

Good Shabbos, everyone.

Thank you to the *drasha* sponsors:

- Rabbi Mordechai and Hadassah Bennett, “with appreciation to the entire Shul and specifically the Rav for being so warm and welcoming to Dr. Allen Bennett, a”h, over the past two years.”
- Mervyn and Adele Myers, in memory of Mervyn's brother, Samuel P. Myers, whose *yahrtzeit* was the 21st of Teves.
- Brian Sporn, in memory of his father, Cantor Lawrence Sporn, whose *yahrtzeit* was the 22nd of Teves.
- Ethan and Cheryl Spiegler, in memory of Ethan's father, Joel Spiegler, whose *yahrtzeit* is the 27th of Teves.

May the *neshamos* have an *aliya* and may all the sponsors be rewarded for their support of the shul with *bracha*, *hatzlacha*, and good health.

Our **Pesach Haggada** expresses a famous teaching from Chazal: **בכל דור ודור חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאילו הוא יצא ממצרים** In every generation, one must imagine **as if he himself had left Egypt**.

This statement is usually understood as the obligation at the *Pesach Seder* to re-live *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, or as an obligation to see the effect of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, which took place so long ago, on our lives today.

But Chassidic thinkers understand this statement very differently. The **Lubavitcher Rebbe** writes:

תורת החסידות מסבירה שהשם מצרים הוא מלשון מיצר והגבלה, והוא מסמל את כל המגבלות שמפריעות ליהודי לעבוד את קונו כראוי. מורים לנו חז"ל שתמיד צריך לצאת ממצרים-להיחלץ מן ההגבלות וההפרעות הללו...

Chassidic works explain that the name *Mitzrayim* comes from the word *meitzar*—border or limit, and represents all the limitations that get in the way of serving God properly; all the obstacles that get in the way of living a meaningful life.

According to this understanding, in the statement, **בכל דור ודור חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאילו הוא יצא ממצרים**, the Rabbis are teaching us that, in every generation, **we must go beyond our perceived limitations and break free from the imagined borders that restrain us from achieving our full potential**.

And the key to understanding how to do this is found in the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. That story serves as a model for our lives. *Sh'ibud Mitzrayim* [slavery in Egypt] represents all the challenges and pitfalls we face in our daily lives and it can guide us in determining the proper way to confront the fears and challenges that are part of the human condition.

A unique insight is found in the beginning of today's *Parsha*. The Jews are a broken people who have just cried out to G-d to rescue them. Moshe gathers them together and tells this broken people:

שמות פרק ו (ו) לָכֵן אָמַר לְבְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲנִי ה' וְהוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מִתַּחַת סְבִלֹת מִצְרַיִם וְהִצַּלְתִּי אֶתְכֶם מֵעַבְדֹתֵם וְנָאֲלַתִּי אֶתְכֶם בְּזֵרוּעַ נְטוּיָה וּבְשִׁפְטִים גְּדֹלִים:

(ז) וְלִקְחֹתִי אֶתְכֶם לִי לְעָם וְהִנֵּיתִי לְכֶם לְאֱלֹקִים וַיִּדְעֹתֶם כִּי אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם הַמּוֹצִיא אֶתְכֶם מִתַּחַת סְבִלֹת מִצְרַיִם:

(ח) וְהִבֵּאתִי אֶתְכֶם אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁאַתִּי אֶת־יָדִי לְתֵת אֹתָהּ לְאֶבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וְלִיַּעֲקֹב וְנָתַתִּי אֹתָהּ לְכֶם מוֹרְשָׁה אֲנִי ה':

Tell the Children of Israel: I will take you out of the bondage of Egypt, I will save you from your work, redeem you with an outstretched hand and great judgment. I will make you my nation, I

will be your God and bring you to the promised land, which was promised as your inheritance to your forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov.

The Jews were downtrodden and broken; they had cried out to God to redeem them. We would have thought they would enthusiastically and joyfully follow any plan proposed by Moshe Rabbeinu. But, instead, we learn that they could not relate to his message.

(ט) וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה בֶּן אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ אֶל־מֹשֶׁה מִקְצֶר רוּחַ וּמֵעֲבֹדָה קָשָׁה:

The Torah teaches us that specifically because they were so broken, they could not even hear the message of hope and redemption. The words went right over their heads...

Why could they not comprehend what Moshe told them?

משך חכמה שמות פרק ו (ט) וידבר משה (כן אל בני ישראל) ולא שמעו אל משה (מקצר רוח ומעבודה קשה). פירוש, ענין הבאה לארץ ישראל, מקוצר רוח ומעבודה קשה. כי דרך קשי יום אשר יחפוצו לשמוע רק כדי לצאת מצרתם, ולא לשמוע בהבטחות עתידות ובהצלחות נפלאות וכו'.

The **Meshech Chochma** explains that this lofty vision and message of a full redemption, including living in a land of their own, was too much for them to process. They were under so much stress and pressure that they could not even wrap their brains around the idea of Jews living in their own land...living as a free people. They were in pure survival mode.

They just wanted the beatings and the torture to end...that is all they dreamed about...and that is all they could hear at that moment. How sad...they were being promised the world...and all they wanted was something much smaller.

In our own lives, as well—we have the ability to achieve eternity through our adherence to Torah and *mitzvos*. — We have the ability to achieve true *gadlus*, but, unfortunately we spend too much time and effort related to this fleeting world. Unfortunately, regarding our spirituality, many times, we are satisfied with *katnus*, relatively small ambitions. If only we would set our sights a little higher...

The **Mesillas Yescharim** in Perek 4 reminds us to set our goals high when it comes to *ruchniyus*:
אם כן, איפוא, איך יוכל האדם להעלים עיניו ממעשיו או למעט השתדלותו בזה אם אחר כך ודאי יצר לו בזמן שלא יוכל לתקן את אשר עותו.

If so, how could a man hide his eyes from his deeds or slacken his striving in attaining this? For afterwards, certainly he will suffer at the time he can no longer rectify what he made crooked.

והנה יש מהפתאים המבקשים רק להקל מעליהם, שיאמרו, למה ניגע עצמנו בכל כך חסידות ופרישות, הלא די לנו שלא נהיה מהרשעים הנידונים בגיהנם. אנחנו לא נדחוק עצמנו ליכנס בגן עדן לפני ולפנים. אם לא יהיה לנו חלק גדול, יהיה לנו חלק קטן. אנו די לנו בזה, ולא נכביד על משאנו בעבור זאת.

There are some simpletons who seek only to lighten the burden on themselves. They reply: "Why should we weary ourselves with so much Piety and Separation? Is it not sufficient for us to not be among the wicked sentenced to Gehinom? We will not strain ourselves just to enter into the innermost chambers of Gan Eden. If we don't have a large portion, at least we will have a small portion. This is enough for us. We will not further burden the yoke of our load just for this."

אמנם שאלה אחת נשאל מהם: היוכלו כל כך על נקלה לסבול בעולם הזה החולף, לראות אחד מחבריהם מכובד ומנושא יותר מהם ומושל עליהם וכל שכן אחד מעבדיהם או מן העניים הנבזים ושפלים בעיניהם ולא יצטערו ולא יהיה דמם רותח בקרבם? לא, ודאי!

There is just one question that we will put to these people: can they so easily tolerate in this fleeting world the sight of one their peers being honored and elevated above them, and coming to rule over them? Or worse still, if this is one of their servants or one of the beggars which are

lowly and despicable in their eyes. Would they not be filled with pain and would their blood not boil inside them?! Surely they could not!

הרי לך, שאין הסבלנות הזו אשר הם דורשים לעצמם להקל מהם חומר העבודה, אלא פיתוי כוזב שמפתה יצרם אותם, ולא דבר אמיתי כלל.

Hence, this "tolerance" which they adopt in order to lighten on themselves the severity of the service is but a deceit which their evil inclination employs to incite them, with no basis whatsoever in truth.

Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski, in his book on prayer, writes that every year before Rosh Hashana, the **Sanzer Rebbe** used to tell his *chassidim* a *mashal* of a king who exiled his son to a distant land for unbecoming behavior. Never having learned a marketable skill, the prince had no way to support himself. He became a shepherd, since watching the sheep did not require any special skills. The other shepherds built themselves small huts, but since he lacked both the know-how and the dexterity, his huts always collapsed. He continued to suffer in the heat.

One day he heard that the king was visiting the country and that there was going to be a huge parade. The custom was that people wrote their wishes on small pieces of paper and threw them at the royal coach. Whichever petitions landed in the coach were granted.

The prince wrote his petition "I want to have a small hut to protect me from the sun." His petition landed in the royal coach. The king recognized his son's handwriting and broke into sobs. "What has happened to my son?," he cried. "He has completely forgotten that he is a prince. His request should have been to return to me and once again live the life of a prince in the palace. Instead, he has resigned himself to being a shepherd, and his aspirations are no greater than to merely have a little hut."

Moshe Rabbeinu saw that the Jewish people were not able to handle the lofty promise he had made them, a vision of living in their own land. At most, they were able to imagine life without slavery and backbreaking labor. Accordingly, from that point forward, he changed and narrowed down his message to speak simply about breaking them free from the shackles of slavery, like the prince hoping for a hut instead of a palace.

As the **Meshech Chochma** continues:

משך חכמה (שם): ולכן "וידבר ה' (אל משה ואל אהרון) ויצום אל בני ישראל ואל פרעה (מלך מצרים) להוציא את בני ישראל מארץ מצרים" (פסוק יג), כלומר לדבר רק אודות זה, וכמו שנזכר לקמן [דו"ק ותשכה], והבן על דרך צחות.

Moshe narrowed the focus...to something they could grasp...to bring the Jewish people out of Egypt. This was the first of four promises--with the goal of helping them eventually raise the bar on their dreams...level by level...until they were ready to appreciate the final piece of the promise...to have their own land...

One step at a time...level by level...Moshe got them to their final destination...

In our lives, as well, one of the saddest parts of living in *galus*, in exile, beyond the physical torture and genocide we have faced over the years...the breaking of Jewish bodies...was the breaking of the Jewish spirit. Because when a person reaches his emotional breaking point...when he is beaten down, he loses the ability to dream big dreams. The thought of a *Beis Hamikdash* is so foreign to us...

The Jewish people, as a group, have encountered this time and time again in all aspects of life. But, *Baruch Hashem*, there have always been Jewish dreamers and visionaries who have kept the spark alive, who have reminded us to dream...

Rav Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman, the Ponovezher Rav, was a famous dreamer. He lost his entire community in the Holocaust, but was able to rebuild the famous Ponovezh Yeshiva in Bnei Brak. He was instrumental in rebuilding Torah in *Eretz Yisrael*. Rav Kahaneman once made the following observation. The Medrash tells us that there will be ten great famines in world history. The first was in the time of Adam, the second in the time of Lemech, the third in the time of Avraham. The Medrash says the tenth will be in the generation prior to Mashiach. But that famine will be of a different nature—as the *pasuk* in Amos says—לא רעב ללחם ולא צמא למים כי אם לשמוע את דברי ה'. It will not be a hunger for food or water, but a hunger to hear the words of God.

The Ponovezher Rav wonders: What is so bad about that kind of famine? People thirsting for more Torah knowledge...people seeking opportunities to study Torah...doesn't that sound great?

The Ponovezher Rav answered that really there are two problems with a famine. The more obvious problem is the scarcity of food and water. He observed the other, more subtle, problem during the hunger-filled years in pre-1948 Palestine-- when there is very little available to eat, people are satisfied with very little. They stop dreaming big...and they are therefore satisfied with tiny achievements. But these limitations are self imposed. We must learn to move beyond mere survival...and dream big dreams...

David haMelech said in Tehillim 126:

שיר המעלות בשׁוּב ה' אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל מִצִּיּוֹן הֵייוּ כַחֲלוֹמִים

When we return to Zion, we will be like dreamers...

I believe the message of David haMelech is that to achieve our goals and potential, we **must** be dreamers...we must never stop dreaming...

So let us make sure that we, as individuals and as a people, never lose the dream. Never allow ourselves to settle for קטנות

We often expect too little of ourselves—in terms of our *avodas Hashem*—our learning, our davening, our *chesed*, our *tzedakah*. We lose sight of our enormous potential. Let us work on expanding our dreams...pushing ourselves beyond our self imposed limits. Because we will never become more than the sights we set for ourselves.

Rav Wolbe writes, in the first volume of *Alei Shor* (p. 121), regarding spiritual achievements:

ועלינו לדעת אמת נוראה זאת: מה שאדם באמת רוצה את זה הוא משיג בחייו, ולהיפך מה שאדם משיג בחייו זהו הגילוי על מה שהיה רצונו בתחילה...

We must understand that what a human being truly aspires to achieve, he will succeed in achieving, and the opposite is true—one can see from what he or she achieved—what they really wanted to achieve in the first place.

Let us use our history to heighten our sense of where we come from and what we can accomplish, so that we never stop dreaming. . .so that we are able to fulfill our potential as individuals and as a nation...a redeemed nation in every sense of the word... May the dream never leave us again...and may Hashem make all our dreams come true...and return us all to a rebuilt *Yerushalayim, bimhera viyamenu, amen.*