

Salvation from G-d Depends on Us

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“If a woman conceives and gives birth to a son, she shall be unclean for seven days... And on the eighth day he will be circumcised.” (Vayikra 3:15)

Parshas Tazria and Metzora discuss various ways one becomes and their purification processes. This week's portion begins with the laws of purification following childbirth. The *passuk* also speaks about *bris milah*, circumcision. Why is the mitzvah of *milah* mentioned here?

In Parshas Bereishis, the Torah describes the creation of the world.

Rashi explains that all of creation was prepared but did not achieve its full potential until man was created and prayed for it. Meaning, G-d created the plants on the third day, but they were hidden until the sixth day. When Adam was created, he prayed – and the plants sprouted.

This was necessary because G-d runs the world, so to speak, based on our actions. In other words, everything in our world depends on our prayers and efforts. Our prayers and good can affect the course of events and can bring us deliverance from our difficulties.

We see this concept throughout the Torah.

In Yaakov's dream, he saw the angels ascend and descend the ladder. One explanation for this is that there were two groups of angels – those who accompanied him inside Israel and those who guarded him outside Israel. The angels from Israel were an allusion to the world Yaakov lived in – *Olam Hazeih*, this world; while the second group of angels were heavenly angels sent to protect him outside of the Land. In order for Yaakov to gain this protection, the angels from Israel – those from “this world” – had to make their way up; they needed to perform an action. Only afterward could the protecting angels descend.

We see another example in Parshas Yisro.

Yisro saw Moshe adjudicating for the entire nation and told Moshe that this setup was unsustainable so he advised Moshe to set up a system of judges. Moshe asks G-d about this plan, and G-d commands him to follow through. But if G-d had intended for Moshe to institute such a system, why did He orchestrate it through Yisro? The answer is that everything good must be initiated by an action on earth. Everything that happens to us depends on what we do and how we behave. The plan needed human effort to come to fruition.

This is also true about our ultimate redemption.

To end our exile, we must repent and become closer to G-d. G-d tells us, *“Return to me and I will return to you,”* but we must return first. Heavenly action is a response to our action. Not because G-d can't do it on His own, but because it depends on us.

This is what the *passuk* in this week's parshah is teaching. *Klal Yisroel* is compared to a woman who gives birth. In order for G-d to grant us the 'birth' we must first conceive an action. It depends on us.

And what about *milah*? The eighth day is a reference to the final redemption. Like childbirth, it requires action. If we start the process, G-d will finally redeem us

This is the answer to every challenge we face. We have the potential to overcome any difficulty we endure – both personal and communal – but our action is needed to receive salvation. We must be careful with every mitzvah – but particularly, with interpersonal *mitzvos*. Our actions *bein adam l'chaveiro*, from person to person, affect the way G-d acts towards us. When we show care and concern for others, we bring out G-d's concern for us.

This is especially true in the area of suspecting others of wrongdoing or judging others negatively. If we view others through a critical lens, we risk having our actions viewed critically from On High.

It is impossible for us to know exactly what a person did or why. We must never judge others until we have stood in their place. We can never experience another person's exact circumstance so we may never judge others. By viewing others favorably, we will be judged favorably in return.

Sometimes we don't understand why we are struggling but we should remember that so much of G-d's salvation depends on the way we judge others. If we improve our relationships and show kindness to others, we will merit personal and communal salvation.