The Spiritual Significance of Numbers cont.

by Dr. Meir Tamari

To some history is merely accidents and chance, to others it is the story of class struggles and to others the slow but constant evolution of improved humanity. It would seem that to us history is the story of the will of Hashem for righteousness and justice to rule. Shema Yisrael is followed immediately by "whose glorious kingdom is forever; Baruch Shem Malchuto". Our Torah begins with the story of Creation and our new year is an announcement of His Coronation However, it is a story in which Mankind is permanently involved as the crown of His Creation

Shimon bar Yochai taught, "all our actions need preparation and all things need improvement. Before Ya'akov lay down to sleep he arranged the stones on Har HaMoriah appropriately. Later David bought that ground and Shlomo completed the building of the Mikdash. So too, when Ya'akov wished to thank Shechem he arranged a stable coinage for them, established markets for their commerce and built bath-houses for their health". We understand such preparation quite naturally in our material lives but it is just as essential in our spiritual lives as well.

Menachem Mendel of Kotsk taught that mitzvot demanded preparation just as the purchase of a pair of shoes is actually payment for a chain of activities which started with the flaying of the skin and included the preparation of the leather. The Admor paused to consider whether perhaps the preparation was not more important.

This preparation permeates our ritual and our philosophy. There has to be a Shabbat between birth and a boy's brit, one enters the Covenant of Israel only at the age of thirteen and there were 3 days of sanctification before Matan Torah. Sefer Bereishit is the preparation of Am Yisrael for Torat Yisrael and Eretz Yisrael. This preparation was through the failure of Mankind to be the Chosen People [Rambam] or evidence of the Divine Will [Ramban[. Irrespective, the mystics instituted a short prayer before the performance of mitzvot in recognition of us as such a People.

The preparation starts with one man, Avraham, commanded by the universal G-d recognized by everyone, to leave birthplace, family and nation for an unknown country. However, first he has to spend time in another foreign land before finally settling in the Promised Land land. There he, together with Sara is granted the son who is to continue his mission, but only after another test of a first born who is not suitable to that task. Then his singularity is tested once more by the commandment to sacrifice that son despite his known opposition to the human sacrifices practiced at that time. Throughout his very name Avraham is evidence of this singularity; he is on the one bank while the rest of the world is on the opposite of the river's bank, mei eiver la nahar.

In the next stage of preparation there are two sons, both destined for greatness yet there can be only one inheritor for the One Land chosen to be a vehicle as it were, for Hashem's Kingship. Twins, according to tradition identical ones,

who make different choices. The same tradition suggests a number of different choices yet perhaps there was really only one, the choice between truth and falsehood, emet ve sheker, from where everything else follows. Idolatry, robbery, murder, rape and all the other evils are false; mercy, kindness, peace and above all Unity of Hashem, are true.

Truth and sheker cannot coexist. Our Sages taught, "You can believe them if they tell you Rome ascends and Yerushalyim descends, or even vice versa. However, that they are in equilibrium is always unbelievable". Owing to our free will the next stage could only be that of a freely made decision by the sons. Eisav chose sheker and lived by his sword. Ya'akov remained ish emet knowing when to use the sword and when to seek peace. Both of their ways always absolute and free of compromise which is worse than either sheker or emet. So Eisav went to his inheritance in Har Seir and Yaakov remained in Be'er Sheva, in his inheritance, Eretz Yisrael 🌹