

Mussar HaTorah

ת"סז

Torah Insights into Human Nature – Dedicated in memory of Rabbi A. Henach Leibowitz zt"l

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Pesach

“THERE ARE FOUR REDEMPTIONS HERE: I WILL REMOVE, I WILL SAVE, I WILL REDEEM AND I WILL TAKE YOU.” (SHMOS RABBAH 6:4)

THE FOUR CUPS of wine we drink on the *seder* night correspond to the four expressions of redemption used by Hashem in freeing us from slavery. The S’forno (Shmos 6:6-7) explains these four terms: “I will remove you – when the plagues begin, the slavery will end; I will save you – when you leave their borders; I will redeem you – with the drowning of the Egyptians in the sea ... because after the death of your masters you will no longer be runaway slaves; And I will take you onto Me as a nation – at Mount Sinai.”

Each Jewish slave was in truth a prince

B’nei Yisroel were the children of Avraham, Yitzchok and Yaakov. Each Jewish slave was in truth a prince who was unjustly incarcerated. Why did they need to see the Egyptians’ demise to feel absolutely free? Hashem showed His abundant love for the Children of Israel by reversing the rules of nature to perform the ten plagues and to secure the freedom of His nation. They should have naturally considered themselves free men as soon as they left Egypt. Why was another step necessary to remove their slave mentality?

We see from here how difficult it is to change our feelings and our impressions of ourselves. Even though B’nei Yisroel were freed from unjust slavery and taken out of Egypt by the miraculous intervention of the direct hand of Hashem (which manifested the importance Hashem placed on His people), they could not totally break away from their feelings of slavery. They still looked upon themselves as freed slaves and not as free men. Hashem needed to perform the miracles of the Red Sea and show B’nei Yisroel the bodies of their former masters washed up on the shore to drive home the point and change their self-image.

Our evil inclination whispers in our ear: “It’s okay for you to do this”

Perhaps the most common cause of spiritual failing is the lack of appreciation one has for his own greatness. Our evil inclination whispers in our ear: “It’s okay for you to do this, you’re just an average person. You can’t expect to learn so much Torah or do so many *mitzvos* anyway. Maybe some important people have to refrain from certain actions and be more involved in good deeds, but you don’t have to.” Every Jew is of royal lineage. He is created in the image of Hashem Himself. Could we imagine a prince acting like a peasant? Improper behavior is beneath us. Before we act, let us pause to contemplate our lofty and noble nature. If we have the proper self-image, we will surely live up to the standards of royalty the Torah has set for us.

We also stood at the foot of Mount Sinai to receive the Torah

On Pesach we are commanded to relive the Exodus from Egypt. We must remind ourselves that we also stood at the foot of Mount Sinai to receive the Torah, that we also benefitted from Hashem’s tremendous miracles in Egypt. We must try to rekindle within ourselves the feelings that our forefathers felt as they crossed the Red Sea on dry land. Only when we appreciate how special we, as Jews, are, can we come to a greater understanding of the tremendous responsibility upon us to keep the *mitzvos*.