



Parshat Bo: Investing With Interest

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

In Parshat Bo, Hashem tells Moshe to speak to the elders, "Slaughter the Pesach offering and dip the hyssops in blood and touch the lintels of the doorpost... and you shall observe this matter as a decree for yourself and for your children forever." The Shivelei Pinchas asks, we don't put blood on our doors anymore, how is this a decree forever? We read in the Hagadah, "V'at urum v'erya,"-You were unclothed. We had no *mitzvot* to merit redemption. Therefore Hashem gave us the blood of *korbon Pesach* and *milah*. And He said, "By your blood you shall live." The Targum Yonoson says the two bloods were mixed together. What is the connection between these two *mitzvot*?

Milah and *korbon Pesach* are the only two positive *mitzvot* which if one can do them and doesn't, one bears the punishment of *kareis*. *Korbon Pesach* was the first *mitzvah* we did actively as a nation. *Milah* was the first *mitzvah* given to the first Jew. These two *mitzvot* represent the lifeblood and the foundation of Judaism. The Bnei Yissachor

explains that if a non-Jewish slave decides to convert to Judaism and while he immerses in the *mikvah* he says, "I'm not immersing to remain a slave but to be a free person," then he becomes free. Therefore the sages say that at the moment of his immersion, his master should command him to do something so that he will continue to be enslaved.

Similarly the Exodus was our moment of national immersion. Our *avdut* to Pharaoh would be transformed, as we became servants to Hashem through the *mitzvot* of *milah* and *korbon Pesach*. The *chok olam* was accepting the yoke of Hashem forever. Why were these two *mitzvot* chosen? The Gemara says, "Zot HaTorah Adam ki yamus b'ohel," (Torah will endure in the person who is ready to give his life for Hashem.) There's the idea of living and dying for the sake of His Name. When the Jews sacrificed the paschal lamb, the deity of the Egyptians, they demonstrated a willingness to die for His name. Likewise when a father circumcises his child which entails pain and suffering, he instills in his soul that aspect

of living to sanctify His name. The exalted message of *Korbon Pesach* and *milah* is that a Jew must be ready at all times and all circumstances to live and die for the Almighty's name. This is the *chok olam*, the eternal covenant of the Jewish people with Hashem.

Most of us are enslaved to society. We do whatever we have to do, but we don't push ourselves. We're comfortable where we're at. But if all we're satisfied with is the external, then it's like we're unclothed. The blood of *milah* and *korbon Pesach* is about effort and exertion. We have to push ourselves beyond that to live on Hashem's terms. There's a larger picture. If a person doesn't try at least once a day to rise above a *middah* that is difficult for him then it's as if he's living on automatic pilot. Payment for a *mitzvah* is calculated on a gradual scale. Every aspect counts.

Take on a small *kabbalah*, even something you already do that you could do better. When we change the quality of even one *middah* it leaves a lasting effect.

Parshat Bo: Freedom from Slave Mentality

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur on Chassidut by Rabbi Hershel Reichman

The Zohar writes that Hashem did not give the Torah to the Jews until Pharaoh and the Egyptian people capitulated. This seems perplexing. Why did the Almighty need one king and his civilization to submit to Him? The submission of Egypt did not last long anyway. Soon after they returned to their idolatrous lifestyle.

The Shem Mishmuel poses another question. How could Datan and Aviram, who witnessed so many miracles that Moshe performed in Egypt, continue to deny the truth of Moshe's mission?

He explains that the Jewish people spent more than 200 years in Egypt. The wicked sins and failings of the Egyptians had influenced them to such a degree that changing their mindset was as a great a challenge as redeeming them from physical enslavement. Pharaoh arrogantly said, "Who is Hashem that I should listen to his voice?" The Jews were so engulfed in Egyptian

culture that they believed Pharaoh when he said he was the creator. Although Moshe performed miracles before their eyes, Datan and Aviram had a way of twisting them, to keep the ideology of Egypt alive.

Why was it important to break Pharaoh so he would concede to the truth? Not because Hashem needed him or the Egyptians, but because He wanted the Jews to spiritually extricate themselves from the clutches of the Egyptian mindset. As Pharaoh began to submit, the Jews reclaimed their belief in Hashem. The first two *mitzvot* they received in Egypt were *brit milah* and *korban pesach*. They required great courage, faith, and self-sacrifice in the face of danger. Soon after, the Jews followed Hashem into the desert in an incredible act of *bitachon*. They marched into the Red Sea and it split in the merit of their unbending faith. Although in practice they had very little *mitzvot*, their *emunah* raised them from the 49 levels of impurity until they were worthy to receive the Torah.

During the first seven plagues, Pharaoh remained haughty and obstinate. Only after the last three plagues did he begin to submit.

At the end of our current exile, our enemies will be brazen and arrogant but Hashem will sublimate them. Before the crack of dawn, the night is darkest. There will be much suffering, but then the *geulah* will come and we will return to the land of Israel.

Just as Hashem needed to take Egypt out of the Jews, we must extricate the exile from within us. We must free ourselves of the blackness and impurity surrounding us. The key is Torah study. Hashem took us out of Egypt in order to bring us to Sinai. As we prepare for the redemption, we must increase our Torah learning and our performance of *mitzvot*. We must raise our children with these important values. In this way we will fulfill the promise Moshe proclaimed to Pharaoh, "B'narein uv'zkeinu nelech." With our children and our elders we will go!



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Traveling through Life Accompanied by Tehillim Part IV

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

In Tehillim chapter 41, David Hamelech says, "...*ashrei maskil el dal*- Praiseworthy is he who looks after the needy." *Dal* is translated as meager, lacking in quantity or quality and refers to someone who either lacks money, healthy, or knowledge of *Torah*. *Maskil* stems from the root words *sechel*- intelligence and *l'histakel* - to see. *Maskil el dal* means looking at what the person needs and contemplating the best way to help him. You can give because it's your duty and obligation or you can be a giver who is *maskil el dal*, invests his mind and efforts to help the needy in the most sensitive way.

The Redak contrasts this with a backhanded way of giving which can really hurt a person. Someone comes to visit a sick person and says, "I can really empathize with what you're going through. My father had the same illness and he died from it." Here the visitor did not contemplate the situation and didn't use his intelligence to discern what would help the sick person. Hinting that he could die is defeating the purpose of the visit. David Hamelech tells us that a person who thinks

and does *chesed* in the right way, is praiseworthy.

The Midrash gives an example of *maskil el dal* when giving charity. Rabbi Yonah encountered a man who was once well off and was now penniless. Rabbi Yonah told him that he had heard that there was an inheritance waiting for him and so he was given him a precious item that he could redeem for money. When he would get the inheritance and have money, he could pay him back. Rabbi Yonah didn't want to embarrass the man, so he gave him the sense that he trusted him, that he would repay the loan because he was a person of means. When the man came to return it, he told him it was a gift and that he never anticipated its return. He viewed the item as charity, as something that didn't belong to him anymore, but he didn't give the recipient the feeling that he had received *tzedakah*. That's *maskil el dal*, looking at a person who needs help, trying to put yourself in his shoes, and using your intelligence to find ways to help him.

Chazal said in the name of *Hillel Hazaken*, that the Torah exhorts us to give charity, "*Dai*

machsoro asher hichsarnu-that which the poor man lacks." If someone who was once wealthy and was used to having a horse to ride on and a servant running before him announcing his arrival, he must be given that. Of course, if there isn't enough to go around, charity for bread comes first. But if there's a possibility to give both, one is obligated to do so. *Chazal* say about *Hillel*, that at one point he couldn't find a servant to run before a formerly wealthy man. For three months, Hillel himself ran before him. Although Hillel was a prominent leader and a righteous scholar, he saw a lack, he was *maskil el dal*, he contemplated what the poor man needed, and he gave it to him without worrying about his own *kavod*.

The Seforno speaks about a person who lacks knowledge and does not know how to conduct himself according to *Torah*. There is an obligation to teach him, but it must be done with understanding and intelligence. If a teacher invests thought, time, and effort, and attempts to reach his students via their unique language, his students are bound to advance and grow.