

ISSUE #71

י"ז שבט תשפ"ה
15/2/25



A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA מורינו הרה"ג ר' אברהם גורביץ שליט"א

פרשת יתרו

אֲנִכִּי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עֲבָדִים. (שמות כ, ב)

I am Hashem, your G-d, Who took you out of the land of Mitzrayim. (Shemos 20:2)

This week's *Sidrah* relates one of the most significant events in history: Klal Yisroel standing together at Har Sinai to receive the Torah. In His opening statements, Hashem introduced Himself as the One who redeemed Klal Yisroel from the bonds of Mitzrayim, commanding us to believe in Him.

The Ibn Ezra raises a well-known question from the Kuzari: Why did Hashem choose to identify Himself specifically as our Redeemer from Mitzrayim? Wouldn't it have been more fitting for Hashem to introduce Himself as the Creator of the Universe or, at the very least, our Creator? Such titles would be more all-encompassing and awe-inspiring.

The Binah L'itim answers that Hashem references taking them out of Mitzrayim to emphasise that the giving of the Torah was both an extension and the culmination of the *geulah* from Mitzrayim. While leaving Mitzrayim provided Klal Yisroel with a sense of freedom, they achieved complete liberation, becoming true חורין בְּנֵי חוּרִין, only upon receiving the Torah. This concept is highlighted in the Mishnah (*Pirkei Avos* 6:2) which states: אֵין לָךְ בֶּן חוּרִין אֲלֵא מִי שְׁעוֹסֵק בְּתַלְמוּד תּוֹרָה, *Only one who is involved in Torah is truly free*. The giving of the Torah at Har Sinai completed the process of freedom that began with the exit from Mitzrayim. (For an alternative approach, see Issue #20.)

At first glance, this concept seems difficult to understand: Are those who receive the Torah classified as בְּנֵי חוּרִין - free men? After all, we find Klal Yisroel referred to as servants of Hashem, as the *possuk* (*Vayikra* 25:55) states: כִּי לִי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲבָדִים, *For the Bnei Yisroel are servants to Me*. Additionally, Moshe is described as עֶבֶד ה'. Furthermore, R' Yisroel Salanter famously said, "While a man is free in his imagination, he is limited in his logic!" Accordingly, shouldn't a person living his life according to the principles of the Torah be more limited and therefore not described as "a free man"?

The Binah L'itim illustrates that subservience to a higher power can lead to a greater sense of freedom, as demonstrated by Hagar, the daughter of Pharaoh. Rashi (*Bereishis* 16:1) explains that after Pharaoh witnessed the miracles performed on behalf of Soroh when she was abducted and taken to his palace, he decided to give Hagar to Soroh, saying, "Better that she be a servant in their house than a princess in someone else's." Pharaoh understood that his daughter would experience more "freedom" in servitude to Avrohom than if she lived elsewhere as a pampered princess.

The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* explains that this idea can be further understood by analysing the distinction in role between a master and a servant. The difference does not necessarily stem from the amount of work and effort each puts in, as often a master may work day and night, sometimes harder than the servant. Additionally, regarding life's comforts, Chazal (*Kiddushin* 20a) teach that a master must ensure his (Jewish) servant lives comfortably, even prioritising the servant when there is a shortage of sleeping provisions. So, what is the fundamental difference between a master and his servant? It lies in the profits and gains of their work. When a free person toils, the outcome is theirs; they reap the fruits of their labour. In contrast, when a servant works, they are not providing for themselves; rather, they are merely increasing the profits for their master.

This is the freedom attained by those who keep the Torah. Although Yidden may work diligently, performing *mitzvos* and learning Torah, they are free because the benefits of their efforts belong to them. This is evident in the *pessukim* (Devarim 6:24-25) which state: וַיְצַונוּ ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת כָּל הַחֻקִּים וַיְצַונוּ ה' לִירְאֵהוּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ לְטוֹב לָנוּ כָּל הַיָּמִים לְחַיֵּינוּ כְּהַיּוֹם הַזֶּה. וַיְצַדֵּקָהּ תַּהֲיֶה לָנוּ וְכוּ'. *Hashem commanded us to perform all these decrees, to fear Hashem, our G-d, for our good, all the days (- Olam Hazeh) to give us life, as this very day. And it will be a merit for us (- Olam Habah)...* By fulfilling the will of Hashem, we attain ultimate goodness both in this world and the next. This was the freedom that Klal Yisroel experienced when they received the Torah. Although observing the Torah and performing *mitzvos* involve servitude to Hashem, we benefit from this commitment by living meaningful lives and earning a reward in Olam Habah.

However, the wicked one is never free but enslaved to his desires. This is illustrated in the *posuk* (Yeshayah 57:20-21) which states: וְהַרְשָׁעִים כִּי־מִיָּגֶרֶשׁ כִּי הַשֶּׁקֶט לֹא יוֹכֵל, וַיִּגְרָשׁוּ מִיָּמִיו רֶפֶשׁ וְטִיט. אֵין שְׁלוֹם. *But the wicked will be like the driven sea that cannot rest, and whose waters disgorge mire and mud. 'There is no peace,' said my G-d, 'for the wicked.'* Rashi explains the imagery of the raging waves of the sea, which helps us understand the comparison to the *reshaim*. When observing the crashing waves at the shore, it seems as though they are trying to escape. They attempt to break free from the confines of the sand and sea to reach dry land but ultimately fail, crashing back down against their will. Even though each wave witnesses the failure of the one before it, the next wave repeats the same motion, resulting in the same outcome.

The behaviour of the *reshaim* resembles the restless waves of the sea. They are never at peace and struggle to find success in their pursuits. They fill their minds with visions of the pleasures that come from sin, believing that breaking free from boundaries will bring them endless satisfaction. However, like the crashing waves trying to escape their fate, all their efforts prove futile. The *rasha* beholds his friends' previous attempts to engage in wrongdoing, noting their lack of success, yet he falls into the same doomed cycle. *Reshaim* are swayed by their tumultuous visions of sin and become trapped by their desires, unable to find calm. Closed off from reason, they become enslaved by a master that is foreign to their better instincts.

Rabbeinu Yonah (*Mishlei* 24:1,19) explains that one should not envy the wicked, even for the pleasures they seem to enjoy in this world. He compares this to someone who, at first glance, appears to have it all - wealth, power, and prestige - causing others to feel jealous. However, if it were revealed that this person suffers from illness, blindness, and hearing loss and that doctors predict a shorter lifespan, there would be no cause for jealousy. Similarly, the *rasha*, who serves a "foreign power" in his heart, is blind and deaf to reality and is ultimately doomed to die young. Therefore, there is no reason to envy such a person. Furthermore, the wicked are aware, on some level, that punishment and troubles lie ahead of them, which diminishes even their enjoyment of life in this world.

Let us appreciate the freedom we gained by receiving the Torah. While observing and learning the Torah requires submission to Hashem, we are ultimately free. Unlike those who are wicked and enslaved by their fleeting desires, living a life of inner turmoil, we are working for our own growth, achieving genuine goodness and satisfaction, both in this world and Olam Habah!

This Devar Torah is adapted from ספר וענפיה ארזי אל and is presented by the Gateshead Yeshiva Alumni Association. To receive by email, please register your interest by sending an email to parshasheet@gyalumni.org.