



TorahActionLife

COMMUNITY PARASHA SHEET

BO

5th Shevat 5776

Shabbat begins: 16:05

Shabbat ends: 17:14

This week's edition is sponsored Leiluy Nishmat Yedidya Ben Haji Eshaq Gabriel



RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL
DIRECTOR, TAL

Making A Mockery

A typical Jewish married couple are the proud parents of a 12-year-old daughter. They are not at all Jewishly observant, but they want their child to grow up happy and healthy, and to marry a Jew. You point out to them what is happening in the public schools--drugs, teenage pregnancy, all sorts of horrors--and you also cite the statistics on the probabilities of today's Jewish children intermarrying. Finally, you suggest: "Why not enrol your daughter in a Jewish day school? Even if you're not religious, do it to protect the child, as a kind of insurance that she should not be ruined!"

And the Jewish father smiles and says: "I'm not worried. I know my daughter. She'll be okay."

One might wonder how the man could be so naive. But this same man is not naive when it comes to his business or his stock portfolio, and he would not dream of putting his life savings into an investment which might just possibly collapse.

Why is it that only with his own child is he so trusting, and willing to take such risks?

One of the darkest periods in our history, the exile in Egypt was about to come to an end. G-d sent an auspicious message to Pharaoh and the Bnei Yisrael.

Hashem said to Moshe, "Come to Pharaoh, for I have made his heart and the hearts of his servants stubborn so that I can put these signs of Mine in his midst; and so that you may relate in the ears of your son and your son's son that I made a mockery of Egypt and My signs that I placed among them - that you may know that I am Hashem."

The message was clear, the end was near, and G-d was about to make a mockery out of Egypt.

At the finale all would come to the realisation that the world was run by G-d Almighty.

But what exactly was the meaning of this 'mockery'?

Seemingly the significance of the miracles was, "so that you may know that I am Hashem." The Torah is saying that unless one appreciates the consequence of the

intimidated, or affected to the point that he feels restrained to any degree vis-à-vis his function, then he is in violation of this negative commandment.

The Gemara (Berachot) tells us that greater is a person who benefits from the toil of his hands than one who fears Hashem. Is it possible to say that a menial labourer is greater than a man who fears G-d? It is obvious that the "labourer who benefits from the toil of his hands" is a person who fears G-d. The Gemara is saying that a man who fears



miracle, that G-d made a "mockery" of Egypt, one is not able to know that G-d is the Omnipotent Power.

Furthermore this instant in Torah is unique in that we are commanded to pass on this message of a mockery, not only to our children, but also to our grandchildren. The question is why?

There is a Negative Commandment in the Torah that a judge is not permitted to be intimidated by anyone when he is adjudicating a case. Regardless of the status of individuals involved (wealthy or powerful), a judge must maintain his objectivity and remain unbiased. If a judge is influenced,



1. How many days was Makos Chosech, the plague of darkness, for?
2. What is the new start found in Parshas Bo?
3. Why are so many mitzvahs remembering the leaving from Mitzrayim?
4. Why do we always call it Yetzias Mitzratim that literally means "the leaving of the Egyptians" not the Jews?
5. When else in the year do we read in the Torah from Parshas Bo?

Answers On Page 3

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G-d and is supported by his own toil is greater than a person who fears G-d and is sustained by others.

The reason for this is that the one who relies on others is bound to be swayed and affected by them. He makes decisions consciously or unconsciously based on how he believes others will react or perceive him and not the way Hashem sees him. Thus the individual who benefits from the toil of his own hands and fears G-d, will be directed by the Will of Hashem alone and be impervious to the opinions of others.

People are impressed and awed by status and power. The Torah tells us that Egypt, the most advanced and powerful civilization in the world was devastated by G-d because it subjugated the Jewish people. Pharaoh, one of the most significant monarchs in existence, was significantly diminished because he did not release the Jewish people from bondage. Although one would think that Pharaoh was a person who was invincible, it was proven that he was a mere mortal. The reason it is important to communicate to our children and grandchildren the "mockery" Hashem made of Pharaoh and his people, is to give them the understanding that although a person is in an exalted and elevated position, he is only there because it is Willed by Hashem. Only when one sees the unimaginable (such as the downfall of Egypt), can he appreciate what the basis is for every person's predicament. If one understands and is able to internalize this, he will know the

meaning of "I am Hashem." If one believes for a moment that achievement and success is attributed to oneself, then he will be impressed with the one who achieves that success, thus, diminishing Hashem's role in existence.

There is an argument between the Rambam and the Ramban as to whether the obligation of Tefilah (prayer) is a Torah obligation or only a Rabbinical dictate. The Rambam is of the opinion that Tefilah is a Torah obligation; as the Talmud explains, Tefilah is the "service of the heart." One would think that Tefilah is simply the acknowledgement of Hashem - that He is great, powerful, etc. That He sustains the living, resurrects the dead, supports the fallen, and heals the sick etc. However, Rambam says that if one only acknowledges Hashem for what He is and does not make subsequent requests of Him; one does not fulfil the Torah obligation of Tefilah.

Why is that so?

The answer is that if in fact Hashem is the all-powerful, awesome, and omnipotent Being, then how is it possible that one does not beseech him for his needs? When one beseeches Hashem for his needs it is a confirmation of all the attributes he has been citing in his prayer. If however, one acknowledges Hashem as being everything and does not make requests from Him, then it is an indication that he truly does not believe that Hashem is what he had acknowledged Him to be. The value of his statement is purely "lip service."

R Bachya explains that the word Hitalalti (mockery) should be understood with the root Ila - first cause. G-d is the first cause of everything and it was through these miracles that even Pharaoh would come to the realisation that there is only one Almighty.

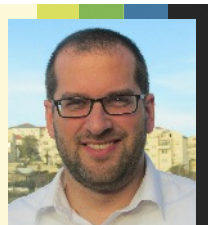
This is one of the most fundamental teachings in Judaism, to truly believe in (and internalising this belief in) the Almighty. Hence the importance of passing down this 'mockery' directly even to the grandchildren. Coming back to our initial question with the Jewish father.

Even if the father is willing to examine the problem intellectually, on the emotional level he refuses to consider it at all. He doesn't want to enter the world of reality; because reality might force him not only to agree with you and enrol his child in the day school, but it might push him to bring Jewish observance into his home as well, changing his entire life. Pharaoh believed he was in charge, yet by the end of the ordeal all had been tipped upside down. Those that were above were now down below, and the trodden nation of Israel had emerged as servants of a Living Almighty G-d.

Let us bring G-d into our daily life, He is the Ila - First cause, He is the Almighty and He is our Father. Don't be content in just acknowledging Him, He has the power to move mountains!

Let us pray and request of Him and show our true belief!

Shabbat Shalom



**RABBI
JONATHAN SHOOTER**

What Is Freedom?

What was the purpose of the going out from Egypt? Hashem informed Moshe that upon leaving they would 'serve Hashem on this mountain'. In other words they were not being freed from slavery for freedoms sake, to live a life of liberty and doing whatever they chose, but rather to be subservient to the will of Hashem. That was the condition upon which the freedom was granted, they went from being servants to Pharaoh, to being servants of Hashem.

There was once an avreich who wanted to try something new. Twice a year we read portions of the Torah containing curses. The prevailing custom is to call up the Baal Koreh. This avreich claimed that he wanted to be called up for the curses, it couldn't be


The 5 senses do not pick up Hashem's presence they cannot sense that we are really neshamas and not merely physical As long as we only perceive the physical, we are enslaved to the 5 senses...

that bad, he was sure nothing would happen. A week later his uncle died. This uncle left him much wealth and a business, and the avreich had to travel to America to

attend to it. As time went on he became more and more involved in the business and eventually he had to uproot his family and move to America for good. This left him little time to learn and he became a full time businessman. Someone related this story to one of the gedolim who commented that you see what happens when you get called up for the curses!

What is interesting about this story is that we may have said 'what a blessing, inheriting such a fortune'. Yet the Jewish perspective is that leaving ones avodas Hashem is a true curse.

One may ask that how is serving Hashem called 'freedom' if one has to follow more rules, who knows who had more rules, Pharaoh or the Torah!! There is what's called physical slavery, and there is physical slavery. Jews aren't cut out for physical slavery, schlepping bricks and the like. However, believe it or not, many people are indeed slaves even today. Have you heard of the Beverly-Hillser Rebbe?

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From ones early days he imbibes unsuspecting people, brainwashes them with the best of what Western culture has to offer. He teaches people to follow the ideals of goyim, the culture, their fashions, and to emulate the way goyim think. To follow the god of money, without a thought for spirituality. To be a slave to Facebook, Twitter, whatsapp etc etc. This is a terrible form of slavery, it robs one of spirituality and connection to Hashem. Following Torah and mitzvos isn't merely about performing rituals. They are meant to make us connected to Hashem. Being a Jew isn't about being a Jew on the outside (if that) but a goy in the inside, a slave in the clutches of the culture of Hollywood. One has to think like a Jew also. As with the avreich in the story, most of a person's life decisions revolve around money. That is a form of slavery. When one sets aside one day a week to focus on the spiritual, thats a freedom from the restrictive lifestyle he leads the rest of the week.

Rav Binyomin Moskovits explains that we are in fact prisoners of our 5 senses. We perceive only things that the 5 senses can pick up, but we are missing out. The 5 senses do not pick up Hashem's presence, they cannot sense that we are really neshamas, and not merely physical. As long as we only perceive the physical, we are enslaved to the 5 senses and entrapped by what we think we perceive. Freedom means looking beyond what the 5 senses perceive, and seeing even that which they cannot pick up. Inside every Jew is a precious neshama, a soul that longs to connect to Hashem. Yet we are enslaved to physicality. When we connect to Hashem, whether through Torah, prayer or mitzvos we are breaking the choke of the physical, and letting are spiritual side free.

Rabbi Jonathan Shooter Is an avreich in Yeshivas Midrash Shmuel. He can be contacted at jonathanshooter613@gmail.com

Mazal Tov!

- Eliyahu Betzalel Yedidyah Lopez & Devorah Rivka Slade on their engagement



1. It consisted of two groups of three. However, the seventh day of darkness took place when the Egyptians chased the Jews in the sea.
2. Rashi at the beginning of Bereishis says that the Torah should have really started from Parshas Bo since this is where the first mitzvah is said to all the Jews.
3. The Ramban at the end of Parshas Bo explains that it is a foundation for our belief. Hashem openly revealed He is in charge of the world by Yetzias Mitzrayim and from this we realise that this remains true despite the cloud of nature that hides Him.
4. Perhaps we see from here how the Jews were so steeped in the 49th level of tuma that they were hardly recognisable from the real Egyptians!

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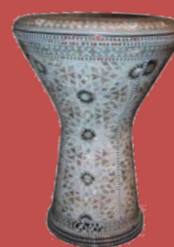
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