

### ***Parshas Achiarei Mos 5771***

## **BENEATH THE SURFACE**

The central theme of Pesach – quite obviously – is Yetzias Mitzrayim (the Exodus), that epic transition from שִׁעְבּוּד (bondage) to גְּאוּלָּה (redemption). It would seem appropriate, then, to ensure a proper understanding of this fundamental concept: what, exactly, constituted “bondage,” and what was the nature of our “deliverance”?

This might seem like a simple question; and – on a superficial level – it is. The Jewish people had been enslaved to their Egyptian masters, and then – through a series of stunning miracles – they were liberated from the bonds of forced labor and granted the opportunity to set out on their own. R' Isaac Sher (*Leket Sichos Mussar, parshas Vayikra*) points out, however, that the שִׁעְבּוּד and גְּאוּלָּה possess a much more profound component, the understanding of which will aid us in appreciating the deeper significance of the Exodus.

### ***PERSPECTIVES FROM ANOTHER WORLD***

The true implications of Yetzias Mitzrayim can be understood through the prism of the well-known incident concerning R' Yehoshua ben Levi and his son Yosef (*Pesachim 50a*). The latter fell deathly ill, to the point that he had a literal brush with death (Rashi states that his soul temporarily took leave of his body). Upon his son's miraculous revival, a relieved R' Yehoshua sensed an opportunity to glean some firsthand knowledge of the Afterlife. He asked his son what he had observed in his brief sojourn in the world of souls. Yosef reported: “I saw an upside-down world. Those who are highly regarded in this world were denigrated in the Next World. And those who are downtrodden here were elevated over there.” To which R' Yehoshua responded: “No, my son. That was not a topsy-turvy world you saw; it was a *clear* world.”

לע"נ הרב אברהם ב"ר אליעזר זצ"ל, נפטר כ"ב סיון תשל"ב

R' Yehoshua sought to convey that, in fact, no *inherent* change took place between one world and the next. He explained to his son that the scene he had witnessed was the reality, where those deserving of honor receive honor, and those lacking real merit are accorded no special privileges. It is only on account of the muddled vision of this world that we tend to get things mixed up, such that clowns and degenerates of various sorts attain fame and prestige, while earnest and upright individuals are ignored or disdained. The veneer of falsehood evaporates in the World of Truth, revealing who had really been in possession of true value throughout their lives.

This same situation occurred in Mitzrayim. Of course, the Jews experienced real torment, subjected to the rigors of labor and enslavement. But this was only part of the tragedy. A major component of the condition of שִׁעְבּוּד was the false perception of their status. At the time, they were viewed – by their overlords and by themselves – as a downtrodden people, a collection of lowly slaves occupying the bottom rung of society. Inherently, though, the opposite was true: Even as they tread through the mud, performing tasks suited for beasts of burden, they were still the noble children of Avraham, Yitzchok, and Ya'akov. In reality, they were the princes of the world, the favored people of Hashem.

But for the time-being, this aspect was concealed. And this was the real “liberation” achieved through their גְּאוּלָּה, over and above the release from their toil. Through the events of the Exodus, the “curtain” was lifted, and the actual place occupied by the Jewish people in world hierarchy became apparent to all. The retribution meted out to the Egyptians and the Jews' miraculous deliverance revealed to the whole world what had really been true all along; far from being some subhuman class, the Jews were the most important

Kindly take a moment to study MISHNAS CHAYIM in the merit of  
הערשל בן דוד ע"ה, a fellow Jew who passed away with no relatives  
to arrange Torah study on behalf of his neshamah.

people on earth. As Hashem declared, “Yisrael is My firstborn son” (*Shemos 4:22*).

This whole notion adds another dimension to the familiar passage in the Haggadah (recorded as well in the Mishnah in *Pesachim [10:5]*):

בְּכָל דּוֹר וָדוֹר חַיֵּב אָדָם לִרְאוֹת אֶת עַצְמוֹ כְּאִלוֹ הוּא יָצָא מִמִּצְרָיִם.

“In every generation, a person must view himself as if he has gone out of Egypt.”

The obligation to undergo an experience of Redemption can be a somewhat tricky matter, and the exact parameters of this dictum are the subject of much discussion. Based on R’ Isaac’s explanation, it would seem to include the exercise elaborated upon above: recognizing one’s true value as a son and servant of Hashem is to experience true liberation.

## “WOE TO THE SHIP THAT HAS LOST ITS CAPTAIN”

The Chofetz Chaim provides an illuminating example (paraphrased below) of the imperative to look past the superficial assessments so prevalent in our world and to properly appreciate those who are truly worthy.

He presents an illustration of a wealthy magnate who commissions the construction of a luxury ocean vessel. Upon its completion, the ship’s designer invites the owner on board for a tour and demonstration.

As the ship sets sail, the designer shows off his finished product. The magnate is truly enthralled by the beautiful furnishings, clean rooms and overall elegant ambience. He is duly impressed with the smooth manner in which it travels. So taken is he with this prized possession that he tells the designer that he must meet those responsible for piloting the ship. “I must see firsthand how this wonderful craft is run,” he declares.

When the owner is led to the engine room in the bowels of the ship, however, he is horrified by the discovery. There he sees men surrounded by steam and soot, their blackened faces sweating profusely as they shovel coal into the furnace.

“No, this cannot be,” states the man resolutely. “Such filth doesn’t belong on my elegant vessel.” With that said, he orders the workers to immediately cease their activities and vacate the chamber. They are told to ascend to the upper quarters where they are to wash up and change clothes. At the irate owner’s insistence, the “grimy” engine room is sealed and closed off.

And then the boat sinks and everybody dies.

The Chofetz Chaim concludes that the aforementioned scenario is a fairly accurate reflection of the position of Torah scholars in today’s world. Instead of the estimation they deserve, people sometimes view them with disdain, as if they lack the prestige of “true professionals.” But nothing could be farther from the truth, for it is they who really uphold the entire world and ensure its continued existence (*cf. Chofetz Chaim al HaTorah, Ma’asei LaMelech, p. 87*).



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