

Takeaway From a Kick Away, and Other Sensitive Matters

Rabbi Yechezkel Greenberg

“Bnai Yisrael did as Moshe had instructed, and they asked the Mitzrim for silver vessels, gold vessels and garments.” Rashi quotes from the Medrash that the list in the Posuk is in ascending order of value, meaning the clothing was more valuable than the silver and gold. How do we understand that?

In this Parsha we were given the Mitzva of setting the calendar and designating the months of the year. **Ramban** notes that the Torah never calls the months by any name; rather they are referred to as the first month, the second month, etc. The names we use are actually Persian names, which we began to use during the Galus Bavel (exile of Babylonia), and continued to do so even after we were back in Eretz Yisrael as a constant reminder of where we had been exiled and that Hashem had saved us and returned us home. Here, too, says the **Chasam Sofer** (quoted in Ichud B'chidud), although throughout the years in Mitzrayim the Yidden did NOT change their mode of dress, when they left they *did* wear Egyptian clothing to remind them of the great miracle of their exodus. Therefore, the Egyptian clothing was more important to them than even the golden vessels.

This was exactly what Moshe had done when he left Mitzrayim as a young boy and traveled to Midyan. Yisro's daughters told their father that an Egyptian man had saved them at the well, and they thought so because Moshe was wearing Egyptian clothing. Why? For the same reason, says the Chasam Sofer, to remind him of the great miracle that Hashem wrought in saving him from Paroh's executioner.

Rashi says the Mitzrim offered the Yidden twice as much as they asked to borrow, which seems to contradict what Rashi said earlier, that the Mitzrim denied having any treasure to give until they saw that the Yidden knew what they had because they had seen it during the Plague of Darkness. The answer is that it's true they didn't want to part with their gold and silver, but when the Yidden asked to borrow clothing to *wear*, they were happy to give them extra, hoping that by wearing the Egyptian clothing the Yidden might become entrapped and become like them!

We must realize the danger of the Galus having an effect on us. We are so influenced by everything that surrounds us, especially by the culture that we live in the midst of. A local sports team can have a modicum of success, and we become crazed by it. The amount of time we waste over such triviality is far too much for us to bear, so Hashem does us the biggest favor and brings the glorious run to an abrupt halt. Lest we mistakenly think it's just arbitrary, the game ends on a most bizarre and unexpected play, to drive home the point that it's Hashem who drives the play. (See, it's our faulty that they can't win; perhaps if we'd be less involved they'd have a better chance!!)

Another example of influences that affect us is today's prevalent attitude that life is all about *me*, which leads one to be deficient in caring for and sensitivity to others. We have to learn from our Gedolim who were sensitive to the slightest things that would be imperceptible to most of us.

Moshe told Paroh that Hashem will strike the first-born “around” midnight, and didn't say “at” midnight. Rashi says he didn't want the Egyptians, who might miscalculate the exact stroke of midnight, to be able to claim that Moshe is a fraud. How could they say that if everything Moshe predicted about the terrible plague would come true? **R' Nissen Kaplan** explained that Moshe's concern was that perhaps their calculation would be a moment early, and for a moment they would think the plague didn't happen at all. Even though a moment later it *would* transpire, and they would then know that Moshe had spoken the truth, but Moshe was concerned for there not to be a Chillul Hashem for even one moment!

R' Boruch Ber Leibowitz once had to leave the room to use the restroom in the middle of listening to a speech, and he left his hat on his shtender until he returned. He explained afterwards that he didn't want the speaker to feel bad and think that the great Rosh Yeshiva was leaving his speech early, so he left his hat to make it obvious that he planned to return. Even though in two minutes when he'd return, it would be obvious that he had only exited to use the restroom, but for *those two minutes* the speaker might have felt bad. *That's* sensitivity!

It was known that when a student of a different Yeshiva was tested by R' Boruch Ber for Semicha (Rabbinical ordination), he would not receive a document until he spent a month in R' Boruch Ber's Yeshiva to allow for him to be observed and to ensure that he was worthy of the title. R' Chaim Pinchos Scheinberg, a young married man from a different town who was unaware of this rule, once came to R' Boruch Ber to be tested for Semicha. After the test was administered, the Rosh Yeshiva told the young man to remain for a month, to which he replied that he couldn't because (not knowing the rule) he hadn't asked his wife permission to stay away so long. He said that he'd travel back home, ask permission and return at once. R' Boruch Ber told him to wait, and then against his common practice he wrote him the Semicha immediately. Afterwards he explained that he realized this man was a Talmid Chacham, and he pictured the scene of his arrival at home. “So, did you receive your Semicha?” his wife would ask excitedly. “No, I did not,” he would answer. Even though he would then follow with the explanation why not, for that first moment his wife's esteem for him would be diminished somewhat. That was reason enough for R' Boruch Ber to make a rare exception and issue the Semicha on the spot.

We must strive to shelter ourselves from the bad influences of the exile, and rather try to emulate the sterling Middos and sensitivity of Gedolim like R' Boruch Ber.