



Forever Free

"He killed in His wrath all of the firstborn of Mitzraim and took His people, Israel, from their midst to everlasting freedom (from the Maariv prayers)." What was this everlasting freedom? Rav Dessler zt"l takes a deep look at the slavery in Mitzraim. Besides the well-known physical bondage, there was a slavery of the soul as well. The powers of *tumah* (impurity) were very strong in Mitzraim. The *Yetzer Hara* (Evil inclination) ruled there. The Jews were trapped in this. They had sunken to the lowest level of *tumah* possible before being lost forever. From this, Hashem redeemed them, instantly.

Now they were free. Liberated from the *Yetzer Hara*. He could never rule over them again in the same way. Free to do what? To serve Hashem. To learn His Torah. Rav Dessler explains that the two go hand in hand. As the Mishna states in Pirkei Avos (6:2) "A man is never more free than when he occupies himself with learning Torah." This became a part of us when we left Mitzraim. Hashem injected into our genes an everlasting freedom from the grip of the *Yetzer Hara*. Nothing could ever prevent a Jew from serving Hashem and learning His Torah.

Kinderlach . . .

Did you ever feel that it was too difficult to learn? A mitzvah just seems too hard to do. It is all just an illusion. There is nothing that can stop you from learning Torah and doing mitzvos. You are truly free. You became free 3300 years ago when we all left Mitzraim. Take a deep breath and give it another try. You will succeed. It is in the genes. You are forever free.

The Mitzvah is the Reason

"Do you have homework today, Chaim?"

"Yes, Abba. The Rebbe left us with a question to ponder. He said that it requires a lot of thought. The answer reveals a fundamental principle of Torah and mitzvos."

"Wow, that sounds like an important question, Chaim. Can you share it with me?"

"Yes, Abba. At the end of this week's parasha, the Torah relates the mitzvah of eating matza. 'Seven days you shall eat matzos, and on the seventh day there shall be a festival to Hashem. Matzos shall be

eaten the seven days...' (Shemos 13:6,7). The next verse tells us to explain this to our children. 'And you shall tell your son on that day, saying, "It is because of this, that Hashem acted on my behalf when I left Mitzrayim"' (13:8). The Rebbe asked us to first read and attempt to understand this last verse. After reading and pondering the verse itself, we should then look in Rashi, the Iben Ezra, and Daas Torah (Rav Yerucham Levovitz). Can you help me Abba?"

"My pleasure, Chaim. The verse states, 'It is because of this'. What does the word 'this' refer to? Let us think a moment, Chaim. Hashem performed a series of miracles culminating in the exodus from Mitzrayim. Subsequently He gave us a mitzvah – the eating of matza. It seems that the mitzvah is coming to commemorate the miracles. Hashem commanded us to serve Him by eating matza. In doing so, we

Matzah



remind ourselves of the great signs and wonders that He performed for us, and we express our gratitude to Him for His kindness and mercy."

"That is how I understood the verse, Abba."

"The Rashbam understands the verse the very same way, Chaim. However, his grandfather, Rashi, has quite a different explanation. 'This' is referring to the mitzvah of eating matza. We then read the verse as follows: It is because of this – eating matza – that Hashem acted on my behalf when I left Mitzrayim". What the Almighty did for me – the signs and wonders of Yetzias Mitzrayim – was for the sake of the mitzvah of eating matza. Rashi uses only a few words to say this. The Iben Ezra elaborates more. He says that the sole reason that Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim was to serve Him. He cites two verses, (Shemos 3:12) and (Bamidbar 15:41) to prove this point. Eating matza is among the first of the mitzvos that He commanded us to serve Him. Therefore, *Avodas Hashem* (performing the mitzvos) is the ultimate reason for the miracles of

Yetzias Mitzrayim."
"Amazing, Abba."

"Rav Yerucham broadens this concept even further. We are accustomed to assume that the reason for a miraculous salvation is to rescue Klal Yisrael from danger or destruction. Subsequently, we perform a specific mitzvah or sacrifice a *korbon Todah* to commemorate this. In our days, we make a *seudas hoda'ah* (feast of thanksgiving). In reality, it is quite the opposite! Hashem really wants us to thank and appreciate Him. If we do this sufficiently on our own, then we are fine. If not, then we need a little help appreciating Him. The Almighty needs to put us in a dangerous situation and save us to make us appreciate Him and everything that he does for us. Therefore, the whole point of the danger and the miraculous salvation is to serve Hashem by making the *seudas hoda'ah* (in our days)."

"Abba, thank you so much! With your help, I understand what the Rebbe meant. This is a fundamental principal of Torah and mitzvos. The ultimate objective is to serve Hashem properly. Dangers and miracles are dramatic 'wake up calls' to draw our attention to Him. We hope, however, that we will not need them. We hope to appreciate and serve the Holy One Blessed Be He properly without the 'wake up call.' This lesson has given me great motivation to put all of my effort into my *Avodas Hashem*."

"Chaim, may you always succeed!"

Kinderlach . . .

Hashem created us. He provides for us, watches over us, and guides our lives with Hashgacha (Divine Providence). All He asks in return is that we serve Him. Serving Him includes appreciating Him, praising Him, and teaching others about His ways. If we become too accustomed to His continuous acts of kindness, we can fall into a "spiritual sleep." Then He may have to send us a "wake up call" to remind us that He is watching over us. Kinderlach, try to stay spiritually awake all of the time. Keep Hashem and His service (the mitzvos) at the forefront of your minds and deeds. Hopefully, you will never need any additional "wake up calls."

Parasha Questions:

- What is the punishment for eating chometz on Pesach? (12:15)
- What else, besides matzos, should not become chometz? (Rashi 12:17)
- Who has permission to destroy at night? (Rashi 12:22)