



Parashat Bo



English version

THINKING about ME.org

Striving to Serve

So many Mitzvot are Zecher Leyitziat Mizrayim. Kiddush, Sukkot, Pesach, Tefillin, Bechor, Petter Chamor, Kriat Shema, etc. The list of reminders doesn't end. Why do we keep reminding ourselves of the Exodus from Mitzrayim? And why is it so important?

The Sifri writes why so many Mitzvot of the Torah are reminders of the Exodus. אֲנִי יְקִיָּק אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי הוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם *I am Hashem, your G-d, Who took you out of Egypt from your being their Slaves.* (Bamidbar 15; 41) It is similar to a king whose beloved son was captured. When he took him out of captivity, he did not free him to be his son again. Instead, he made him a royal slave. So that when the son would not want to listen to his father the King, the King would take out the contract showing that he had bought this son as a slave, and say, "You are my slave". That is why Hashem took us out of Egypt, so that we would serve Him, even when we are not in the mood. Even when it is hard. This is the reason why we have so many Mitzvot to remind us of the Exodus. Because the Exodus was part of the plan to make us G-d's servants. (Sifri Shlach on the passuk)

In his master work Sichot Mussar, R Chaim Shmulevitz has not one essay written on being an Eved Hashem - but three!!! In the first edition, R Chaim summed it up as following: If a person can say, "I really love to eat pork, but what can I do – G-d said no!", that is the ultimate servant of G-d. When a person puts his passion on pause, when a person downplays his desires in order to listen to

G-d and His 613, that person is the quintessential Servant of G-d. (עבד ה' 3) To be G-d's servant means not to have your own opinion, if G-d has one. This is very different from being a son. A son can "not be in the mood". But a servant must always be in the mood. G-d reminds you of the Exodus in order to remind you that you need to always be in the mood for the 613. A son has choice. A servant has no choice.

These weeks from Shemot until Terumah - Tetzaveh, that were given the acronym of Shovavim, the "wild" weeks, have a special power hidden in them. These are the weeks when G-d calls you His son, His Firstborn. בני בכורי ישראל. These are the weeks when you become an עבד ה', G-d's servant. כי לי בני-ישראל עבדים. (Vayikra 25; 55) Becoming G-d's servant, serving G-d, is the recurring message. G-d told Pharaoh שלח את עמי ויעבדוני. *Send My nation and they will serve Me.*

We say in the Shema every day, that if we listen to G-d and His Mitzvot, to love Him and to serve Him, with all of our hearts and all of our souls, we will merit all the blessings of the Torah. On the flip side, the biggest punishments we get are not because we misbehaved. But because we were not *happy servants*. תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה' אלוהיך בשמחה ובטוב לבב The first words in Mishpatim that G-d told Moshe to tell the People at Har Sinai are - that you guys are My slaves, and not slaves to slaves! The Zohar teaches that the passuk that says כי לי בני-ישראל עבדים, Your being G-d's servant, is not just a revelation. It is a Mitzvah. There is a Mitzvah to be a servant of Hashem, specifically in

prayer. According to the Rambam, we have a Mitzvah to pray from the words 'ועבדתם את ה' אלוקיכם, and we learn this from the words we say in Shema (Rambam Tefillah1;1) ובכל נפשכם

The Mishna in Avot teaches that a servant of G-d is the most free person in the world. "והמכתב מכתב אלוקים חרות על הלוחות" (שמות ל"ב) "אל תקרא חרות אלא חרות שאין לך בן חורין, אלא מי שעוסק בתורה" The only person who is truly free is the one who lives a life of Torah (Avot 6:2). Only by following the חרות of the Tablets can one become a free man. This is what King David said in his Psalms, and something we chant along with him, in Hallel. אָנְּהּ: *Please G-d, because I am your servant, I am your servant the son of your maidservant. You have released my bonds.*

How does this make any sense? Isn't the person who is free to do whatever he wants more "free" than the person who is confined to a lifestyle of 613? How can it be that the way to freedom is through slavery?

The truth is that serving G-d, being G-d's slave, is different from slavery. A free life without a moral compass is a life of misery, for G-d is inside you. וַיְבָרֵא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ (Bereshit 1:27). When you serve G-d, when you follow His Torah, you live with moral conscience; you live with your goals. You have inner peace, between the opposing drives inside you, between your basic instincts and the standards you wish you were on. The 613 is this sort of map, with a lot of restrictions, rules and regulation, that will take you to your life's purpose, in the most direct and the fastest way possible. And then, you are free to become who you really can become.

The first man to become G-d's servant was Moshe. Then, Yehoshua and Kalev. We needed to go through Egypt to become G-d's servant. Going through difficulties is the fundamental element in the whole process.

Whenever you have a hard time in life serving G-d, it is part of G-d's plan to remind you that you are just His servant. Our Rabbis teach that one should

make no interruption between Redemption to Prayers. (Berachot 4b) Our prayers, our Avodah, our service, is connected to our redemption. Both the Redemption of Exodus גאול ישראל, and the Redemption that each and every one of us go through in the present גאול ישראל. When G-d frees you from your troubles, you owe Him so much, you feel such gratitude, that you are willing to be his slave.

Why is prayer the pinnacle of serving G-d? There are three parts to prayer. 1. Praise. 2. Requesting. 3. Thanks. I could understand how the first and last part of prayer are serving G-d. But what about the requesting part? Is that also serving? When we pray for health, financial assistance, wisdom, that G-d answer our prayers... is all this asking also serving?

The Maharal (Netiv HaAvoda1) says that asking is a tremendous form of serving. There is no greater serving G-d than showing Him how you recognize that you are dependent upon Him. That he holds the keys. He has the medicine. He controls all of the markets and exactly how many cents you have or don't have in your bank account. He is your doctor, and He is your "hard drive". When you recognize that He is the boss, you are ready to give up all for the Boss. And once we become G-d's servant, once we accept Him as the Ultimate Power in the Universe, He answers all of our prayers. If your prayers have not been answered yet, it is probably because you are not ready to be called G-d's Servant (See Berachot 34b).

So, this morning, I woke up and asked myself - Yosef! Are you ready to serve? It was a different morning. I put on my Tefillin, to display that all of our senses are subservient to G-d. Four boxes on the head, for the four senses up there, Sight, Sound, Smell and Taste. One box on the arm, for the sense of Feeling. Just as we say in the Leshem Yichud, wearing Tefillin is proclaiming that we are making all of our senses subservient to G-d. And although the Tefillin of the head has four compartments, we put on the Tefillin of the arm first, to proclaim the ultimate subservience, נעשה ונשמע. We will do, and then we will listen. Even if we have no idea why G-d wants us to serve Him in the way He chooses, we don't ask any questions.

THE THREE DRIVES OF MAN

Over the last few years, psychology has discovered and revealed what the Torah has been teaching about human behavior for thousands of years. First, psychology taught that material desires were the main motivation for a person's actions. Later, an equally powerful drive, that of the ego, was recognized. Finally, the conclusion was reached that the most powerful drive was the search for meaning in life.

The Torah's view of self-help consistently looks at the person's psyche on three levels, called גר"ן. Or נשמה רוח נפש. A person has within him three voices, three drives, three angles through which he perceives the world and life. The Neshama is the Soul that searches for meaning; the Ruach is the Ego that searches for honor and social recognition, but also for self-esteem, and the Nefesh is the material drive, and the drive for existence. In his book Real Power, Dr. David Lieberman puts it this way: every action that a person does is motivated by the desire to feel good (Nefesh), to look good (Ruach), or to be good (Neshama). This three-pronged approach is the basis for the most effective treatments, as it works on all three motivational levels. (This is the concept behind R Yitzhak Fanger's latest book, FHT. The famous books on how to change, SWITCH, and Change Anything.)

For example, I used to think that there are only two main reasons why yeshiva boys don't do well in Yeshiva. Either there is a learning problem, a lack of learning skills, which results in a lack in connection to learning Torah, or a social problem, lack of social skills, which prevents the boy from connecting to the rest of the yeshiva environment. Either the bachur feels that he is a failure, or he does not feel part of the chevra. But those reasons address only the two levels, the Neshama and the Ruach. There is a much greater problem that drives yeshiva boys out of yeshiva. And that is the Nefesh. The material drive. Something so powerful that it can cause the greatest yeshiva boys to sleep through Shacharit and go days without learning.

We find three different expressions referring to how G-d strengthened the heart of Pharaoh. ויחזק לב. ואני אקשה את לב פרעה. וכבד את לבו. Why does the Torah use these specific three כבד, קישוי, חזוק, קישוי? Don't they all mean the same thing?

The answer is that each one of the three is referring to one of the three levels of the person's psyche mentioned earlier. G-d first made Pharaoh's soul, his wisdom, strong. G-d gave Pharaoh wisdom, but Pharaoh used it in the wrong way, trying to "outsmart" G-d, trying to imitate G-d's miraculous conducting of the world by using his knowledge of witchcraft. Then, G-d strengthened Pharaoh's ego, his Ruach. And then, G-d made Pharaoh's heart, the part of his Nefesh, the materialistic part of Pharaoh's heart, heavy.

The place in the body that connects with the Neshama is the Moach, the mind. The place in the body that connects with the Ruach is the Lev, the heart. The part of the body that relates to the Nefesh is the Kaved, the liver. (Hence, when a person is using all of his drives in descending order, beginning with the mind, the initials of the words Moach, Lev, and Kaved, form the word Melech, or king. That is how a person feels when he uses the correct order - like a king. But when a person allows his drives to work backwards, giving precedence to his Nefesh, he becomes Kaved, Lev and Moach, or Klum, which, in Hebrew, means nothing. That is how a person feels: like a nothing.)

בא אל־פַּרְעֹה כִּי־אָנֹכִי הִכְבַּדְתִּי אֶת־לְבוֹ *Come to Pharaoh, because I have made his heart heavy.* "Moshe, the reason why Pharaoh is not going to come running after you now is because I have made his heart heavy. So, the only way you can communicate with him is by you going to him." Listen closely to the words. When G-d wanted to make Pharaoh complacent, not scared even of the Plague of the Firstborn, He strengthened Pharaoh's Kaved. Or more precisely, G-d made Pharaoh's heart into a Kaved. אני הכבדתי את לבו. What does that mean, that G-d made Pharaoh's heart into a liver? Liver is



the only meat that does not soften when cooked: the more heat applied to liver, the harder it gets. Pharaoh lost his heart, he lost his ego, and no matter how foolish he was looking in this game "versus" G-d, he was just in the mode that nothing could move him. He was in the mode of Kaved. The materialistic mode.

The Kotzker Rav draws attention to one word from Rashi and brings to light an amazing concept. The Torah says that at the Plague of the Firstborn, at midnight, when G-d smote all Egyptian firstborn, ויקם פרעה לילה. *Pharaoh got up at night*, and Rashi says, ממטחו, "*from his bed*". The Kotzker asks, what is Rashi adding here? Of course Pharaoh got up from his bed!!! Where else would he be sleeping? The answer is, said the Kotzker, that it is possible for one who becomes Kaved, even if he has been warned and he knows that G-d is going to kill his favorite son that night, to ignore the warning and go to bed. Pharaoh, with all the warnings about the inevitable, was able to just go to sleep! In his bed!

You see, that is what happens when a person lets his Nefesh, his Kaved, take over. It is not about being materialistic in an immoral way. It is about rejecting all responsibility. *I don't have to answer to anyone. Except for myself.* Once a person enters

his own world, without recognizing anything outside of himself, G-d is forgotten, his wife is forgotten, his children are forgotten. *There is nothing else in life but me.* So why should he get up before eleven Shabbat morning, Friday morning, or Bein Hazmanim in the morning? The main motive of life, for many, is freedom. Freedom from responsibilities, as if freedom from responsibility is success. This is the third powerful drive for yeshiva boys to lose their connection to learning and fall out of yeshiva.

But this is a huge mistake. Studies have proven, over and over again, that people who come up with great inventions, great artists, great thinkers, do not become great from staying home, from thinking alone, free from people and responsibilities. To release their creative juices, they get out there, meet with people, learn the world, learn what people are dealing with. We grow from responsibilities and relationships, and we shrivel from solitude. And in order for you to have relationships, you need to get out of your bubble. You need to be there for others, feel for others. In order for you to grow in learning, you need to have a study partner, or a Rabbi. You can't grow alone.

Torah self-help is simple. It is a healthy balance of Neshama, Ruach, and Nefesh.

Does learning or reading cause you fatigue?
Do you wish you could triple your learning speed, and cover 3 books in the time it presently takes you to finish one?
Is your time in the Beit Midrash important to you?
Do you wish you could remember your learning better?
Do you wish you could improve your listening in class, and improve your listening in conversations?
Does your mind wander too often while praying?
Do you hate tests?
Do you wish you were more focused while reading a book or sefer, especially Gemarra and text books?

If you said YES to any of these questions, join my upcoming

EFFECTIVE LEARNING COURSE



052-7679186



RABBIYOSEFFARHI@GMAIL.COM



YOSEFFARHI.COM

To support this publication, or receive it by e-mail, please email me at rabbiyoseffarhi@gmail.com.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF SONNY AND IRENE GINDI A"H



CHECK OUT NEW WEBSITE YOSEFFARHI.COM FOR MORE MOTIVATIONAL CONTENT