



GOLD CHASERS AND GRAVE DIGGERS

Before the Israelites left Egypt, some chased after gold and some chased after graves — both upon the express command of G-d. Who was right?

A lesson about priorities.

TEACHER'S MANUAL



JEWISH INSIGHTS

A TASTE OF THE REBBE'S TEACHINGS



THE
SHLUCHIM
OFFICE

PARSHAT BESHALACH

Book of Exodus / Shemot

Dedicated by
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KMR Group Foundation

Vancouver, WA



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Shluchim Office International

816 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, NY 11213
718.221.0500

5782- 2021

Founded in 2007 in memory of Rabbi Gabi and Rivky Holtzberg OB"М
Shluchim of the Rebbe to Mumbai India

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Before G-d took the People of Israel out of Egypt, he commanded them to plunder Egypt of all its wealth (Source 1). The Jews responded enthusiastically (Source 2). Then, at the splitting of the sea, the Jews gained even more wealth from the drowning Egyptians (Source 3). According to the Talmud, every Jew left Egypt with ninety donkeys laden with gold and silver (Source 4).

The Rebbe cites the Chassidic teaching that the Jewish people “gained” from their experience in Egypt. On a most basic level, they amassed great wealth. But there was certainly more to it.

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According to Kabbalah, there were many Divine sparks hidden in Egypt, and the plundering of its gold and silver was to redeem them (Source 5).

The Rebbe explains that for Jews, material and spiritual success are integrated. The great wealth of Egypt also had spiritual meaning. Essentially, they weren’t just chasing money; there was profound meaning to their project.

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This entire lesson seems to turn on its head with Source 6, which praises Moses for searching out Joseph instead of chasing money. But wasn’t the plunder an express command from G-d?

The answer, the Rebbe says, is about choosing your priorities correctly.

Introduction:

During the Covenant with Abraham, when G-d chose him and his descendants to be the chosen nation, He informed Abraham that his progeny would serve as slaves in a land strange to them – but they would ultimately leave with great wealth.

When the time for redemption arrives and Moses was about to lead the exodus, G-d asks him to ensure that the second part of the promise is fulfilled – that the Jews take gold and silver from the Egyptians – so that Abraham would not be able to claim that G-d had completed the first promise while leaving the second one unfulfilled.

Moses indeed fulfills his mission and encourages the Jews to “borrow” gold and silver from the people of Egypt. The Jews responded enthusiastically; after all, they had been working in Egypt for many years without pay! In the end, they leave the country laden with the world’s finest clothes and jewelry.

But one person wasn’t chasing gold; he was working to fulfill another promise – not a promise of G-d, but a promise of a mortal.

In this lesson, we will learn: Why was it so important to plunder Egypt? Why by G-d’s command? And why did Moses find something else to do nonetheless?

A great lesson in priorities.

A. The Plundering of Egypt

Source 1 Exodus 11:2

When G-d prepared the Jews for the final step of the Exodus, he asked Moses to relay to the Jews an important message.

Please speak to the people discreetly and let each man request gold and silver articles from his friend. Let every woman make [the same] request of her friends.

דְּבָרִים אֲבָזִינִי הַעַם וַיֹּשֶׁלֶלוּ
אִישׁ מֵאָתָה רַעֲהוֹ וְאֶשְׁתָּה
מֵאָתָה רְעוֹתָה כְּלִי־כְּסֶף וּכְלִי
זָהָב.

Rashi

Please, speak: [The verse is saying that] I ask you to warn them about this, [i.e., to ask their neighbors for vessels] so that the righteous man, Abraham, will not say that G-d fulfilled with them [His promise] “and they will enslave them and oppress them,” but He did not fulfill with them [the conclusion of His promise], “afterwards they will go forth with great possessions.”

דְּבָרִים אֲבָזִינִי: אֵין נָא אַלְאָ
לְשׁוֹן בְּקָשָׁה, בְּבָקָשָׁה
מִמֶּנּוּ הַזֹּהֲרִים עַל כֵּן שָׁילָא
יֹאמֶר אָתוֹן צְדִיק אֶבְרָהָם
”עֲבָדּוּם וְעַנוּ אֶותָם”
(בראשית ט”ו), קִים בָּהָם,
”אַחֲרֵי כֵּן יֵצְאוּ בָּרְכָשׁ
גָּדוֹל” (שם), לֹא קִים בָּהָם.

Source 2 Exodus 12:35-36

In this week's Torah portion, we read how the Jews did as G-d commanded, draining Egypt of its wealth.

The Jews did as Moses had said; they requested from the Egyptians silver and gold articles and clothing. G-d made the Egyptians respect the people, and they granted their request. [The Jews] thus drained Egypt of its wealth.

וּבְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל עָשׂוּ כְּדָבָר
מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּשֶׁלֶלוּ מִמְצָרִים
כְּלִי־כְּסֶף וּכְלִי זָהָב וּשְׁמִלְתָּה.
וְהִנֵּה נָטוּ אֶת־הַעַם הַעַם בְּעִינֵי
מִצְרָיִם וַיֹּשֶׁלֶלוּם, וַיַּנְצְלוּ
אֶת־מִצְרָיִם.

Source 3 Exodus 14:21-28, 30

Seven days after leaving Egypt, the Egyptians chased the Jews, which led to the splitting of the Red Sea – the Jews passed through the opening, but the sea fell on the Egyptians as they gave chase.

Moses extended his hand over the sea. During the entire night, G-d drove back the sea with a mighty east wind, transforming the sea bed into dry land and dividing the waters.

The Jews entered the sea bed on dry land. The water was on their right and left like [two] walls.

The Egyptians gave chase and came after [the Jews]. All of Pharaoh's horses, chariot corps, and cavalry went into the middle of the sea.

G-d then said to Moses, "Extend your hand over the sea, and the waters will come back over the Egyptians, and it will cover their chariot corps and cavalry."

Just before morning, Moses extended his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal condition. The Egyptians were fleeing [the water], but G-d swamped the Egyptians in the middle of the ocean.

The waters came back and covered the cavalry and chariots. Of all Pharaoh's army that had followed [the Jews] into the sea, not a single one remained.

Thus, on that day, G-d rescued the Jews from Egypt. The Jews saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore.

וַיְסַבֵּת מֹשֶׁה אֶת-יָדוֹ עַל-הַיִם
וַיַּוְלַךְ ה' אֶת-הַיִם בְּרוּם
קָדִים עִזָּה כָּל-הָלִיל וַיָּשֶׂם
אֶת-הַיִם לְחֻרְבָּה וַיַּקְעַז
הַמְּפִימִים.

וַיָּבֹאוּ בְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּתוֹךְ
הַיִם בִּיבְשָׁה וְהַמְּפִים לְפָנָם
חוֹמָה מִמְּקִינִים וּמִשְׁמָאָלִים.

וַיַּרְדְּפוּ מִצְנִים וַיָּבֹאוּ
אַחֲרֵיכֶם כָּל סֹס פְּרֻעה
רַכְבָו וְפִרְשֵׁיו אֶל-תוֹךְ הַיִם.

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל-מֹשֶׁה נֶטֶה
אֶת-יָדְךָ עַל-הַיִם וַיָּשֶׂבּוּ
הַמְּפִים עַל-מִצְרִים עַל-רַכְבָו
וְעַל-פִּרְשֵׁיו.

וַיְסַבֵּת מֹשֶׁה אֶת-יָדוֹ עַל-הַיִם
וַיִּשְׁבַּת הַיִם לִפְנֵות בָּקָר
לְאִיתָנוֹ וּמִצְרִים גָּסִים
לְקַרְאָתוֹ וַיַּנְעַר ה' אֶת-
מִצְרִים בְּתוֹךְ הַיִם.

וַיָּשֶׂבּוּ הַמְּפִים וַיַּכְסְוּ אֶת-
הַרְכָּב וְאֶת-הַפְּלִשִּׁים לְכָל
חַיל פְּרֻעה תְּבָאִים אַחֲרֵיכֶם
בַּיּוֹם לְאַגְּשָׁאָר בָּהֶם עַד-
אֶחָד.

וַיַּוְשַׁע ה' בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אֶת-
יִשְׂרָאֵל מִינְדָּר מִצְרִים וַיָּרָא
יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת-מִצְרִים מִתְּעִלָּ
שְׁפַת הַיִם.

Rashi

The Jews saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore — For the sea spewed them out on its shore so that the Jews would not say, “Just as we come up from this side of the sea, they came up the far side, and they will pursue us.”

נירא ישראל את מצרים מות. שפלטו הים על שפטו, כדי שלא יאמרו ישראל, בשם שאנו עולים מצד זה בך הם עולים מצד אחר, רחוק ממננו, וירקפו אחרינו.

A lesser-known fact about the miracle: the death of the Egyptians provided the Jews with even more wealth.

Moses led the Israelites away from the Red Sea, and they went out into the Shur Desert. They traveled for three days in the desert without finding any water.

ניפע משה את ישראל מים-יסוף, וייצאו אל-מדבר שור, נילכו שלשת-ימים במדבר ולא מצאו מים:

Rashi

Moses led the Jews away from the Red Sea — against their will, for the Egyptians had adorned their horses with gold, silver, and precious stones, and the Jews found it all in the sea. The spoils at the sea were more significant than the spoils they obtained in Egypt ... Moses, therefore, had to lead them away against their will.

ניפע משה: הסיעו בעל כרham, שעטרו מצרים את סוסיהם בתכשיטי זהב וכסף ואבני טובות, וכי ישראל מוציאין אותו בים - וגדולה היה ביתם מבנות מצרים ... לפיכך הצרך להסיעו בעל כרham:

Source 4 Talmud, Tractate Bechoros 5b

The Talmud gives a clearer picture of just how much gold and silver the Jews had when they left Egypt.

There was not one member of the Jewish people that did not have ninety Nubian donkeys [which were considered to be of superior quality] with him, laden with the silver and gold of the Egyptians.

שאיין לנו כל אחד ואחד מישראל, שלא היו עמו תשעים חמורין לובים טעוגנים מכספה וזהבה של מצרים.

>> The Rebbe

The Great Jewish Wealth

When describing the exodus, the Torah says, “When Pharaoh sent out the nation...” implying that he was to be credited with the freedom of the Jewish people. Chassidism explains – based on Midrashic teachings – that Pharaoh and the Egyptians are indeed to be credited with the superior state of the Jewish people at the time of the exodus.

On the most basic level, it is a reference to the fact that the Jews borrowed gold, silver and precious garments from the Egyptians, draining the country of its wealth. As the Talmud relates, every single Jew had ninety nubian donkeys laden with the best of Egypt’s possessions, and their wealth was vastly expanded following the splitting of the sea, to the extent that Moses needed to drag them away to Mount Sinai to receive the Torah, as stated in the verse, “Moses led the Israelites away from the Red Sea.”

Chassidic teachings explain that the words of “beshalach” mean that Pharaoh sent the Jews away on a much higher level than they stood when they first entered Egypt. On the most basic level – they left very wealthy.

על הפסוק ”ויהי בשלח פרעה את העם”, איתא בתורה א/or¹ ובדרשו חסידות שלachi זה² (על יסוד המבוואר במדרשי חכמיינו ז”ל) שהזו מה שפרעה פעל ב”העם” שיתعلו מעילוי לעילוי .

ופשיות העניין - הרי זה מה שכותב³ ”וישאלו ממצרים כלי כסף וכלי זהב ושמלות... וינצלו את מצרים”, ועוד ש”אין לך כל אחד ואחד מישראל שלא היו עמו תשעים חמורים לובים טעונים מכספה וזהבה של מצרים”⁴, ובזה ניתוסף עוד יותר על ידי ביתם, עד כדי כך, שבקושי היו יכולים לנתק אותם ממשם אפילו כדי לילך למתן-תורה, שלכן נאמר⁵ ”וישע משה את ישראל מים סוף” (הסיען בעל כרחם).

(4) בכורות ה, ב. מカリთא בשליח יד, ג. תנומה בשלוחה כה. הובא בפרש”ז
בבאי, יג.
(5) בשלוח טו, כב (ובפרש”ז).

(1) ר”פ בשלוח.
(2) תוייח ואוה”ת שם.
(3) בא יב, לה-לו.

B. Spiritual Earnings

In the following talk, the Rebbe explains that the Jews also acquired spiritual wealth when they left Egypt. To understand how, we must first explain a fundamental concept in Chassidus – Shevirat Hakeilim [the Shattering of the Vessels] and Birur Hanitzotzot [Elevating the Sparks].

According to Kabbalah, the world as we know it is the second stage of G-d's creation (which explains why the Torah begins with the letter Bet – the numerical value of two – indicating that this world is the second stage of creation). The first stage in G-d's creation was an entirely different world, one with its own, unique spiritual reality.

This first world is not another physical planet somewhere in space. This stage was entirely a spiritual one, created on an entirely different plane – fundamentally different than our world. This first stage is called the world of “Tohu–Chaos” and our world is called “Tikkun–Repairment.”

The world of Tohu and Tikkun is a common theme in Chassidus. Each world is entirely different than the other, each with its advantages and disadvantages, and only with the final redemption will these two worlds merge.

The definition of the world of Tohu is, “A great amount of light and few receptacles.” Tohu is the world where G-d is revealed in a most powerful way, but in which there are no adequate receptacles to handle it. This is comparable to a person who is convinced of a certain truth but does not have the words to express it to others. It can be a difficult situation for him, and it could even affect his sanity. So too, the world of Tohu is a chaotic one, one with extremely bright revelations but without a proper ability for expression.

This problem leads to another – a lack of “blending.” In a state where people are supremely convinced of their view but lack the skills to apply it, they cannot come to terms with conflicting views; they lack the ability to evaluate the two views and come to a conclusion in which there is space for both.

In this world, every “light” of G-d shines extremely brightly; each element of G-d's expression – that of kindness, that of severity and so on – shines on its own, without any thought of the level before or after. The light of kindness says, “all that exists is kindness.” The light of severity says, “all that exists is severity.” It is not an integrated, well-built system; it is an raw, unstructured, unfinished place with immense strength and potential.

(3) פרש"י עה"פ.
(4) סנהדרין ל,ב. הובא בתניא פל"א.

(1) בא יב,כט.
(2) תולדות כה,כג.

This problem leads to what is called in Chassidus, “Shevirat Hakeilim.”

Because the world of Tohu contains such a “sensory overload,” it smashed into smithereens and all order malfunctioned. Because of its lack of ability to cooperate, it turned into a world of devastation and confusion; Divine sparks that were once in high, lofty places, fell into low, degenerate locations which were not their true place.

Our world is the world of Tikkun; its job is to correct the mistakes that happened in the world of Tohu.

G-d isn’t very revealed in our world at all, and whatever revelations we do experience are able to be contained without causing disaster. Each G-dly revelation is channeled to its proper place. Therefore, Tikkun is orderly; all the different elements are able to work together to create an integrated whole.

The Divine sparks from the world of Tohu that fell out of place are hidden among all the physical elements of our world. Our job is to find those sparks of light and elevate them.

How so?

Kabbalah explains that the innate drive that we have for food or material needs stems from the fact that sparks exist in the food and worldly possessions. A man’s soul wants to collect those sparks, and therefore, he always feels the need to obtain food and other physical objects.

We see this from a verse in Deuteronomy (8:3), “It is not by bread alone that man lives, but by all that comes out of G-d’s mouth.” It is not the bread, the physical component of the bread, that gives the person life. It is the G-dly light in the bread that makes him live.

In simple terms, when a person uses something physical for a good purpose, he elevates the spark of light hidden in that object and returns it to its original, G-dly home.

(Based on Musagim Bachasidus in Sichat Hashavua)

Source 5 Torah Or, Parshat Bo 60c

The Alter Rebbe describes the situation.

Two hundred eighty eight sparks fell by the Shattering of the Vessels, and during the exile in Egypt, the Jews elevated 202 of them. This is the intention of the verse (Exodus 12:36,) “They drained Egypt of its wealth.” and this also explains the verse (12:38) “A great mixed multitude - *eirev rav* - went up with them [out of Egypt],” and the verse (Deuteronomy 3:26)) “*Rav* - Many are with you.”

כִּי רְפַח נָצֹצִים נִפְלָו
בְּשִׁבְירַת הַכְּלִים, וּמִזָּה
נִתְבָּרֵר בְּגָלוֹת מִצְרָיִם ר'ב
נִצְצִים. וְעַל זֶה נִאָמֶר:
וַיַּנְצַלּוּ אֶת מִצְרָיִם. וַיְהִי
שְׁכַתּוּב וְגַם עֲרָב רְבָב עַלְהָ
אֶתְמָם. וְכַתִּיב רְבָב לְקָנוּ.

*The total number of sparks that fell and lay hidden was 288. During the Jews' slavery in Egypt, they elevated 202 of those sparks. This was demonstrated by the vast possessions they obtained when they left Egypt; what they were doing was taking the sparks that lay within them out of Egypt. In the final verses, *rav* has the numerical value of 202.*

>> The Rebbe

Spiritual and Material Wealth

The People of Israel left Egypt with vast possessions in a material sense, but it also means that they had vast spiritual possessions as well. The plundering of Egypt before leaving and at the sea wasn't only a physical act; it was a collection of Divine sparks. The Torah speaks of a “mix-magnitude,” the *eirev rav*, which joined the people during the exodus. *Rav* has a numerical value of 202, representing the 202 sparks that were elevated, leaving only 86 sparks left.

והיינו, שהיה אצלם ריבוי גדול בעניינים
גשמיים, ומזה מובן שהיה גם ריבוי גדול
בעניינים רוחניים, כך, שגם ברוחניות
היתה פעולות ה”רכוש גדול”⁶ של ידי
ביזת מצרים וביזת הים, שהוא עניין
בירור הניצוצות, כידוע הפירוש⁷ במא
שכתוב⁸ ”וגם ערבות רב עלה אתם”, דהיינו
על ר'ב הניצוצים שנתרבו מכל ר'פ'ח
הניצוצים, ולאחריו זה נשאר לבירר רק
פ'ו ניצוצים, שזו היא הגימטריא דשם
”אלקים.”

(6) לך טו, יד.
(7) ראה כנפי יהה ד'ג ס"ג. הובא במנג'ע אוקף נה. תוי"א בא ס, ג. ובס"מ.

In other words: For the Jewish people, spiritual and material matters are integrated. One cannot truly appreciate material wealth without investing it with spirituality, and one cannot truly be fulfilled spiritually without implementing his idea on a material level – after all, action is the main thing.

This is reflected in the great wealth associated with the exodus. The Jewish people went after the gold and silver upon the express commandment of G-d Himself. As Rashi explains, G-d begged Moses to ensure that the Jews left in great wealth, so that His promise to Abraham – that following the enslavement they would experience great prosperity – would be fulfilled.

...והענין בזה - שאצל בני ישראל באים שני הדברים ביחד: לא יכולה להיות עריבות בגשמיות, בשעה שאין זה קשור עם רוחניות; ולאידך, כאשר ישנו עניין הרוחניות, צריכים להמשיך זאת גם בגשמיות, שהרי תכלית הכוונה היא - "המעשה הוא העיקר".⁹

וענין זה מודגש ביותר בנוגע ל"רכוש גדול": ההתפקיד של בני ישראל בה"רכוש גדול" הייתה מצד ציווי הקב"ה - כמו שתכתב¹⁰ "דבר נא באזני העם וישאלו גו' כלי כסף וכלי זהב", ואמרו רבותינו ז"ל¹¹ "אין נא אלא לשון בקשה, אמר ליה הקב"ה למשה בבקשתה מצד לך ואמור להם לישראל בבקשתה מכם שאלו ממצרים כלי כסף וכלי זהב, שלא יאמר אותו צדיק ועובדות עוננו אותם, קיימים בהם, ואחרי כן יצאו ברכוש גדול, לא קיימים בהם".

Based on what we just learned, we see that the collection of spoils was not a crass craving for money; there was an inherent spiritual purpose. G-d told Moses to remind the Jews to collect the money because that is what he promised Abraham, and primarily because that was the purpose of the slavery in Egypt – to find the Divine sparks and to elevate them to holiness.

(10) בא יא, ב.

(11) ברכות ט, סע"א ואילך.

(8) בא ב, לח.

(9) אבות פ"א מ"ג.

C. Who Is Wise?

Source 6 Exodus 13:19

When the Jewish nation prepared for the Exodus and got busy with the task of plundering Egypt of all its jewelry and fancy clothes, Moses was busy with something completely different.

Moses took Joseph's remains with him. Joseph had bound the Jews by an oath: "G-d will surely remember you, and you must then bring my remains out of here with you."

וַיַּקְהֵל מֹשֶׁה אֶת־עָצְמוֹת
יוֹסֵף עָמוֹ. כִּי הַשְׁבָע הַשְׁבִּיעַ
אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְאמֹר,
פָּקֹד יִפְקֹד אֱלֹהִים אֶתְכֶם,
וְהַעֲלִיתֶם אֶת־עָצְמוֹתִי מִזֶּה
אֶתְכֶם.

Source 7 Mechilta D'Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai 13:18

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai gives us more details.

Moses took Joseph's remains with him: Come and see how precious the mitzvot were to Moses. While all the Jews were occupied with the spoils of Egypt, Moses was busy fulfilling a commandment. In this regard the verse says (Proverbs 10:8), "The wise-hearted choose mitzvot."

וַיַּקְהֵל מֹשֶׁה אֶת עָצְמוֹת
יוֹסֵף עָמוֹ: בָּא וַיָּרַא כִּמְהֵה
חֲבִיבוֹת מִצְוֹת עַל מֹשֶׁה
לְבִינּוֹ. שֶׁבֶל יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲסֻקִין
בְּבָזָה שֶׁל מִצְרָיִם, וּמֹשֶׁה
עֲסֹוק בְּמִצְוֹת. וְעַלְיוֹ הוּא
אֹמֵר (מִשְׁלֵי י' ח') חַכְמָה לְבַ
קָח מִצְוֹת.

How did Moses know where Joseph was buried? They said: Serach, the daughter of Asher, is the only one left from that first generation. Moses went to Serach and asked her where Joseph was buried, and she answered, "The Egyptians made Joseph a coffin out of metal, and sunk his body in the Nile river, in order to bless the waters."

וְמִגִּין הִיא יוֹדֵעַ מֹשֶׁה רְבִינָה:
הַיְּכוֹן יוֹסֵף קָבּוֹר? אָמָרוּ:
שֶׁרֶךְ בַּת אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁתִּירָה
מִאָתוֹת הַדָּוָר. הַלְּךָ מֹשֶׁה
אֶצְלָה וְאָמַר לָהּ: הַיְּכוֹן יוֹסֵף
קָבּוֹר? וְאָמַרְתָּ לוֹ: אָרְזָן שֶׁל
מִתְּכַת עַשְׂוֹ לֹא מִצְרָיִם,
וְקַבְעֹוֹה בְּנִילִיס נֶהָר, כִּי
שִׁיתְבְּרָכָו מִימָיו.

Moses went to the river and said, "Joseph, Joseph! G-d's oath to take the Jews out of Egypt is being fulfilled, and it's time to fulfill

הַלְּךָ מֹשֶׁה וְעַמְדֵד עַל שְׁפָת
גִּילּוּס, אָמָרוּ: יוֹסֵף יוֹסֵף
הַגִּיעָה [הַשְׁבוּעָה] שְׁנַשְׁבַּע

the oath you put on the Jews. Now, listen, the Jews are being held back because of you. If you reveal yourself, good. if not, we are free of our promise." Immediately, Joseph's coffin surfaced.

Rabbi Natan relates: Joseph's remains were in the tomb of the kings. Moses stood at the tomb and cried, "Joseph Joseph!" Immediately, Joseph's coffin began to shake, and Moses took the coffin. This is what the verse implies when it says, "Moses took Joseph's remains with him."

הקב"ה לישראל לאלאן,
והגיעה שבועה שהשבעת
את ישראל. עכשיו שמעה
ישראל מעוכבין לנו, אם
אתה מגלה עצמן, הרי
мотב. ואם לאו, נקיים
אנחנו משבועתך. מיד צפּ
ארונו של יוסף.

ר' נתן אומר: יוסף
בקברנייטו של מלכים היה
קבור. הלא משה ועמד על
קברנייטו של מלכים, ואמר:
יוסף, יוסף! מיד נזען
ארונו של יוסף, הלא
משה, ונטלו והביאו עמו.
לכן נאמר ויקח משה את
עצמאות [יוסף] עמו.

>> The Rebbe

Moses Wasn't Confused

Nonetheless, a different Midrashic teaching seems to imply the opposite. Moses personally went to bring the coffin of Joseph along, and the Midrash praises him for being occupied with mitzvot while the rest of the Jewish people were busy with their own gold and silver.

Although the Jews were collecting the possessions of the Egyptians only because G-d told them to, and, as we discussed, there was the spiritual elevation involved as well, Moses, on the other hand, was involved with a much more important job – to find the remains of Joseph and to fulfill the oath that the Jewish nation had sworn to him – to take him along for burial in the land of Israel.

ואף על פי כן, מצינו במדרשו בפרשנתנו¹²
על הפסוק¹³ "ויקח משה את עצמות
יוסף", "עליו הכתוב אומר¹⁴ חכם לב
יקח מצות, שכלי ישראל היו עוסקים
בכסף וזהב (מביזות מצרים), ומשה היה
עסק בעצמות יוסף".

(14) משלי י"ד, ח.

(12) שמואיר פ"ב, יט.
(13) בשלה ג, יט.

Therein lies a lesson for every Jew: As we stand at the threshold of the exodus from our exile – which we will leave with “great wealth” – it is important to clarify this matter:

A famous Chassidic parable tells of a king who opened his doors wide and allowed any citizen to obtain an audience. The simple folk all entered the palace, but were so blinded by the beauty and splendor of the outer rooms that they remained mesmerized there – missing their opportunity. Those who were wiser continued into the inner chambers; however, it takes true wisdom – and even that is sometimes not enough – to not get carried away with the opulence and beauty of the king's inner chambers and to remember that the main purpose is to get to the king himself.

A person who gets a pass to visit the king will understandably be blinded with amazement from the vast beauty and riches in the different halls and rooms in the palace. But that will make him forget the main purpose – to visit the king himself...

The same is true in our lives:

We were placed in the world for a certain purpose, and we can, on the way, find many good and wise things to busy ourselves with. However, it can easily be a disturbance which prevents us from doing our true purpose.

וזהו הוראה לכל אחד ואחד: כיון שעומדים אנו בהיציאה מן הגלות, שעל זה נאמר ”זאת רצון יצאו ברכוש גדול“ - אזי יש צורך להבהיר ולשלול עניין של טעות.

ובהקדם המשל הידוע¹⁵ מעניין הכניסה אל המלך - שהמון העם מסתנוורים מהיופי והיוקר שישנו בחדרים החיצוניים שבארמון המלך, ונשארים שקוועים שם עד כדי התעלפות... ואלו שם חכמים גדולים יותר - ממשיכים לילך חדר לפנים מחדר; אבל, יש צורך בחכמה עמוקה ביותר - וגם זה לא מועיל... - שלא השקע ולהבלע לגמרי מגודל היוקר והעלוי שבבדירים הפנימיים וטרקליני המלך, ולא לשכוח שהתכלית האמיתית היא - להגיע אל המלך עצמו.

¹⁵) ראה תולדות יעקב יוסף פ' ואთחנן, מאור עינים פ' תשא. אור המאיר פ' וישראל. כתר שם טוב סצ"ז. ראה גם תורת ח"ב ע' 46. וש"ג

The parable indicates that wisdom alone does not always suffice. From a purely intellectual perspective, the precious items found in the king's outer chambers may be so valuable that they will provide for you throughout your lifetime in this world and in the next – without ever reaching the king himself.

Therefore, it is important to clarify that even when Egypt is available to be plundered by the express command of G-d, we shouldn't forget that there is something more important – the connection to Joseph; the Joseph of every generation.

The lesson for every person, in simple terms: despite the fact that one could amass great wealth in a way which is meaningful on a literal level and kabbalistic level, enriching oneself both materially and spiritually, nonetheless, we must remember that the truly wise "choose mitzvot" – they choose to connect to the essence of Joseph [in Hebrew, bones—*atzamot* is the same word as essence—*atzmut*]. This allows a person to reach his ultimate purpose, the true good of every individual, and the general good as well.

ועל פי המבוואר בזה – הרי עניין החכמה אינו מועיל על זה, כי, מצד החכמתה והשכל, הרי מעלה הדברים היקרים שבבדրיהם הנזכרים לעיל (לפני הכניסה אל המלך בעצמו) גדלה כל כך, שעילי זה מספיק לו עברו כל ימיו בעולם הזה ובעולם הבא, מבלתי להגיע אף פעם אל העצמות!

ולכן, יש צורך להבהיר, שגם כאשר ישנו העניין דביזות מצרים, ועל ידי זה מקיימים ציווי הקב"ה – אין לשוכח, שישנו עניין חשוב יותר – ציוויי הקב"ה שישנו ב"עצמות יוסף", בה"יוסף, שבדורנו .

וזהו ההוראה לכל אחד ואחד, בדברים קצריים – שאף על פי שישנו "רכוש גדול" על פי תורה, על פי פנימיות התורה ועל פי רזין דרזין, זה ברוחניות זהן בגשמיota, ובאופן של "אג ורصفה כאחד ממש" וכיו' וכו' – צריך לדעת, ש"חכם לב יקח מצות"; להתקשר בה"עצמות" דיוסף. ואז באים להתכלית האמיתית, שהו הטוב האמית של כל אחד ואחד, בתוך כלל ישראל.

משיחת יו"ד שבט, ה'תש"ט,
רשימת השומעים בלתי מוגה.
תורת מנחם כרך כה עמוד 52.

We can learn a lesson from the story of Moses in our daily life:

Some may think that as long as I make a good choice – I use my time productively instead of wasting it – I am in the right place.

The story of Moses teaches us that sometimes there must be a decision to decide between two goods. And sometimes, when we do a good deed, it distracts us from doing the proper thing which we really ought to do.

Although it was essential to obtain gold and silver from Egyptians, a commandment from G-d after all, Moses nevertheless felt that he was tasked now with an even more important mission – to recover Joseph's remains. Rabbi Shimon recognized this and praised Moses for what he did, calling him “wise-hearted.”

The Rebbe doesn't define for us what is the proper work we should fulfill. He merely says that we must connect ourselves with “Joseph” – referring to the previous Rebbe. The message is that the ultimate proper thing to do is to follow the Rebbe's instructions, which gives us the correct list of priorities, and the Rebbe, through his teachings, shows us the true and most proper objective one must have.