



דרכים בפרשה

בא

זכור את היום הזה אשר יצאתם ממצרים מבית עבדים

Remember this day [as the day] on which you came out of Egypt, from the house of slavery (13:3)

The Meor Einayim (Rav Nochum Twersky-Tchernobel) zt"l once arrived in a small village to spend a night. At midnight, he awakened and recited the *tikkun chatzos* on the floor with great meaning and fervor. He sobbed uncontrollably over the loss of the *Beis Hamikdash* and pleaded and begged for the return of the *Shechina* to its home.

The host had never seen or even heard of this practice. Assuming that something was terribly wrong, he quickly ran to ask the rebbe why he was crying and how he could help him. The rebbe explained why he was crying and that he was davening that Moshiach should come speedily and take Klal Yisroel out of this bitter *golus*. Observing the glazed uncomprehending look over the host's eyes, he asked: "Don't you want Moshiach to come and take us all to Yerushalayim?" The host responded that he would have to ask his wife. After a few moments he returned with her response. "We are not willing to pick up and relocate to Yerushalayim. After all, who would look after our geese and chickens?" The rebbe continued, "And what will happen when the Cossacks come and steal all your belongings and threaten your lives?" The man followed up again with his wife. Without missing a beat, she replied that she had a better idea. "Let Moshiach come and take the Cossacks to Yerushalayim and leave us here peacefully with our geese and chickens!"

Our possuk teaches us to remember on a constant basis the day that we went free from Mitzrayim. Upon exiting, we left behind the chains and bondage of slavery as well as the slave mentality. This would include no longer be bound down to the physical lifestyle of the Mitzriyim. Life would now have a purpose. There would be the ability to live higher connecting to the *Borei Olam* with everything that we do. However, we must realize that just like the simple villager, we all have our own "geese and chickens" that tend to distract us and take our eyes off of our purpose. Therefore, the Torah gives us a constant obligation to remind us not to get held back.

But how do we know where we are holding?

The Michtav Sofer would often talk about the prince that was kidnapped and taken into captivity in a faraway land. After many years of slave labor and torture, he finally managed to escape. Along his journey home, he befriended a pauper who was also held captive. Together they traveled and shared their longings and yearnings of new beginnings. Feeling anxious about finally returning home after so many years, the prince also confided in his friend about all of the things that he missed from the palace, as well as reviewing all of his memories so that they should remain fresh in his mind. The pauper thought to himself that if he claims to be the prince and gives over these memories as if they were his own, perhaps he can fool



everyone into thinking that he was the prince and the real prince was actually just an imposter. Sure enough, with both of them sharing the exact same memories, there was no way to be sure.

The king's advisor was summoned. He spoke to each one privately and asked the following question: "During your captivity, what did you miss most?" The pauper related how the labor was backbreaking and harsh, and at times, they were beaten and starved. During those moments, oh what he would have done to once again taste the crusts of bread that he always ate.

On the other hand, the prince spoke of the differences between harsh physical labor and the comforts of the palace. He contrasted the dire conditions and hunger to his days of enjoying delicacies and lavish meals. He reflected upon the praise and encouragement that he always received, as opposed to the embarrassment and shame that was heaped upon him.

After hearing that all the pauper was really missing during his captivity was just a crust of bread, it was understood that his best days were pretty much the same as well. However, the prince spoke of his longings for the upbringing of royalty. A mere crust of bread would also not make him happy. At this point, there was no longer a doubt who the king's son truly was.

In the *Hagadah shel Pesach* we say, כל המרבה לומר בליל חמשה עשר ביציאת מצרים הרי זה משובח - *The more one speaks of the exodus, the more he is praiseworthy*. This can be explained as follows: One may proclaim, "why does our *seder* need to end at three a.m.? After all, the story is

really quite simple- we were slaves; they worked us hard; we ate some Matzah and we were set free." If a person's sole interest in this world is in the physical aspects, the only part of the night of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* that he will be able to relate to will be the physical aspects.

However, in many truly praiseworthy homes, well after *chatzos*, one can find great discussions of the spiritual hardships that were endured; the lowest point of the People, how they reached all the way down to the forty-ninth level of impurity; the lack of feeling connected to Hashem and how all of that changed. Add to this the beautiful songs of *nishmas* and *hallel* coupled with the tefillah cries of "*vanitzak*", and of course all the different *vertlach* shared by young and old. As the *seder* comes alive with an excitement that rivals nothing else, one is left with a feeling that even two *seder* nights is barely enough. The Michtav Sofer explains that the more one can connect to and express the *ruchniyus* aspects of the Yom Tov, the more one can prove what their true identity is and if they are truly praiseworthy or not.

So how do we know where we are holding? As the Michtav Sofer explained, a good litmus test will be to take a good look at what catches and holds our interests. Ask yourself: How do I spend my time? Which things and people make a difference in my life? Do I work to live or do I live to work? Is the purpose of my car, house, or *parnasah*, to bring me closer to Hashem or are these items goals unto themselves? If the case is the latter, it might be time to reconsider the focus.

מרדכי אפפאל, Good Shabbos



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