



בס"ד

Part of The Mitzvah to Remember The Exodus From Egypt is The Recognition That Hashem Always Acts Kindly To His Creations!!!

» *Why Did Moshe Tell Pharaoh That The Jews Would Only Leave For 3 Days?*

This week's Parshah describes how Moshe Rabenu asked Pharaoh to allow the nation to leave Egypt to serve Hashem. He told him that the people would travel a three-days' distance into the desert and sacrifice offerings (Shemos 8:23). We may wonder why he only asked for permission to leave for three days, when he knew that he really was planning on redeeming the nation for good.

We actually see in Parshas Shemos that Hashem commanded Moshe to say this, as is stated (3:18): "You and the elders of Yisroel, shall come to the king of Egypt, and you shall say to him, 'Hashem, G-d of the Ivrim has happened upon us, and now, let us go for a three days' journey in the desert and offer up sacrifices to Hashem, our G-d.'"

The Ohr Hachaim and Abarbanel ask how it could be that Hashem told Moshe to say something seemingly untrue. Furthermore, why was it necessary to say this to Pharaoh? Was it necessary to trick him and say that the nation only wanted to leave for three days in order to get him to allow them to leave, and then to actually never return?

The Abarbanel answers that Hashem did this so that everyone would see how cruel and unbending Pharaoh was, so that all would understand why he deserved a harsh punishment. Thus, he told Moshe to only request a three-day leave to offer sacrifices to Hashem in the wilderness, with the implicit understanding that they would return after those three days. Yet Pharaoh did not agree even to this small request, which indicated that he certainly would never free the nation from their servitude for good.

The Abarbanel adds that, still and all, Hashem told Moshe only to ask that the nation be granted permission to travel three days into the wilderness, never actually saying that they would then return to

{ לעילוי נשמת הרה"צ אלחנן יוסף בן שמואל זצ"ל }

Egypt. He never actually told him to lie, but he told him to say the words in that way for the reason he explained.

» *Why Was Pharaoh So Stubborn?*

This leads us to ask why, in fact, Pharaoh was so stubborn and cold-hearted that he could not even grant the Jewish people a three-day break. The verses indicate that Pharaoh believed that all Moshe and Aharon wanted was the three days leave they requested, and he had no inkling that they planned on redeeming the nation forever. If so, why was he willing to risk Divine retribution over such a small request?

Furthermore, it appears that the public belief was that Moshe was saying the truth when he asked only for three days, as we see after the seventh plague, when Moshe came to warn that Hashem was about to send a plague of locusts, the people of Egypt told Pharaoh (10:7): "Send out the people to serve Hashem, their G-d." It seems that they still believed that they had no intention of leaving for good, and Pharaoh did not respond that Moshe only said that as a trick and really was planning on leaving forever, meaning that he too still believed that the only plan was for them to leave for three days.

» *Every Challenge Is Handpicked Specifically For The Affected Individual!*

Rashi in Parshas Chayei Sarah (quoting Chazal) states that the reason the story of the death of Sarah is written next to the story of the akeidah is because when Sarah heard that her son was being offered as a sacrifice and was almost slaughtered, her soul left her and she died.

The Brisker Rov zt"l (quoted in Sefer Nesivos Raboseinu) CITES the Gemara that says (Avodah Zara 3A): "The Holy One, blessed be He, does not deal imperiously with His creatures." The means that He never sends someone a challenge he cannot overcome.

Thus, a righteous and lofty man may be sent a difficult test that he has the ability to overcome, while a lesser person would not be tested in this manner, as such a challenge would be beyond his capabilities.

Therefore, Avrohom Avinu was given the difficult test of the akeidah, as Hashem knew that it was within his ability to pass this test. Sarah, however, was not given this test, as such a difficulty challenge was beyond her ability. Avrohom passed this test, but, when the news came to Sarah, she could not bear it and her soul left her. We do not find anywhere that this was considered a complaint against her. On the contrary, Chazal say on this verse that she died free of any sin – saying that all her years were equally good and meritorious. Rather, this was a test that was never meant for her, as it simply was more than she could take.

Similarly, in Parshas Ha'azinu (32:11) the verse states: "As an eagle awakens its nest, hovering over its fledglings." The Ohr Hachaim writes that Hashem treats His children in this manner. He only tests them in a way that they can handle. Therefore, one should never despair and say he cannot manage to overcome his challenges. If Hashem gave him this test, it is certain he has the strength to pass it. test he cannot pass.

Since Hashem never tests someone in a way that he cannot pass, one can never despair and say that a challenge is too great for him. If Hashem sent him the test, it is clear that he can pass it.

The Ramban (Toras Odom, Shar 3, 119) writes that this was one of Iyov's complaints. He complained that Hashem gave him tests and challenges that he could not handle. His friends answered him that every challenge a person is faced with is given with righteousness, and one never receives any pain or suffering he cannot manage to deal with.

In this vein, the Chinuch (376) explains that a Kohein is permitted to defile himself for seven relatives, while a Nazir is not, because a Kohein did not voluntarily accept his holy status, as a Nazir did. Since the Kohein may be unable to hold himself back from defiling himself, the Torah permitted this to him, as the Torah never makes difficult demands on people that are beyond their capabilities. The Nazir, however, voluntarily accepted his holiness and, therefore, is willing and able to refrain from defiling himself even for relatives.

This is as Dovid Hamelech states (Tehillim 121): "I lift my eyes to the mountains. From where will my help come?"

The verse can be translated to mean "from nothing, my help will come" – once a person feels he has nothing more to give, he then receives Hashem's help to overcome. From all this, we see that Hashem never gives us a test we cannot withstand. He only demands that we do all that we can, and when we feel we have no more strength to go on, He removes the challenge.

Some people, when faced with any challenge, immediately proclaim, "I cannot do it! I cannot manage!" We must understand that this mindset is mistaken and wrong. If one receives any challenge, it is a sign that he has the strength to overcome it.

» If One Fails a Test, The Tests Only Become Harder!

One should know that successfully passing a Heavenly test is a great benefit for him. Sometimes Hashem sends a person a small test. If he passes the test and overcomes the challenge, he has fulfilled its purpose and earned his reward.

If, however, he fails the test, he must now be tested again and again until he passes. Each new test will be harder and more challenging than the last. This is because every test has a purpose, and if the purpose is not reached through the first test, the subject must be tested again and again until he passes and attains the purpose.

For this reason, we say in our prayers, "Do not bring us to the hands of tests." This may sound puzzling to us. We know that the purpose of man on this world is to overcome challenges. Why do we ask not to be tested at all? I heard in the name of the Mashgiach, Rav Yechezkel Levenstein zt"l that we are praying that we have the strength to pass small tests so that we need not be tested with much larger and more difficult tests.

We find the same concept in relation to Pharaoh. Chazal (Yalkut Shimoni Remez 181) describe how many great miracles occurred to Moshe when he entered Pharaoh's palace. Pharaoh witnessed this with his own eyes. After seeing such wonders, it would seem that it should have been very easy for him to accept that Moshe was a holy man and to heed his words and accept that Hashem rules the world. This was a very small test. However, instead of passing this small test, he said, "Who is Hashem that I should listen to His voice?" Once he failed this easy test, Hashem hardened his heart and sent him much harder challenges as a result.

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This is also evident from the verses regarding the ten plagues. The verses blame Pharaoh's refusal to release the Jews after the first five plagues on his stubbornness. He chose, with his own free will, not to let them go.

By the first plague, the plague of blood, it says (7:23) that Pharaoh "did not heed even to this." By the second plague, the plague of frogs, it says (8:11) that he "hardened his heart and did not listen to them." By the plague of lice, it says (8:13) that he "hardened his heart." By the plague of wild animals, it says again (8:28) that he "made his heart hard." And by the fifth plague, the plague of pestilence, it further says that he "hardened his heart and did not send out the nation." All of these decisions not to release the nation were made by Pharaoh, with his own free will.

However, beginning with the sixth plague, the verses seem to say that Pharaoh's heart was hardened by Hashem and he no longer had the free will to decide on his own whether he wanted to release them or not. By the plague of boils, it says (9:12), "And Hashem hardened the heart of Pharaoh." By the plague of hail, it says (9:38), "And He hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not send out the children of Yisroel." From both, we see that Hashem took away his free will.

So too, by the plague of locusts, it says (10:12) that Hashem hardened his heart, as it does by the plague of darkness (10:27).

This was a result of Pharaoh's own actions. Originally, he had the ability to pass the test and free the nation. However, he chose to harden his heart and, in this way, he failed the test. As a result, Hashem hardened his heart and did not allow him to make a decision to let them go in the end, which brought upon him the terrible punishments he deserved.

We learn from this that Hashem sometimes challenges a person with a small test. If he passes it, he has fulfilled its purpose and can now move on. If he fails, he must be tested again, this time with a much more difficult challenge.

In this way, Pharaoh's first test was only to allow the nation to take a break for three days and travel into the wilderness to offer sacrifices to Hashem. It would have been very easy for him to grant this small request. When he failed this test and forbade them to leave even for three days, he needed to be sent much more difficult challenges, and his heart was hardened so that he lost the ability to pass them and was doomed completely.

» The Reason Hashem Told Moshe to Ask For Only Three Days!

According to all that we have stated, we can explain that this was the reason Hashem commanded Moshe to tell Pharaoh that the nation only wanted to leave for three days in order to serve Hashem. Hashem knew that

asking Pharaoh to leave for good was a test that Pharaoh could not possibly pass. It would have been impossible for him to acquiesce to such a request and he certainly would have refused.

The entire purpose of the exodus from Egypt was to instill in us the ideas of emunah in Hashem and belief in His Divine guidance. Hashem wanted to teach us the lesson that He only sends tests to a person if He knows that individual can overcome the challenge. Therefore, He did not challenge Pharaoh with a test that he could not pass, as proof that He never sends a test to a person if that person cannot pass it.

» Remembering The Exodus From Egypt Means Remembering That We Have The Power To Overcome Challenges!

We do not merit to see the Divine guidance in every generation as we saw it during the exodus from Egypt. Therefore, Hashem gave us numerous mitzvos as a means of remembering what occurred during the exodus in order to instill within us, and within our offspring and descendants for all generations, the recognition of how Hashem guides the world and how He only tests a person in a way that the person can overcome and carefully measures the challenge before sending it to ensure the recipient is capable of emerging successfully from the test.

This is as the Ramban states: "He commanded us to make constant memorials and signs to remember what our eyes saw and to pass it on to our children...He commanded us to write all that we saw of the wonders and miracles and place it on our arms and between our eyes (a reference to the mitzvah of tefillin), and to write them again and place it on the doorpost of our homes, and to relate it with our mouths in the morning and evening (in the Shema)...and to make a Sukkah every year...and many other mitzvos as well, all of which are a memorial for the exodus from Egypt.

"All of this is to be testament for us in all generations so that we should not forget the miracles and a denier should not have the opening to contradict our belief in Hashem. One who buys a mezuzah for one zuz and places it on his doorpost and concentrates on its words is accepting how the world was created and expressing belief in the Creator and His guidance of the world, as well as in prophecy and all the words of the Torah."

As we recall all that occurred during the exodus, we should also remember the lesson of how Hashem never demands more of anyone than what they are capable of, and how this teaches us that we always have the strength to pass any test He sends our way. And if we pass the small tests, we will not need to be tested with more difficult challenges.