

B'Shalach

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Can a slave ever be free?

This week's parsha is B'Shalach, the recounting of the Jews travels through the Yam Suf.

The whole detailed narrative of the story of exodus isn't necessarily for the history of the event, all the details are to teach us something deeper.

We know the Jews had to go to Egypt (this was promised from the covenant between Avraham and Hashem), why?

One answer I will posit is to expose the psyche of humans to show how plausible and possible it is to serve a higher entity (Hashem) in a fully immersive and nullified way (Bittul).

Chassidus explains that the Jewish exit from Egypt couldn't have happened in any other way than what was highlighted in the Torah, because the Jews' status changed from slave to not slave. Any other method of exit there would be a remnant of the slave or owner on them, which would not allow them to be subservient completely to Hashem, in the way of bittul that is required to be perfect servants to Hashem and Hashem's desires and Hashem's way, as proscribed by the Torah and Halacha.

If the Jews weren't taken out of Egypt in the way they were, they would be beholden to Egypt and or other good Samaritans of the time, which would possibly hinder their ability to understand what it means to be completely bittul.

Bittul according to Chassidus is the nullification of the Yesh, the ego that exists within each human that would bar people's maximum potential to serve Hashem. Everything we do and don't do, especially in the service of Hashem is due to an ego driven decision. Ego, not as translated from "Gayva", rather Ego as translation of "Yesh", which is existence.

A compliant slave is fully given over to their master, and even if the master frees the slave, the slave has a leftover connection to that master, that should the slave be working elsewhere, would bar his ability to be fully given over to the new owner. The Jews perhaps went through the process of slavery to burn and scar into our psyche human subservience over subservience to Hashem. I do not want to explain away people's suffering as reasonable or rational, we don't have the right to explain Hashem's methods, but given the narrative described the lesson to be learned perhaps, is a lesson in Bittul.

Furthermore, Hashem made "water" promise on the third day of creation to be ready when the Jews will cross the Yam Suf, to counter its nature, which is to find its way to stasis, and stand opposite nature to be a tunnel through which the Jews can pass. Had water not held up its promise, Hashem would have turned water to nothingness. Water acting exactly opposite what its naturally supposed to do, is part of the allegory of breaking out of slave mentality. It is unnatural for a slave to go from slave to as they say in Yiddish "ois slave".

Reference to this is the fact that shortly after the Jews' departure from Egypt, after passing through the Yam Suf, they have a spiritual journey to achieve the highest levels of purity to receive the Torah at Mt. Sinai. The Yam Suf expedition represents

similar immersive experience as going to the Mikvah.

The idea of opposites converging is a metaphor for when Mashiach will come. We know this to be true, given the connection between the giving of the Torah and Purim. At the giving of the Torah Hashem held the mountain over the Jews and said if you do not accept the Torah you will be crushed right here right now under the mountain. Only at Purim “Kimu V’kiblu” did the Jews fully accept the Torah. The theme of Purim is “V’nahaphoch Hu” which is the flipping of opposites, that the entire decree against the Jews was flipped. This theme, and the string of opposites converging relates to the exodus from Egypt beginning with the plagues (think about Barad, where there were flame encapsulated hails – fire water don’t usually mix), there was the water standing as a wall, there was the flip from slave to no slave, and finally there was the break from slave mentality to serve the one and only master, Hashem.

In conclusion, Shmuel holds (Pesachim 68a)

ולשמואל דאמר: אין בין העולם הזה לימות המשיח
אלא שיעבוד מלכיות בלבד, מאי איכא למימר? אידי
ואידי לעולם הבא, ולא קשיא: כאן — במחנה שכינה
כאן — במחנה צדיקים.

The Gemara asks: **And according to the opinion of Shmuel, who said that there is no difference between this world and the days of the Messiah except for subjugation to foreign kingdoms**, but in all other ways, including the illumination of the celestial bodies, the world order will remain unchanged, **what is there to say** to reconcile these verses? The Gemara answers: **This and that refer to the World-to-Come, and it is not difficult: Here**, where it says that the sun and the moon will be totally ashamed, it refers to **the camp of the Divine**

Presence; while there, where it says that the light of the sun and moon will be greatly magnified, it refers to **the camp of the righteous**.

The gemara’s conclusion about the era of Mashiach is that opposites will come together. Things that don’t make sense will fall into place. We will no longer be subject to the world order around us. The sick will be healed, and the concealed light of Hashem will be revealed. The entire world as we know it will be like the “Makom Ha’Aron, Eino Min Hamida” that the place of the Aron Kodesh was physically present, but immeasurable- because of the coexistence of pure spirituality and the physical. The slave becoming the un-slave.

May we be zocheh to break from our current slave mentality and welcome Mashiach Bimhera Vyameinu. Good Shabbos.