

PARSHAS BO

תשפ"ו

There are many important yesodei hadaas in the story of the 10 makkos and the process of yetzias Mitzrayim that Klal Yisroel went through.

The Ramban writes in his drasha Toras Hashem Temimoh, that there are 600,000 types of neshomos in Klal Yisroel, and every one of us is a mixture of these types. When Klal Yisroel received the Torah at Har Sinai, the six hundred thousand souls who were present represented all the neshomos of the entire nation that will ever exist in history. All of us today are a combination of those types of 600,000 souls that received the Torah.

There was an entire year of preparation by Klal Yisroel for leaving Egypt and accepting the Torah – a year of demonstrating the yesodei hadaas in front of their eyes. Hashem runs the world, makes intelligent decisions, and showed He is greater than any other power in the world. All the avodo zoros of Egypt are completely powerless.

In the beginning of Parshas Bo, the makkoh of borod had just ended. Hashem showed He can make contradictions in the laws of nature and there is nothing He can't do. Really, it was time to finish up and move on. But the posuk says Hashem had another goal to achieve. He needed to drill all these lessons deep into the psyche of Klal Yisroel so that they will never be forgotten for all future generations – no matter how far away in time these events will become.

Hashem tells Pharaoh – עד מתי מענת לי ענות מפני when will you finally accept the fact that Hashem runs the world? But, not only must Pharaoh accept this, Klal Yisroel must also accept it. It is kabbolas ol malchus shomayim – understanding that we don't have control over anything that happens. It is only Hashem.

This is a learning process that Klal Yisroel have to undergo in order to accept the Torah.

All along, Moshe Rabbeinu is telling Pharaoh: we are only leaving Egypt to serve Hashem. We need to take everything with us because we won't know in advance what we will need with us to serve Hashem. The truth is that Hashem wants our entire being – everything we are – and not to hold anything back.

Are Klal Yisroel ready to leave? They want freedom, but they have to prove that they are ready to be mekabel Hashem's absolute sovereignty over them.

Then comes makkas choshech. It has a dual purpose. One is to knock out the second main Egyptian god – the god of the sun. The other main god – the Nile River – was already shown to be a source of death at the very beginning of the ten makkos. Now the sun will be blocked for three days straight. But there is another goal – 80% of Klal Yisroel who do not want to become the chosen nation and accept the Torah will die and be buried during this makkoh. We don't have a choice to become Hashem's people. Either we accept it and embrace it, or we vanish.

Then we have the final makkoh – makkas bechoros. There is an incredible Rashi which demonstrates the ability for a human being to cling to his delusions and fantasies and ignore reality.

The Egyptians have just been through nine makkos and they have witnessed nine times over how Hashem is in total control and can destroy anything He wants. Pharaoh was warned about this tenth makkoh and then, when it happens, Rashi tells us Pharaoh is woken from his bed! That means he went to sleep that night just like he did

every other night. As if nothing was going to happen that night! He was told to his face everything was going to collapse, and he just ignored it and went to bed.

You can hear the truth and see the truth and live through it personally, but still can't accept it!

There is another incredible Rashi which shows this. Earlier, Moshe predicts that the makkoh will arrive at midnight. But the language changes from saying "exactly at midnight" to "approximately midnight". Why did Moshe change the language? Rashi explains because Moshe knew that if he says to the Egyptians that it will happen exactly at midnight, and they will think the makkoh is a little off from exact midnight because their clocks aren't 100% accurate, they will have an excuse to ignore the whole thing and call it a fraud. So Moshe has to say approximately midnight.

This is incredible! People are desperate to find the flimsiest excuse to avoid confronting an uncomfortable reality. If there would be a voice from shomayim declaring, "I am Hashem," most people would just turn over and go back to sleep – completely ignore it.

Hashem needs Klal Yisroel to go the next step. Take a sheep – the object of worship for the Egyptians – and bring it to your house to watch for four days. Then slaughter it and put its blood on your doorposts for all to see! You are declaring that you are rejecting the avodo zoro of your former masters. If you aren't willing to denounce your former Egyptian identity, you won't have the zechus to survive makkas bechoros and leave Egypt.

Pharaoh gets up and screams at Moshe and Aharon to get out of Egypt. The Egyptians tell the Jews to leave and take whatever you want with you.

When Klal Yisroel leave, the pesukim say they gather at Ramses and then go to Sukkos. You don't appreciate what this means until you learn the Yalkut. Ramses is at the eastern corner of the Nile River Delta, in the north of the country. To go to Eretz Canaan, they should have continued to go up – north-northeast up the coast of the Mediterranean. But Sukkos is due south! Hashem told Klal Yisroel to turn around and go south to the Gulf of Suez – the opposite direction of Eretz Canaan. Klal Yisroel had no clue why they were going the wrong direction. But they went anyway without questioning – a perfect example of deep bitachon.

Klal Yisroel go 100 miles due south and arrive on the eastern coast of the Gulf of Suez. Then Hashem tells Klal Yisroel to up to the top of the Gulf, then west, then south! This route violates any normal logic you could think of. They wind up at Pi Hachiros by a city called Migdol, in front of the idol Baal Tzefone. This is the idol of money – the last avodo zoro to go.

The Yalkut explains exactly what all these places are and it explains why Chazal say the bizas hayam was greater than bizas Mitzrayim. How could that be? How could war chariots have so much valuables put on them?

Pi Hachiros was the southern border of Egypt, where the storehouses of Yosef were located. All the wealth Yosef had collected during the years of famine was being kept there. It was kept far away from the population centers and a military camp was set up there called Migdol to protect it. It was also protected by the god of money. Now Klal Yisroel are going down towards Pi Hachiros and Migdol – that is where

all the money is being kept! Pharaoh hears about this and he has to go out to save Egypt's enormous treasure.

They get horses to chase Klal Yisroel. Where did these horses come from? They came from the people who feared Hashem and brought their animals inside to shelter them from the makkos. Now they are using them to chase Klal Yisroel? What happened to their fear of Hashem? The truth is that when fearing Hashem helps you protect your money, you will fear Hashem in order to do it. But when your money is in jeopardy, you won't let fear of Hashem stop you from protecting it.

The Egyptians come charging down and Klal Yisroel are facing the sea. They cry out to Hashem to save them. Hashem tells Moshe – I can't save Klal Yisroel. They have to save themselves with bitachon in My command. They have to start walking into the sea without it splitting first. They have to keep walking into water until they are about to drown! Their bitachon is what created the miracle. They had to deserve the miracle with their unquestioning bitachon in order for Hashem to perform the miracle. It was a tremendous test.

There is a machlokes in the midrash as to how the sea split to respond to their bitachon – some say it all split at once, and the other says it split little-by-little. As they deserved it with their bitachon, they got more and more.

And after they crossed over to the other side, the water came crashing down on the Egyptians chasing them from behind, and drowned them all.

As Klal Yisroel come out, all the Egyptians – those who came from Egypt and those who came from the military camp at Migdol – were killed. No Egyptians were left to defend the treasures of Yosef! The fact is that Hashem only arranged for bizas Mitzrayim when Klal Yisroel left, to avoid the accusation that He didn't fulfil his promise to Avrohom that Klal Yisroel would leave with great wealth. Hashem didn't want 7 days to go by with Klal Yisroel having this accusation in their heads, so He gave them something to hold them over until kriyas Yam Suf, where they received the real wealth that was promised to Avrohom.

Hashem had a plan with golus Mitzrayim. Hashem knew He needed to forge a nation that was capable of accepting the Torah after being purified by the smelting furnace of Egypt. He had to bring them up to an incredible level step-by-step until they reached the highest level

of nevuah at kriyas Yam Suf. They experienced a gilui Shechinoh only after they passed a very severe test of bitachon.

It wasn't easy to reach the level of being worthy of accepting the Torah. They had to undergo a deep transformation and change their entire way of thinking in order to say na'aseh v'nishmoh. Being mekabel ol malchus shomayim in kriyas Shma is a part of our daily mindset. Even after saying kriyas Shma, the Rema says we need to finish shacharis and be mekabel ol malchus shomayim again before we begin the day. How? By saying Oleinu – which includes the words: כי המלכות שלך היא ולעולמי עד תמליך בכבוד.

The story of yetzias Mitzrayim is one of trials and challenges and tests. Klal Yisroel weren't told in advance that after following all these crazy directions, they will be saved at Yam Suf and receive tremendous wealth in the end. They didn't know how it would turn out in advance. They followed Hashem with blind bitachon and that gave them the zechus to be saved.

Hashem sends us messages over and over again. The ones who didn't get the message and preferred to stay in Egypt weren't worthy to accept the Torah and died in Egypt.

Pharaoh refused to submit to Hashem's power and kept up the illusion that everything will be fine. He still thinks he runs the world and nothing will happen. He goes to bed and refuses to accept the reality that Hashem runs the world.

And finally, there is a machlokes in the midrash about the final fate of Pharaoh. The posuk says לא נשאר עד אחד. What does that mean? One shittah says all Egyptians died – including Pharaoh. The other shittah says everyone and everything was wiped out – besides Pharaoh himself. Perhaps the biggest punishment was Pharaoh walking back to Egypt alone with no army and no treasure, and facing the utter humiliation of seeing his destroyed country.

There is a lot here for us to think about in our own lives. Hashem demands things of us, sends us messages, and expects us to pay attention.

In the end, those who were willing to sacrifice everything and follow Hashem without question through all His irrational directions emerged with great wealth, became worthy of all the nissim, and received the Torah.