

Good Yom Tov and Chag Sameach, everyone.

I hope everyone had wonderful and meaningful *sedarim*. מה נשתנה in the past year? A year ago, at the beginning of Pesach, we were in the early stages of a shutdown, which lasted far longer than any of us anticipated. And this year, at the beginning of Pesach, with a lot of hard work and Hashem's help, we are cautiously returning to normal. May we see the end of the pandemic soon!

The *haftara* we read yesterday tells of the first time that our ancestors celebrated Pesach as a free people in their own land, Eretz Israel. The *Tana"ch* describes how Yehoshua led the Jewish people in this historic observance, shortly before the battle of Yericho.

יהושע פרק ה פסוק י

(י) וַיִּחַנּוּ בְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּגִלְגָּל וַיַּעֲשׂוּ אֶת-הַפֶּסַח בְּאַרְבַּעָה עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ בְּעָרֵב בְּעַרְבוֹת יְרִיחוֹ:

This represented the final piece of the redemption—the fifth of the *leshonos of geula* והבאתי אתכם אל הארץ, “I will bring you to the Promised Land.”

Then, the next day, something surprising happened — or, actually, did **not** happen.

יהושע פרק ה פסוק יב

(יא) וַיֹּאכְלוּ מֵעֵבֹר הָאָרֶץ מִמִּחְרַת הַפֶּסַח מִצֹּת וְקִלְיֵי בָעֲצִים הַיּוֹם הַהוּא:

(יב) וַיִּשְׁבֹּת הַמָּן מִמִּחְרַת בְּאֲכֹלֶם מֵעֵבֹר הָאָרֶץ וְלֹא-תִהְיֶה עוֹד לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן וַיֹּאכְלוּ מִתְּבוּאֹת אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן בַּשָּׁנָה הַהִיא: ס

*On the day after the passover offering, on that very day, they ate of the produce of the country, unleavened bread and parched grain.*

*On that day, when they ate of the produce of the land, the manna ceased. The Israelites got no more manna; that year they ate of the yield of the land of Canaan.*

The next morning, the *manna*, which had fallen from above and miraculously provided the Bnei Yisrael with food for their forty years in the desert, stopped. Never again did it fall, so from that day on, they ate the produce of the Land of Canaan. The cessation of the *manna* at this time is remarkable. Here was a people who had faithfully followed Moshe, and now Yehoshua--for four decades--through the treacherous wilderness of Sinai. This moment was the culmination of their long and difficult journey, the fulfillment of Hashem's promise to Avraham. If anything, at this time the *manna* should have been enhanced, not discontinued. This was a time the Bnei Yisrael deserved reward and encouragement, not punishment and reprimand. Why, then, did the *manna* stop at this time?

**Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm**, in a *drasha* delivered on Pesach about a half century ago, writes that one of the most significant insights into the lofty theme of freedom may be found in the answer to this question. He explains that the end of the *manna*, the free gift from Heaven, was—paradoxically--their greatest reward because it symbolized that they had finally arrived at their destination!

There could be no greater gift to the Bnei Yisrael, no more appropriate symbol that they had finally arrived, than the withdrawing of the heavenly *manna* that had sustained them for forty years. At this moment, the Bnei Yisrael had to learn the hardest but most vital lesson of all about freedom and independence--namely, that it must be **earned**, not passively accepted as a prettily packaged present. For the forty years, while they worked off their centuries-old slave mentality, the *manna* was satisfactory. But no people can long remain free if they fail to appreciate that the price of independence and true freedom is hard work. They must appreciate that, indeed, anything worthwhile in life requires hard work, sweat, toil, and tears.

The **Ramchal** writes in *Daas Tevunos* that we enjoy and appreciate things we have earned and worked for, much more than things that are given as gifts.

דעת תבונות כדי להטיב רצה ה' שהאדם ישלים חסרונותיו אות יה  
(יה) מחוק הטוב להטיב לכן ברא ה' נבראים שיקבלו טובו בשכר מעשיהם בלי הרגשת בושה  
אמר השכל: מה שנוכל להשיג ענין זה הוא, כי האל ית"ש הוא תכלית הטוב ודאי. ואמנם, מחק הטוב הוא להיטיב, וזה הוא מה  
שרצה הוא ית"ש - לברוא נבראים כדי שיוכל להיטיב להם, כי אם אין מקבל הטוב - אין הטבה. ואמנם, כדי שתהיה ההטבה  
הטבה שלימה, ידע בחכמתו הנשגבה שראוי שיהיו המקבלים אותה - מקבלים אותה ביגיע כפם, כי אז יהיו הם בעלי  
הטוב ההוא, ולא ישאר להם בושת פנים בקבלם הטוב, כמי שמקבל צדקה מאחר. ועל זה אמרו (ירושלמי ערלה פרק א,  
הלכה ג): "מאן דאכיל דלאו דיליה בהית לאסתכולי באפיה."

(18) *Said the Intellect - What we can grasp in this matter is that HaShem may His name be blessed, is certainly the perfection of good. And indeed it is the rule of good to do good, and this is what He, may his name be blessed, wanted – to create creations in order the He could do good for them, for if there is no one to receive the good, then there is no giving of good. And indeed, in order that the giving of good be complete, He knew in his sublime wisdom that it is appropriate that those who receive it [the good] receive it with the work of their hands, because then they will be masters of this good, and they will not have residual embarrassment in the receipt of the good, like one who receives charity from another. And upon this did they say (Yerushalmi Orlah 1:3 11a- "One who eats not from his own, is ashamed to look at his [benefactor's] face":*

When confronted with hard work, the lazy part of us runs the other way. As **Erich Fromm** writes, in Escape from Freedom, people naturally desire to escape from freedom, because the process of achieving true independence and freedom is so long, so difficult, so tortuous, sometimes so painful, that they would rather dispense with it altogether. In his words: “*Modern man, freed from the bonds of pre-individualistic society. . . the alternatives he is confronted with is either to escape from the burden of his freedom into new dependencies and submission, or to advance to the full realization of positive freedom which is based upon the uniqueness and individuality of man.*”

No wonder the Bnei Yisrael rebelled against Moshe and his demands throughout those four decades in the desert. No wonder the people were hesitant to advance to Eretz Yisrael during the episode with the Meraglim. Freedom requires hard work and the willingness to sacrifice. They did not yet have the maturity to understand that hard work is “worth it,” that a “hand-out” mentality breeds low self-worth and existential emptiness. This is what Moshe warned his people about when he tells them prophetically of their future entry into the Holy Land. He says:

דברים פרשת ואתחנן פרק ו פסוק י - יג  
(י) וה'ה פי יביאך ה' אל'הארץ אשר נשבע לאבותיך לאב'תם ליצחק וליעקב לתת לך ערים גדלות וטבת אשר לא-בנית:  
(יא) ובתים מלאים פל-טוב אשר לא-מלאת וברת הצובים אשר לא-חצבת פרמים וזיתים אשר לא-נטעת ואכלת ושבעת:  
10) *When Hashem your God brings you into the land that He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to assign to you—great and flourishing cities that you did not build,*  
11) *Houses full of all good things that you did not fill, hewn cisterns that you did not hew, vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant—and you eat your fill,*

Moshe is warning the Jewish people that Hashem will bring them to the Promised Land, and they will find everything prepared for them, ושבעת ואכלת and they will eat for free and become full. One might think: how wonderful! Yet Moshe's next words reveal the danger in reaping pleasures for which they did not labor:

(יב) השמר לך פן-תשכח את-ילגך אשר הוציאך מארץ מצרים מבית עבדים:  
12) *take heed that you do not forget the LORD who freed you from the land of Egypt, the house of bondage.*

Once you get used to undeserved luxuries to comforts and conveniences created by others-- then you will forget Hashem; you will forget the price of freedom and forfeit it foolishly. When you indulge in

pleasures and benefits you did not work for, you give up your most sacred possessions, independence and true freedom.

**Rabbi Dr. Lamm** comments on this Pasuk: “*What Moshe is telling his people — and us as well-- is that above all we must never relinquish our dignity and self-respect. What he is reminding them — and all men — is that if freedom is not earned — it is spurned. For what comes effortlessly is surrendered thoughtlessly.*”

This was part of the lesson in not bringing the Jewish people directly to Israel and taking them on a circuitous route. As the Pasuk says הוא קרוב כי ארץ פלישתים דרך ארץ נחם אלקים דרך, ולא נחם אלקים דרך, because when things come too easily, they are not valued.

This idea is expanded in **Chullin 17b**. On the *pasuk* we cited, בתים מלאים כל טוב אשר לא מלאה, “*houses filled with all kinds of good things that you did not place there,*” the Gemara asks, what are these “*good things?*” The answer, כסילי דחזירי, large portions of forbidden food.

When people become perpetual takers and begin to act and feel that freedom and happiness are their due, that everything is coming to them, that they do not need to earn their keep; when they begin to imagine that the world owes them a living, then they have opened the floodgates to a deluge of *tumah*, of impurity. They do not believe they need to answer to anyone, and they quickly devolve into poor choices and they will eventually allow into their lives all that is demoralizing and corrupting.

Immorality, and a lack of integrity and values, is the consequence of being overprivileged. In our prosperous society, therefore, we must conscientiously teach our children to work hard and earn their keep. We must remember that too much *manna* may be a punishment, not a favor, to our children. And although it may be challenging to begin this attitude shift, Chazal teach us that inwardly, deep down, every human being prefers the sense of achievement to easy possession.

תלמוד בבלי מסכת בבא מציעא דף לח עמוד א

אמר רב כהנא: אדם רוצה בקב שלו מתשעה קבים של חבירו.

*Said Rav Kahana: A person prefers one portion of his own handiwork to nine free portions...*

**Rabbi Jonathan Sacks**, in an essay about the hard work required to build the Mishkan, discusses what is known as the “IKEA effect.” IKEA, a Swedish furniture retailer, sells many furniture products that require some assembly. Thus, the “IKEA effect” is a cognitive bias in which consumers place a higher value on products they partially created. It was identified in 2011 by three professors. One of them was Dan Ariely, originally from Israel and later a Duke University professor of psychology and behavioral economics. He conducted a series of experiments on this effect. In his words “For practically-challenged people like me, putting an item of furniture together is usually like doing a giant jigsaw puzzle in which various pieces are missing, and others are in the wrong place. But in the end, even if the item is amateurish, we tend to feel a certain pride in it. We can say, ‘I made this,’ even if someone else designed it, produced the pieces, and wrote the instructions.”

There is, about something in which we have invested our labor, a feeling expressed in Tehillim 128 גייע כפיד כי תאכל אשריך ותטוב לך, *You shall enjoy the fruit of your labors; you shall be happy and you shall prosper.*

And this message of hard work is what the Torah asks us to communicate to our children at the seder.

שמות פרשת בא פרק יג פסוק ה

והגדת לבנך בימים ההוא לאמר בעבור זה עשה ה' לי בצאתי ממצרים:

The **Ibn Ezra** explains that we do not eat *matza* and do *mitzvos* because Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim. The opposite is true--Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim **so that** we would do mitzvos...

Mitzva observance was the goal, that is the way we achieve our potential...and value our freedom and our lives.

אבן עזרא שמות פרשת בא פרק יג פסוק ח: בעבור זה אמר רבי מרינוס, פ' בעבור זה, היה ראוי להיותו הפוך זה בעבור שעשה ה' לי. והביא רבים כמוהו לדעתו. ולפי דעתי, אין אחד מהם נכון, כי אין נהפוך דברי אלהים חיים. **וטעם הפסוק הפך מחשבתו, כי אין אנו אוכלים מצות בעבור זה, רק פ' בעבור זה, בעבור זאת העבודה שהוא אכילת המצה ולא יאכל חמץ שהוא תחלת המצוות שצוה לנו השם עשה לנו השם אותות עד שהוציאנו ממצרים.**

The commentators look for reasons we refer to the Shabbos before Pesach as Shabbos Hagadol. I believe we can find the reason in an idea from **Rav Soloveitchik** about the meaning of the word *gadol* in *Tana"ch*. The first time the Torah uses the term *gadol* is in Breishis in reference to the sun.

בראשית פרק א

(טז) וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים אֶת-שָׁמַיִם הַגְּדֹלִים אֶת-הַמְּאֹר הַגְּדֹל לְמַמְשָׁלֹת הַיּוֹם וְאֶת-הַמְּאֹר הַקָּטָן לְמַמְשָׁלֹת הַלַּיְלָה וְאֵת הַכּוֹכָבִים:  
Rav Soloveitchik suggests that this *pasuk* provides us with the Torah's definition of the words *gadol* and *katan*.

The sun is called *gadol* [great] because it generates its own light. The moon is called *katan* [minor] because it does not generate its own light. It only reflects the light of the sun. Rav Soloveitchik suggested that that is the meaning of the tefilla at a *Bris Milah* that יהיה גדול הקטן זה "this *katan* should develop into a *gadol*." Every child starts out a *katan*, a reflection of his parents. Like the moon reflecting the light of the sun, the child reflects the light, the choices generated by those who brought him into the world and who will raise him. יהיה גדול יהיה זה is a prayer that the child should grow to generate his own light, his own power and illumination—make his own wise choices to bring glory to Hashem.

On that Shabbos before Yetzias Mitzrayim, the Jewish people were told to take a sheep into their homes and be prepared to slaughter it as a *Korban Pesach*. **This was the first time they were asked to do something for themselves.** This is when they began to transition from smallness to greatness...from being passive, to actively owning their decisions, and their lives. And this is the exact worldview the *rasha* at the seder is mocking. He asks למה העבודה הזאת לכם why we have to work so hard in our religion. Other systems of religion do not require much work or investment. Why would he choose to buy into a life of hard work?

**Rabbi Lamm** in his haggada, *The Royal Table*, explains the difference between the views of the *chacham* and the *rasha*: "A wrong question often asked by young people is: "What is the world going to give me?" The right question should be: "What does the world expect of me?" The wrong question is: "What are my rights?" The right question that should be asked is: "What are my duties?" President John F. Kennedy reminded us of the difference between the two when he urged us to ask not what our country can do for us, but what we can do for our country. This indeed is the difference between the *chacham* and the *rasha* of the Haggadah. **The Wise Son asks for information as to his obligations and duties. The Wicked Son shrugs his shoulders and asks: "Mah ha-avodah ha-zos lakhem? What do you need all this for?"**

And our answer must be presented through both our actions our attitudes: Yes, there is work involved; maybe even a lot of work...**but it is worth it.** There is no greater feeling than that of accomplishment and enjoying the fruit of our own labor. As **Winston Churchill** said "The price of greatness is responsibility." Pesach is the *yom tov* of freedom, and freedom is earned through our work...our choices...and taking responsibility for our lives and our world. It is not an accident that Pesach involves a lot of work...because it is only through our hard work that we can achieve our potential.

May we savor our freedom and put in the work necessary to perfect ourselves and the world, and may we merit to be together next Pesach in *Yerushalayim Habeniya...bimhera viyamenu amen.*