

# Parsha Pearls

FROM THE WORDS OF THE GEDOLIM

Bo 5770

## **And you shall eat it in haste; it is a Pesach offering to Hashem. (12:11)**

One of the laws of the Pesach offering is that no gentile may eat of it (v. 43). The Midrash (Shemos Rabbah 19:6) comments on this: This fulfills the verse, “He relates His words to Yaakov, His laws and statutes to Yisroel. He did not do so for any nation, and His statutes they do not know” (Tehillim 147:19-20). The Holy One, blessed is He said to them: Let no other nation mix into to this; let them not know its secrets, only you. In this world when Israel ate the Pesach offering in Egypt, they ate it in haste (v. 11) as it says, “For in haste you left the land of Egypt” (Devarim 16:3). But regarding the future redemption, Scripture states, “Not in haste shall you leave, and in a hurry you shall not go” (Yishaya 52:12).

This may be compared to a merchant who checked into an inn, stayed there during the day, and then arose at night, stole everything from the inn and went on his way. In the morning the innkeeper arose, and she began to shout: “Look at this merchant who arose at night, stole all my belongings and left!” When the merchant heard this, he said, “This only happened because I left at night. Therefore I swear that I will never leave at night again.”

So too, Israel prepared themselves at night to leave early in the morning. After they left, the Egyptians arose and said, “Let us chase after them because they took all our belongings.” The Holy One, blessed is He said to them: “This is only because you left in haste. From now on, not in haste will you leave.”

This Midrash is hard to understand for several reasons: In the parable, was the merchant sorry that he stole? And what does his stealing have to do with his leaving at night? If he was a thief, he would steal during the day as well. And in the story of the Jews leaving Egypt, what did their leaving in haste have to do with their taking the Egyptians’ belongings? Finally, what is the connection of all of this to the law that a gentile may not eat from the Pesach offering, study Torah or “know its secrets”? What are these secrets?

In Sanhedrin 91a, we find the famous story of the dispute between the Egyptians and the Jews, arbitrated by Alexander the Great. The Egyptians quoted the Torah to prove that the Jews had taken their gold and silver, and they demanded it back. The Jewish advocate Geviha ben Pesisa replied that the Jews dwelt in Egypt for 430 years (Shemos 12:40). “Give us our pay for our 600,000 slaves who worked for you for 430 years,” said Geviha ben Pesisa. The Egyptians asked for three days to think of a reply; when they could not, they admitted defeat and left the land.

We see here that the gold and silver taken by the Jews was the rightful payment for their work. The Egyptians finally admitted this a thousand years later. But at the time of the Exodus they did not admit it. According to the Midrash quoted above, it seems that if the Jews had not left in haste, they would have admitted it then too. Why?

The answer is that the exile in Egypt was supposed to have lasted 400 years. However, Hashem took them out early, as it says, “The voice of my beloved, behold it has come, skipping over the mountains and jumping over the hills” (Shir Hashirim 2:8). The Midrash there says, “The voice of my beloved – this refers to Moshe. When he came and told Israel, ‘In this month you will be redeemed,’ they said, ‘Moshe our teacher! How can we be redeemed? Didn’t the Holy One, blessed is He say to Avraham that they will enslave us for 400 years? It has only been 210 years so far.’ He said to them, ‘Since He wishes to redeem you, He does not look at your calculations. He skips over the mountains – the predestined end-times.’”

When the Torah says that they left in haste, it refers to their leaving after only 210 years. Had they stayed the entire 400 years, the Egyptians would have willingly paid them. It is only because they left early that the Egyptians thought they were not entitled to any payment. They reasoned that Hashem had only promised “and afterwards they will go out with great wealth” (Bereishis 15:14) on condition that Israel would fulfill the previous verse and work for the full 400 years. (Actually, however, Hashem in His mercy considered the time Yitzchak and Yaakov spent sojourning in Canaan to be part of the 400 years of exile, so the condition was indeed fulfilled.) We see this also in the story of Geviha ben Pesisa, who won the debate with the Egyptians by quoting the verse, “The time that the Children of Israel dwelt in Egypt was 430 years.”

The verse is not to be taken literally - the Jews only spent 210 years in Egypt. But the Egyptians one thousand years later had no way of knowing this, so they accepted their defeat.

The law that gentiles may not eat of the Pesach offering symbolizes the law that gentiles may not study Torah, as we see in the Midrash quoted above. They may study the Written Torah, which was translated into seventy languages and made available to all (Rashi on Devarim 27:8, Sotah 35b; see Meishiv Davar Yoreh Deah 77). But they may not study the Oral Torah, which explains that the Jews really only spent 210 years in Egypt. When the 72 sages translated the Torah for Ptolemy, king of Egypt, they disclosed this secret (Megillah 9a) because the original Egyptians were no longer ruling Egypt. The Ptolemys were Greek rulers, descendants of one of Alexander's generals.

When Hashem saw that Egyptians at the time of the Exodus did not accept the justice of their payment of gold and silver to the Jews, He said, "This is only because they left early. In the future redemption, I swear that they will not leave exile early." Hashem knew that if we left exile early, the nations of the world would have claims against us, saying that we stole Eretz Yisroel.

The Gemara in fact tells of three debates in which Geviha ben Pesisa represented the Jews: one against the Canaanites, one against the Egyptians, and one against the Ishmaelites. It is interesting to note that in the debates against the Canaanites and the Egyptians, they each asked Alexander for three days to think of a reply, and when they could not, they admitted that Geviha ben Pesisa had won. But in the debate against the Ishmaelites, in which the Ishmaelites claimed that as descendants of Avraham they had a right to part of Eretz Yisroel, and Geviha ben Pesisa replied that Avraham had written a document willing all of his property only to Yitzchak, the Gemara does not say that the Ishmaelites attempted to reply, or admitted their defeat. It seems that the Ishmaelites never retreated from their claim on Eretz Yisroel – a claim they maintain to this day.

Whether they are aware of it or not, there is truth to their claim, as the Zohar (Shemos 32a, end of Va'eira) says: "The Angel of Yishmael stood for four hundred years before the Holy One, blessed is He, and asked: Does someone who is circumcised have a share in Your Name? He said to him: Yes. He said to him: But Yishmael is circumcised – why does he have no share in Your Name like Yitzchok? He said to him: This one was circumcised properly and this one improperly. Furthermore, these cling to Me properly, on the eighth day, but these are far from Me for many days. He said to him: Even so, since he is circumcised, should he not get some reward? (Woe to the day Yishmael was born in the world and was circumcised!) What did the Holy One, blessed is He, do? He distanced the children of Yishmael from clinging to Above, and gave them a portion below in the Holy Land because of their circumcision. The children of Yishmael are destined to rule over the Holy Land for a long time, when it is empty of all, just as their circumcision is empty, not complete (i.e. without p'riah). And they will prevent the Children of Israel from returning to their place, until that merit of Yishmael is used up."

Hashem knew that if the Jews were to leave exile early, they would arouse the Ishmaelites to claim that they had stolen Eretz Yisroel from them. Therefore He said, "For not in haste shall you leave, and in a hurry you shall not go; for Hashem walks before you, your Gatherer, the G-d of Israel" (Yishaya 52:12). If we wait for Hashem to redeem us, He will walk before us and make His presence clear to the entire world. Everyone will recognize this, and they will abandon any claims against the Jews. This is explicit in the preceding verses in Yishaya: "Eye to eye they will see when Hashem returns to Zion" (v. 8). "Hashem has bared His holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our G-d" (v. 10).

Rabbi Simcha Bunim, rav of Zachlin and disciple of Reb Mendel Kotzker, seems to have understood the verse "For not in haste shall you leave" the way we have explained it above - that we will not leave exile early. In a letter printed in Daas Harabbanim (published 1902), he responded to the then-new Zionist movement as follows: "G-d forbid for us to believe that our salvation is dependent on human power. This goes against an explicit verse: 'And those redeemed by Hashem shall return, and come to Zion with song...' (Yishaya 51:11). And later (ibid. 52:3), "So said Hashem: You were sold for free, and not through money will you be redeemed" – as they [the Zionists] imagine. And later (v. 12), "For not in haste shall you leave..." And in the words of Chazal: The Holy One, blessed is He made swear three oaths...that they should not force (ידחקו) the end (Kesubos 111a). Rashi explains this to prohibit praying excessively. If we see that even excessive prayer is forbidden, all the more so taking action, to say, "Our hands will prevail, we have our own language, who can be master over us?" G-d forbid! And although there is another version of the text, that they not make distant (ירחקו) the end, through their sins according to Rashi, in my opinion both versions are true, for if they violate the oath and pray too much, and certainly if they take actions, they will thereby make distant the end because of their sins, G-d forbid. (Daas Harabbanim p. 35)



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