



דרכים בפרשה

בא



דבר נא באזני העם וישאלו איש מאת ראהו ואשה מאת רעותה כלי כסף וכלי זהב (יא:ב)

Please speak in the ears of the people: Let each man request of his fellow and each woman of her fellow silver vessels and gold vessels

Quoting the Midrash, Rashi explains that HaShem asked Moshe to make an extra special effort to prevail upon the Yidden to request valuables from their Mitzri neighbours. Unless they did so, the Tzaddik, Avrohom, would come with a complaint to HaShem: You carried out the part of the prophecy that my offspring would work for 400 years, but the part of them leaving with great wealth You did not carry out.

The obvious question here is that we are “talking about” HaShem. HaShem’s word is better than gold! Is it possible that were it not for Avrohom, HaShem possibly would not have kept His promise?

Another question (which will actually be the key to answer our first question) is the title that Avrohom is called by in this Midrash. Yosef is typically known as the tzaddik. There are others as well, i.e. Binyomin at times, and Mordechai. But we never find the title “Tzaddik” associated with Avrohom Avinu, even though of course he acted as a tzaddik would act.

In his sefer, Shaarei Ora, Rav Meir Tzvi Bergman offers a tremendous insight which will give us a much broader perspective into what Mitzraim was meant to accomplish for the Yidden.

In order for the Bnei Yisroel to become the *Am Hanivchar*, it was first necessary to learn the proper ways that a Jew should act. Part of knowing how to act is knowing how *not* to act. We are warned against acting like the Mitzrim.

Whether we choose to acknowledge it or not, the nanny or cleaning lady in a house is a keen observer. She sees how her employers behave when they are on their best behaviour, and also when no one else is around and they aren’t as “prim and proper”. Prior to becoming the *Am Hanivchar*, Bnei Yisroel was sent down to Mitzraim to observe, and to learn how not to act.

Another reason Bnei Yisroel was sent down to Mitzraim is known as the *kur habarzel* (lit. a smelting furnace used to purify iron). Mitzraim was meant to be a refinery that would purify the Bnei Yisroel, rendering them fit to become the *Am Hanivchar*.

ואחרי כן יצאו ברכוש גדול - After *successfully* completing this process, they would leave with great wealth.

Let’s picture the following scenario: A restaurant owner hires a busboy to clean all the dishes. Due to the busy nature of the restaurant, the owner installs a conveyor belt that brings all the dishes directly to the busboy. The owner hears some laughing and

chatting on a phone from the busboy, so he assumes that he is well ahead of his work. Deciding to give a quick peek, he notices that the belt is still running, and all the dishes that keep getting loaded on are coming to the end of the belt and falling to the floor, smashing into smithereens. There is really no excuse that can explain why the busboy was “asleep at the wheel”, especially when the phone call wasn’t even work related. Imagine the *chutzpah* of the busboy: As he is getting fired for causing hundreds of dollars of damage, he tells the owner that he expects to get paid for his time. The owner, of course, will toss him right out, and possibly try and deduct the damages from any money still owing.

The *Gemara* in *Meseches Bava Metziah* (83a) relates that some porters broke a barrel of wine out of negligence while working for Rabba bar Bar Chana. As indemnity, he took their coats from them. They went and told Rav, who told Rabba bar Bar Chana to return the coats. He based the *psak* on the *passuk* in *Mishlei* (2:20) -למען תלך בדרך טובים- *that you may go in the way of good people*. After returning the coats, the workers said that they were poor and worked the whole day and would like their payment for their time. Rav again sided with them and told Rabba bar Bar Chana to pay them their wages. Shocked at this ruling, he asked incredulously, “Is this really the *halacha*?” Rav answered that it is based on the *passuk* (ibid) וארחות צדיקים ותשמור -*and that you may keep the paths of the righteous*.

From this *Gemara* we learn that the way of a *tzaddik* is that he pays even if the recipient is undeserving.

Bnei Yisroel was sent down to Mitzrayim with a job. Chazal tell us that the *malachim* pointed out that there was no difference

between Bnei Yisroel and the Mitzrim. Instead of succeeding, they had failed miserably. Sure they put in their time, but they did not accomplish what they were meant to. Could they still expect to get paid the great wealth that was promised to them? Would Avrohom Avinu really be able to come to HaShem with a complaint?

Looking back at HaShem’s instruction to Moshe, Avrohom is called a *tzaddik* over here. HaShem was telling Moshe that truth be told, there was no claim at all for the great wealth that was promised, as they were undeserving of it. It is only because this is the way of *tzidkus*, to pay up regardless of how the job was done.

Perhaps we can observe the following: The *Aibishter* is the זן ומפרנס לכל, and what’s more, He does it בחן בחסד וברחמים. Can we ever truly deserve everything that the *Aibishter* sends us? Maybe not, but at least we can see to it that it is not נהמא דכיסופא - bread of shame. No one wants a handout. We all want to honestly work for what HaShem gives us without being a “schnorrer”. The question we must ask ourselves is, “Are we putting in a full day’s work or are we still breaking the barrels?”

Good Shabbos, מרדכי אפפעל



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