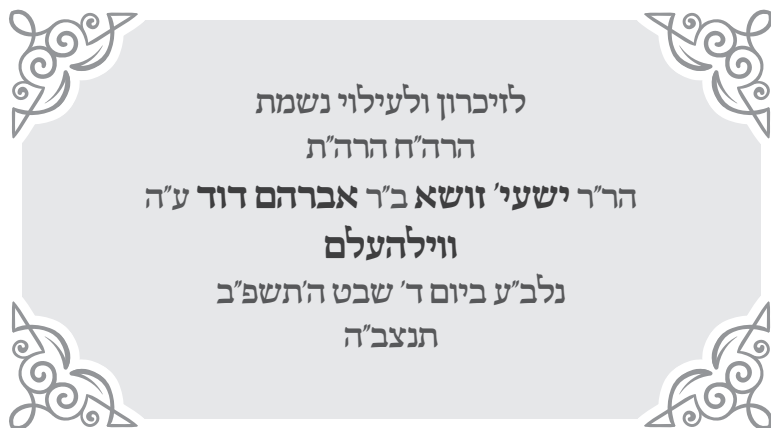


Bo

THE WEISS EDITION

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FROM THE TEACHINGS OF
THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE ON THE
WEEKLY TORAH PORTION



לזיכרון ולעילוי נשמת
הרה"ח הרה"ת
הר"ר ישעי' זושא ב"ר אברהם דוד ע"ה
ווילהעלם
נלב"ע ביום ד' שבט ה'תשפ"ב
תנצב"ה

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בא Bo

10:1 | א:י

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה בֹּא אֶל פַּרְעֹה כִּי אֲנִי הִכְבַּדְתִּי אֶת
 לְבָבוֹ וְאֶת לֵב עֲבָדָיו לְמַעַן שְׂתִי אֹתָתִי אֱלֹהִים בְּקִרְבּוֹ

*G-d said to Moshe: “Come to Pharaoh,
 for I have hardened his heart and the heart
 of his servants, in order that I may place
 these signs of Mine in his midst.”*

When the Gates of Teshuvah Close

The Torah attests that G-d hardened Pharaoh’s heart, effectively causing him to keep Bnei Yisrael enslaved until G-d inflicted all Ten Plagues upon the Egyptians.

The hardening of Pharaoh’s heart was a punishment for his prior sins. The Rambam explains, “It is possible for a person to commit a sin so egregious, or to commit so many sins, that the judgment rendered before the True Judge is that his retribution for these sins, which he committed freely and of his own accord, is that he is prevented from repenting and is

no longer able to abandon his evil ways—so that he dies and perishes on account of those sins he committed.”¹

This explains why G-d did not give Pharaoh a chance to repent and avoid punishment for his *previous* wrongdoings. We find, however, that even after hardening Pharaoh’s heart, G-d warned him, “If you refuse to let My nation go, behold, tomorrow I will bring locusts into your borders.”² How could Pharaoh be held accountable for decisions he made *after* G-d took away his freedom of choice?

Evidently, even after his heart was hardened, he retained the ability to change his ways, and was therefore punished when he did not.

Support for this can be found in the Tanya, where the Alter Rebbe writes, regarding the Talmud’s assertion that certain sinners are not granted a chance to repent, “This means only that he [the sinner] is not granted an opportunity. But if he presses forcefully and overpowers his evil impulse and repents, then his repentance is accepted.”³ Similarly, even after G-d manipulated Pharaoh’s feelings toward Bnei Yisrael, the ultimate decision regarding their freedom was still Pharaoh’s to make, and he was held liable for refusing to do so.

This teaches us that hope for a person to repent and change his ways is *never* lost. On the contrary, the obstacles a Jew encounters in his path to repentance are there to arouse in him an even greater determination, to “force” his return to G-d.

—*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 6, pp. 64–66

1. Mishneh Torah, Hil. Teshuvah 6:3.

2. Shemos 10:4.

3. Iggeres Hateshuvah, chapter 11.

 10:22 | י'כב

וַיְהִי חֹשֶׁךְ אֲפֹלָה בְּכָל אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם

There was thick darkness over the entire land of Egypt.

Not the Time and Place for Miracles

One of the purposes of the plague of darkness was to allow Bnei Yisrael to enter the Egyptian homes and take note of their possessions. This facilitated their fulfillment of G-d's command⁴ that, upon their redemption, they should empty Egypt of its valuables. As Rashi explains, "When they were leaving Egypt and requested [certain items], if the Egyptians told them, 'We have nothing,' they would reply, 'We saw it in your house, and it is in such-and-such a place.'"⁵

A similar account is found in the Midrash. The Midrash adds, however, that Bnei Yisrael canvassed the Egyptians' homes in a supernatural manner: "Wherever Bnei Yisrael went, light accompanied them and illuminated all that was in the barrels, closets and hidden recesses of the Egyptian homes."⁶ In contrast, Rashi implies that though the darkness *enabled* the search by blinding the Egyptians, Bnei Yisrael actually combed through the homes via natural means.

Rashi's opinion supports the principle that the natural processes involved in performing a mitzvah are a significant component of the mitzvah itself. This is because the purpose

4. See Shemos 3:22 and 11:2.

5. Rashi, Shemos 10:22.

6. Shemos Rabbah 14:3.

of all mitzvos is to bring G-dliness into the world by utilizing material means for a G-dly purpose. When a person does a mitzvah, he sanctifies not only the object with which the mitzvah is performed (e.g., the *shofar* or *lulav*), but also any other physical means that contributed toward the fulfillment of the mitzvah. As such, when there is hardship or financial cost involved in fulfilling a mitzvah, we are provided with the opportunity for even more of our lives to be included in and elevated by the holy act. If these costs were circumvented through supernatural means, part of the mundane natural world would remain unaffected.

Rashi therefore deduces that the fulfillment of G-d's command that Bnei Yisrael empty Egypt of its valuables involved the effort of conducting an ordinary, natural search. Had Bnei Yisrael been shown the "hidden recesses" of the Egyptian homes by means of a miraculous light instead of going through the effort of conducting an ordinary search, the opportunity for this mitzvah to elevate the natural processes of life would have been diminished.

—*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 31, pp. 48–49; vol. 5, pp. 80–81

 יב:ב | 12:2

הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֶם רֵאשׁ חֳדָשִׁים

This month shall be for you the head of the months.

Sacred Time

The first mitzvah given to the Jews after they became a nation was to determine and sanctify the first day of every month—Rosh Chodesh—thereby creating the Jewish calendar. This command is expressed in the verse cited above, הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֶם רֵאשׁ חֳדָשִׁים. The words הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה can also be translated as “this renewal,” meaning that G-d showed Moshe the crescent moon and said, “This renewal—when the moon renews itself—shall be [what determines] for you the heads of the months.”⁷

The priority given to this mitzvah suggests that sanctifying Rosh Chodesh is a model mitzvah, representing the underlying theme of all the other mitzvos.

The primary objective of all mitzvos is to transform the physical world from mundane to holy. By using any physical object to perform a mitzvah, we reveal the G-dly purpose for which that object was created, thereby sanctifying said item.

The sanctification of Rosh Chodesh embodies this idea, for in this mitzvah *time itself* is elevated. Namely, this mitzvah involves taking a day that was previously like any other, and declaring it Rosh Chodesh—no longer a regular weekday, but a day replete with special offerings brought in the Beis Hamikdash. In addition, setting up the calendar requires the Beis Din to calculate the constant cycles and patterns of the sun

7. Rashi ad loc.

and moon. Thus, the mitzvah to establish a Jewish calendar not only elevates the days sanctified as Rosh Chodesh (and by extension, the holidays observed on specific dates within the months), it reveals the G-dly purpose within the *entire* passage of time.

Rosh Chodesh was therefore the first mitzvah commanded, since it is a visible act of sanctifying the mundane—the essential theme of all the mitzvos. Moreover, time, which marks and is defined by change, is the first and *most basic* characteristic of every created being: the change from non-existence to existence. As such, just as time is the very first creation, its sanctification is the very first mitzvah.

—*Likkutei Sichos, vol. 26, pp. 61–65*

 יב:ו | 12:6

וְהָיָה לָכֶם לְמִשְׁמֶרֶת עַד אַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה

You shall keep it for inspection

until the fourteenth day of this month.

The Deprogramming

Bnei Yisrael were commanded to designate a lamb on the 10th of Nissan to be slaughtered as the Pesach offering four days later.

Rashi comments that these four days of waiting were necessary because “the time for the Redemption had arrived... but Bnei Yisrael were steeped in idolatry.”⁸ To leave Egypt’s borders but to bring its undesirable influences—“the shame of the earth”⁹—with them would mean that the redemption was incomplete. The slaughtering of sheep—an Egyptian deity—for the Pesach sacrifice was the Jewish people’s means of rehabilitation. But the Jews in Egypt had not only dabbled in idolatry, they were steeped in it. Therefore, a one-time act that renounced their previous obsession with idolatry was not enough to deprogram them from Egyptian influence. A longer process was required: four days of introspection.

Why four days?

When Avraham was commanded to offer his son Yitzchak as a sacrifice, he headed out the very next morning to do G-d’s bidding, but he was shown the place where Yitzchak would be sacrificed only three days into his journey—i.e., four days after the initial command. Rashi explains that G-d delayed showing

8. Rashi ad loc.

9. Bereishis 42:9.

it to him immediately, “so that people should not say that He confused him and confounded him suddenly, overwhelming his mind, and that if Avraham had had time to think it over, he would not have done it.”¹⁰ A person’s greatest passion is his children. Giving Avraham four days to contemplate parting with his child meant that when he ultimately lifted the knife over Yitzchak, it was indisputable that he did so completely sound of mind.

Therefore, to remove the shame of the Egyptian influence, the Jewish people were commanded not only to slaughter a sheep, but to start the process four days in advance, fully aware of what they were about to do. By slaughtering a creature that they had once considered a deity, after four days of thought and awareness, they effectively and indisputably purged themselves of their idolatrous state of mind.

—*Likkutei Sichos, vol. 16, pp. 117–119*

10. Rashi, Bereishis 22:4.

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