

The Seichel Rules

Hashem created man with two competing forces. On the one hand, a person has emotions and desires. Opposing this are his intelligence and *seichel* (common sense). The emotions are very powerful. They want to rule a person, and make him use his intelligence to seek wealth, power, and honor. The *seichel* objects. It recognizes the *emmes*. It strives to rule the emotions, thereby using them to serve Hashem and come close to Him. Which side has the upper hand? Who will win?

Rav Meir Simcha of Dvinsk, in his sefer Meshech Chochma (on parashas Bo) shares a fascinating insight into this deep subject. The Jewish people stood at the Yam Suf, surrounded with danger on all sides. What should they do? "Tell the Children of Israel that they shall travel (forward into the sea)" (Shemos 14:15). A person cannot live in water; however, the *seichel* saw that Hashem wanted them to plunge into the *yam*. Nachshon Ben Aminidav, the Prince of the tribe of Yehuda led the way. He let his *seichel* rule his emotions. With complete faith, he went into the *yam*, a place where no person could live, following the Will of Hashem. His tribe followed, as did all of Klal Yisrael. They all crowned their *seichel* as ruler over their emotions by following Hashem's command. This ultimate act of *mesirus nefesh* (self-sacrifice) that stemmed from *emunah* forever crowned our *seichel* as ruler over our emotions. We achieved eternal freedom from the grip of the lower forces.

This idea provides the answer to a very bothersome question. Why do we continue to celebrate Pesach as *z'man cheiruseinu* (time of our freedom)? The freedom that we achieved from Mitzraim was relatively short-lived. We lived in Eretz Yisrael under our own rule for approximately 800 years until Nebuchadnezzar expelled us, beginning a series of exiles, pogroms, inquisitions, and subjugation that continue to this very day! Is that freedom? "Yes!" says Rav Meir Simcha. The nations may rule over us physically, but they will never usurp the rule of our *seichel* over our emotions. As the evening prayers state, "He took the nation of Israel out (of Mitzraim) to eternal freedom." Therefore, even a poor man must

eat reclining at the Pesach Seder. That is the way free people eat, and he is free. The plunge into the sea liberated his soul forever.

Kinderlach . . . Hashem tests us. Temptations are all around. We want to nap when we should be learning. We want to daydream when we should be praying. We are tempted to eat things that we should not. Our yetzer hara pushes us to get angry, take revenge, or make fun of someone. How can we overcome him and do the right thing? Just remember the Yam Suf. Your great great great...grandfather walked straight into the cold water, following the will of Hashem. He put the koach (strength) into your neshama (soul) to do the same. Daydream in the middle of prayer? Forget it! I am following Hashem. Get angry? Impossible! Move onward into the Yam. That yetzer can't touch me. I am forever free.



Having Mercy Brings Mercy

Klal Yisrael was afraid. They were surrounded by danger. Would they merit another miracle? They cried out to Hashem. "Why are you crying out to Me?" (Shemos 14:15), He asked Moshe. The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh is puzzled by this verse. Hashem wants us to cry out to Him in times of trouble. It demonstrates our faith in Him. Why was this time different? He answers according to the Medrash. Klal Yisrael was being judged at that time. The accusing angel claimed that the nation who had worshipped idols in Mitzraim did not deserve to be saved. Hashem was in a dilemma (so to speak). The angel was correct. They needed to perform a merciful deed

to save themselves. Their mercy would allow Hashem to use His *Middas HaRachamim* (Merciful Judgment) to save them. Therefore Hashem instructed Moshe, "Tell the Children of Israel that they shall travel (forward into the sea)" (Shemos 14:15). They were to move into the water unaware that it would split. And so they were *moser nefesh* (prepared to sacrifice their lives), with complete faith. This awesome act of *emunah* was a tremendous *chesed* for the Almighty. It showed the accuser how much they trusted Him. And so, this act of *chesed*, which showed their *rachmonus* for the Almighty, allowed Hashem to judge them with *Middas HaRachamim*, and they were saved.

Kinderlach . . . We all need Hashem's mercy. Who can say that they will stand up to His Middas HaDin (strict judgment)? How do we obtain that mercy? By being merciful on others. Acting with rachmonus towards others brings rachmonus upon ourselves. The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh illuminates a new aspect of rachmonus to us. Having rachmonus for The Creator. He set up the world with accusing angels who are waiting to point out our faults and bring destruction upon us. Hashem loves us and wants to save us. However, He needs our help (so to speak). He needs to prove to the accusers that we are worthy of being saved. Have rachmonus on Him and let Him save us. Feel the tsar (suffering) of the Shechina (Divine Presence) when we have to suffer. Use this to motivate you to have mercy and do His Will with all of your might. Fill your heart with rachmonus and emunah, and move forward into the yam.

Parasha Questions

- What is Hashem's weapon of war? (Rashi 15:3)
- Did all of the Mitzrim drown in the same way? (Rashi 15:5)
- Did the Mitzrim merit to be buried? Why? (Rashi 15:12)
- How much *mun* did each person get, regardless of how much he gathered? (Rashi 16:17)
- How did Hashem show His affection for Klal Yisrael when serving the *mun*? (Rashi 16:7)
- What happened to the *mun* that was left overnight? (16:20)