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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 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, 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 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. ►

9th Shevat 5781

SHABBAT BEGINS: 4:17 PM

SHABBAT ENDS: 5:25 PM



THE WEEKLY QUOTE

"If people are doubting how far you can go, go so far that you can't hear them anymore."

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Making a Mockery
RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL

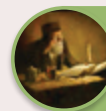
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The Torah tells us that Egypt, the most advanced and powerful civilization in the world was devastated by G-d because it subjugated the Jewish people. Pharaoh, one of the most significant monarchs in existence, was significantly diminished because 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 - AVREICH IN YESHIVAS MIDRASH SHMUEL



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 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? He has billions of Chassidim. 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.

■ Shabbat Shalom

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OUR CHACHAMIM

RABBI ELIYAHU LOPIAN

Three times a day we pray in the Shemoneh Esrei for G-d's mercy to be "upon the righteous, upon the pious, upon the elders of Your people, the House of Israel, and upon the remnant of their sages." Have you ever asked yourself just who are the "remnant of their sages"? These are the Sages – the Sages of the Torah – that G-d left from former generations in order to tell us of their predecessors, and to reflect the character of Torah greats of previous generations. One of these Sages, a man left over from the Great Assembly, was Rabbi Eliyahu Lopian. On Elul 20, 5370 (1970), at the age of nearly 100, he passed away in Eretz Israel at the approach of Rosh Hashanah.

Rabbi Eliyahu drank from the source of the "lions" of Mussar: Rabbi Yitzchak Blazer of St. Petersburg, Rabbi Simcha Zissel Ziv of Kelm, and Rabbi Naphtali Amsterdam, the main disciples of Rabbi Israel Salanter, the father of the Mussar movement.

Rabbi Eliyahu was born to Rabbi Yaakov in the city of Graibe (near Lomza) around the year 5632 (1872). He studied in the Lomza yeshiva, which was founded was Rabbi Eliezer Shulevitz, one of Rabbi Israel Salanter's young disciples.

Rabbi Eliyahu married the daughter of Rabbi Yitzchak David Weinmacher ("the winemaker"), a famous Tzaddik from Lomza. Under the influence of his father-in-law and Rabbi Eliezer Shulevitz, Rabbi Eliyahu left for Kelm, the residence of Rabbi Simcha Zissel, the man of Mussar who founded the great "Talmud Torah" from which the most renowned Mussar figures of the previous generations emerged. He stayed many years in Kelm and devoted himself to the Mussar of his great Rav, which he spread everywhere he went. At first this was in the small city of Kelm, then in England, and finally in Eretz Israel during the latter part of his life.

Rabbi Eliyahu founded a yeshiva in Kelm for the young, and there he educated many students in Torah and Mussar. Even until today, his remaining students evoke his name with great reverence. One of his first students, who is now an elderly man, recounted that to this day the melody of his Rav's voice still echoes in his ears when he sings the verse, "By David, a michtam, when he fled from Saul in the cave" (Psalms 57:1). Verses such as these from the Book of Psalms, which Rabbi Eliyahu recited with sighs and tears, have accompanied him his entire life.

For various reasons, Rabbi Eliyahu left Kelm and went to live in England. He founded Etz Chaim yeshiva in London and there, as in Kelm, he never ceased his study of Mussar. He strived with all his might to educate a generation of youngsters in England according to his approach. Jews who came to the British capital would often visit the yeshiva, but when their feet crossed its

threshold they forgot all the commotion that rang out from the great city, and instead felt that they were in Kelm.

Near the end of his life, Rabbi Eliyahu departed for Eretz Israel, where he spent the remainder of his days in the Knesset Chizkiyahu yeshiva in the rural city of Kfar Chassidim. There he accomplished amazing things, taking special care to get closer to those youngsters who were far from his path and approach. He devoted himself intensely to the Tzabarim, who spoke Hebrew and wore knitted kippot, and exerted a great influence on them through the purity of his mind and his method of Mussar. Many of these youngsters left their life of comfort in their parents' homes to follow their elderly Rav and warm themselves by the light of his Torah. The Tzabarim became attached to him with every fiber of their being and cherished him with all their heart and soul. Even near the end of his life, he was sensitive to every individual student, discerning what bothered each of them, recognizing which ones truly feared G-d, knowing which elevated themselves in the rungs of holiness, and worrying over each like he was his own son.

One story has it that a young student from a yeshiva in Jerusalem came to visit him in Kfar Chassidim. After prayers he approached Rabbi Eliyahu and said "Shalom Aleichem," and in the ensuing conversation the young man explained to Rabbi Eliyahu that he had come from Jerusalem with the intention of staying until Thursday. On Friday morning as Rabbi Eliyahu went to pray, he saw that the young man was still at the yeshiva. He invited him to his home, and there he asked him what his intentions were with respect to Shabbat. The young man replied, "I made some friends here and found the atmosphere very enjoyable, so I've decided to stay until after Shabbat." Upon hearing this, Rabbi Eliyahu got up, went towards his closet, and took out a clean, white undershirt. He then said to him, "You didn't plan on staying for Shabbat, so you certainly didn't bring a change of clothes with you. Take this undershirt and some undergarments for Shabbat."

Rabbi Eliyahu lived almost 100 years. Multitudes of Jews followed his funeral procession, and the greatest Roshei Yeshiva of Eretz Israel gave eulogies for him. His grave was dug at the summit of the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. With the passing of Rabbi Eliyahu, a powerful figure disappeared from our ranks, a leftover from the Great Assembly and the last of his kind in our generation.

Rabbi Eliyahu left behind sons who became great in Torah, men who have served as Rosh Yeshiva in a variety of places. He saw his grandchildren and great grandchildren all walking in the ways of G-d, and in their lives they perpetuated his ways. ■



HALACHOT

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

SELECTING WHEN THE UNDESIRE FOOD IS EDIBLE

The classic case of Borer (selecting) involves a mixture with Ochel (food) and P'solet (waste), which is inedible. The Halacha only permits selecting from such a mixture if one removes the Ochel, by hand (without a utensil) for immediate consumption.

Tosafot (Shabbat 74), based on a variant reading of a Beraita and Rabbenu Hannanel, apply the prohibition of Borer even to a mixture in which both components are edible, but the person only desires to eat one of them. The desired food is considered Ochel relative to the undesired food, which becomes subjective P'solet. Rambam (8:12-13) also records this concept of "relative P'solet," and it is codified by Maran.

The Poskim discuss whether the regular restrictions of Borer apply to such a mixture of Ochel and Ochel. Clearly, there is no leniency regarding the requirement of selecting by hand and choosing the desired item. The question is whether the requirement to only select for immediate consumption applies to mixtures of "relative P'solet."

The Rambam uses an interesting language regarding the time frame. He says it is only prohibited when one selects in the morning for the afternoon. This implies that anything less than that would be permitted, such as selecting for use in three or four hours. Such a gap would not be permitted in a mixture with an objectively inedible component.

The Bet Yosef points out this inference, but questions why there should be any difference between the two types of mixtures. The Mishna Berura says that here is no difference; both are restricted to immediate consumption. This is also the opinion of Hacham Bension and Hacham Ovadia. Although the Kaf HaHaim (319:35) is lenient, in accordance with the Magen Abraham, the Halacha is in accordance with the strict opinion, since it is potentially an Issur D'oraita (Torah Prohibition).

SUMMARY

There is no difference between a mixture of Ochel and P'solet and a mixture of two types of Ochel when one of them is undesired. Borer will only be permitted when done for immediate use. ■

Kids Time

TEST YOURSELF - Q&A

- ❶ What was Pharaoh's excuse for not releasing the Jewish children?
- ❷ How did the locusts in the time of Moshe differ from those in the days of Yoel?
- ❸ How did the first three days of darkness differ from the last three?
- ❹ When the Jews asked the Egyptians for gold and silver vessels, the Egyptians were unable to deny ownership of such vessels. Why?
- ❺ Makat bechorot took place at exactly midnight. Why did Moshe say it would take place at approximately midnight?

Answer

❶ 10:11 - Since children don't bring sacrifices there was no need for them to go. ❷ 10:14 - The plague brought by Moshe was composed of one species of locust, whereas the plague in the days of Yoel was composed of many species. ❸ 10:22 - During the first three days the Egyptians couldn't see. During the last three days they couldn't move. ❹ 10:22 - During the first three days the Jews could see and they searched and found the Egyptians' vessels. ❺ 11:4 - If Moshe said the plague would begin exactly at midnight, the Egyptians might miscalculate and accuse Moshe of being a fake.

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