Points to ponder

Bo 5783

**בֹּ֖א אֶל־פַּרְעֹ֑ה Come to Pharaoh (10:1)** - **Rav Soloveitchik** noted that there were 2 personalities of פרעה that משה encountered. When he was engaging the monarch persona, was told לך אל פרעה and in those instances he was harsh with the king and humiliated him in his crown. However, when told to appeal to the person פרעה and his heart, we find the word בא which implied a softer conversation.

**בְּאֶ֥רֶץ מִצְרַ֖יִם  Hashem spoke to Moshe and Aharon in the land of Egypt (12:1)** - Why do we care where they got their original message? **Rav Aharon Kahn**  suggested that the first step of freedom is the development of a mentality of freedom — an ideology independent of the controlling nation. That בני ישראל received a message of a new מצוה from the new sheriff in town— demonstrated that they were already free of פרעה’s ideology and almost totally free too.

**ולָקַ֣ח ה֗וּא וּשְׁכֵנ֛וֹ הַקָּרֹ֥ב אֶל־בֵּית֖וֹ And he will take together with his neighbor (12:4)** - It is interesting that this קרבן uniquely is brought ideally in a group and that once you are in one group, you cannot simply drop out. Why? Moreover, the תוספתא adds that one should specifically try to make the קרבן פסח with his close neighbor and not go to a friend. Why? **Rav Asher Weiss** suggested that the idea is based in the writing of the **Sfas Emes** who noted that we state that the מצריים were based אותנו meaning that they made us into stingy, bad people. (This idea also appears in the writings of **the שם משמואל and the תפארת שלמה**.) Rav Asher added that in order to counter this effort of the Egyptians, we eat in the close חבורה, to show that they did not and cannot win.

**וּלְכֹ֣ל | בְּנֵ֣י יִשְׂרָאֵ֗ל לֹ֤א יֶֽחֱרַץ־כֶּ֨לֶב֙ לְשֹׁנ֔וֹ A dog will not whet its tongue (11:7) - Rashi** notes that in reward for not barking the dogs are entitled to the meat of a טריפה (see shemos 22:30). Why do the dogs deserve reward? Dogs have no free choice? Basing himself on the thought of **Rav Schwab, Rav Yisrael Reisman** suggested that similar to angels who might not have choice to do or not do מצות but do have variation in how they perform the רצון ה׳, the dogs too, could have had the choice as to how they carried their mission and they still chose to do an excellent job.

**וַיִּקֹּ֥ד הָעָ֖ם וַיִּשְׁתַּֽחֲוֽוּ: And the nation bowed (12:27) - Rashi** notes that they were happy with the news of the impending גאולה, that they were going to inherit the land and that they were going to be blessed with children. Why were they so excited about the children which was only an ancillary bit of news not connected to the main news? And moreover since in מצרים they were having six at a time, why was the extension here more important and powerful? **Rav Chaim Dov Altusky** explained that specifically now when the people saw the revelation through the miracles that were overt, it was time to thank Hashem for the natural miracles that they had taken for granted until this point.

**וַיָּ֨קָם פַּרְעֹ֜ה לַ֗יְלָה  Pharaoh got up in the middle of the night (12:30) - Rashi** says he got up from his bed. **Rav Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi** explains that פרעה understood what was going to happen but chose to go to sleep anyway. He refused to do anything about his situation. Sleep was not an acceptance. He went to sleep to hide from his reality. Rav Baruch Mordechai adds that it is incredible to him that sleep is often an excuse for missing קריאת שמע which is a more פרעה  type of behavior that denies the reality of Hashem’s sovereignty over the world at large and over each individual specifically as dictated in the very Shema that is being ignored.

**כִּי־גֹֽרְשׁ֣וּ מִמִּצְרַ֗יִם וְלֹ֤א יָֽכְלוּ֙ לְהִתְמַהְמֵ֔הַּ They baked the dough into matzos (12:39**) - When the Jews were slaves, they were given matza to eat to fill them, implying that Matza symbolized slavery. At the time of their redemption they also ate matzah. In that regard, Matza symbolized freedom. How could the same food serve as both a symbol of slavery and freedom? **Rav Schachter** explained that the symbol of matza reminds us that what we have achieved is not the result of what we accomplished on our own. We believe that everything is מן השמים and that we became the עם הנבחר because Hashem freed us. He granted us that distinction. In that regard, it can be symbolic of both slavery and freedom.

**Haftara**

**אַ֠תָּה אַל־תִּירָ֞א עַבְדִּ֚י יַֽעֲקֹב֙ נְאֻם־יְהֹוָ֔ה כִּ֥י אִתְּךָ֖ אָ֑נִי Do not be afraid my servant Yaakov (Yirmiyahu 46:28**) - What did the Jews assume? Did they think that Hashem WOULD destroy us because he did the other nations? **Rav Gideon Weizmann** noted that מצרים didn’t fall because it was defeated by a bigger nation. It fell because Hashem wanted it to. Hence ירמיהו reminds us that while it may appear at times as if Hashem doesn’t intend to, He will protect us and save us and He has the power to do so. There is no need to fear otherwise.