאולה, he has positioned himself as the one 'close to the king'.

This understanding of גאולה, and its crucial role in *tefilloh*, can inspire us, and obligates us to change our perspective of Hashem and his relationship to us. We need to transition from the sense of 'He', mighty and grand as that 'He' may be, and as we utter ישראל, recognize that He is 'You', father of those who are his בכורי ישראל, and as we have impressed that image into our mind, we must not waste a moment, and transition immediately to true *tefilloh*. ■

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