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PARASHAS BO

NOW IS THE TIME

The plague of locusts demolished Mitzrayim. The locusts ate up the last bit of the produce that was not destroyed by the hail. This devastating *makko* humbled Paroh to the point that he verbally agreed to send the Jewish people out of Mitzrayim. He said to them, "Go and serve Hashem, your G-d. Who is going?"

Moshe said, "With our youngsters and our elders we shall go; with our sons and our daughters, with our sheep, goats and cattle we shall go, because it is a festival of Hashem for us" (Shemos 10:8,9). The Noam Elimelech beautifully darshens these verses with a message that touches at the very heart of the educational process.

Sholomo HaMelech teaches us, "Train the youth according to his way; even when he grows old, he will not swerve from it" (Mishlei 22:6). If a child is brought up in a holy atmosphere and taught to serve Hashem from the earliest age, he will not have to change his ways when he grows older. He has been on the right path since his youth, and will find it easy to serve Hashem later in life. This is the meaning of the verse, "With our youngsters and our elders we shall go." Those youngsters, who conduct themselves with holiness, will continue along the same path when they become elders. "With our sons and our daughters we shall go." Both young men and young women need guidance along the proper path. "With our sheep, goats, and cattle we shall go." This part of the verse hints to our business ventures, eating, drinking, and other activities to sustain our bodies. We engage in all of these activities with the intention of coming closer to our Creator. They are also included in *avodas Hashem*. Lastly, "because it is a festival of Hashem for us." A flame of desire burns inside of us, to serve Hashem with all of our hearts.

Kinderlach . . .

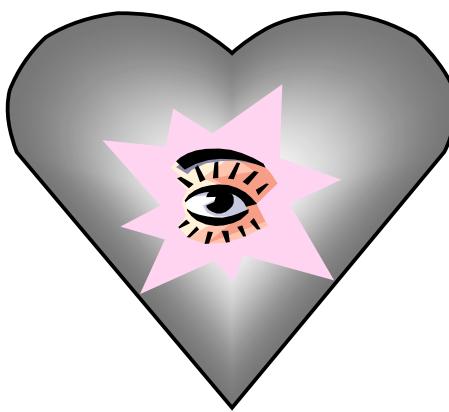
Now is the time. Now you are young. Stay on the straight path. Keep your souls pure. Serve Hashem with great enthusiasm. When you do this, you lay down a solid foundation for the rest of your life. One who follows the correct path in his youth, will not stray from it later in life. It will be easier for him to serve Hashem with fervor. Now is the time!

I SEE

"Come to Paroh for I have hardened his heart" (Shemos 10:1). This verse is a bit puzzling. A person with a hard heart is usually not sympathetic to the needs and requests of others. Moshe Rabbeinu was being sent to Paroh to seek

the freedom of the Jewish people. If Paroh's heart was hardened, what was the point of asking? He will only refuse. Furthermore, we know that people have the free will to choose between right and wrong. By hardening Paroh's heart, did Hashem take away his free will? Was he doomed to suffer the plagues without any hope of doing *teshuva* (repentance) on his sins?

Rav Leib Chasman zt"l in his sefer Ohr Yochel shares a deep insight into human nature. There are two types of sight. The eyes are made of flesh and blood, and they see the physical appearance of objects. The heart, on the other hand, "sees" the spiritual world. Knowledge is contained in the brain. The true understanding is in the heart. When his wisdom enters his heart, a person can say, "I see." As the verse states, "You shall know this day and take to your heart" (Devarim 4:39). Some people are blind because they have no eyes. Others do not see



because their eyes are covered. Both cannot see, but for vastly different reasons. The same is true with spiritual "sight." Some cannot understand the truth because they have no heart. They are totally cut off from reality. There is no hope for them, because their heart (ability to understand) has been removed. They are like the person with no eyes. Others have a heart. It is just covered and locked up. They can remove the lock, but it may take some work. They are like the person whose eyes are covered.

Paroh's heart was blocked. This impaired his spiritual vision. However, he was capable of removing the blockage. He could "see" again, if he did *teshuva*. Therefore, it was worthwhile for Moshe to go to him. Perhaps he would soften his heart, and see the truth that Hashem is the King of Kings. Then he would let the Jewish people go.

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Hashem did not give up on Paroh. He and his nation had suffered seven makkos (plagues) and he still did not recognize Hashem. We might think that he was hope-

less. Hashem did not. He sent Moshe Rabbeinu to him again, in the hope that he would do tshuva. What about us? Do you ever feel that you want to give up on your self? "I'll never change." "I'm beyond hope." These words are false. You are surely no worse than the evil Paroh. Your are much better than he was. And he was able to change. You can too. Try again. And again. And again. Your heart will soften. The truth will enter. "I see, I see," you will say. With the voice of true understanding.

TEMPTATION

The plague brings total darkness and the Egyptians are defenseless. Anything can happen. The Jews are free to do whatever they want. They can take revenge against their cruel Egyptian task-masters and never be caught. Why not leave Egypt? The perfect opportunity. There were no guards or sentries to stop them, and no army to catch them. They have an opportunity to end this miserable slavery once and for all. But wait. They once made an oath many years ago. The Targum Yonason (on Bereshis 50:25) explains that Yosef made the Jews swear not to leave Egypt before the appointed time. The Chasam Sofer zt"l explains that this is the explanation of the verse in Tehillim (105:28), "He sent darkness and made it dark, and they did not defy his word." The Jewish people could have very easily defied Yosef's word and left Egypt. However, they would not go back on their oath. They resisted the temptation and kept their word.

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We all have temptations. The desire is especially strong when people are not watching. "Abba and Imma are taking their Shabbos nap. Now I can go to my friend's house without asking permission." "The storekeeper is busy with customers. I can easily slip this bag of marbles into my pocket." "Imma is busy with the baby. Now is the perfect time to sneak a piece of the special dessert that is only for guests." We know that these things are wrong. It makes no difference whether someone is watching or not. However, the temptation is greater when we feel that we can get away with it. We have the strength to resist that temptation. We inherited it from our forefathers. Stand fast and do the right thing. Even when no one is watching.

Parasha Questions:

- Which is the only tamei animal whose bechor we redeem? (13:13)
- Which of the four sons is perek 14, posuk 13 speaking about? (Rashi)
- Why did the people carry the matza dough on their shoulders when they left Mitzraim? (Rashi 12:34)