

*A Weekly Serial for those Seeking Practical Remedy  
and Advice from the Teachings of the our Holy  
Teacher, Rabbi Nachman of Breslev zya"l*

# Ale Letrufa

## Weekly Torah Portion

### Feel Free to Serve Hashem

*Exile is enslavement to the past, to yesterday. Faith can shake nature and break our unhealthy patterns.*

Within this week's Parsha, we find an altercation that would later become the epitome of an age old dichotomy -- one between pure faith and denial of Hashem. Moshe and Aharon stood across from the sorcerers of Egypt, with Pharaoh at the sideline. For the outside observer, the battle between these two forces would have been heart-racing: One minute you would be captivated by the miraculous signs of Moshe, Hashem's messenger, and the next minute plunged into confusion by the mimicry of the parlour tricks of the Egyptian magicians.

This dichotomy was most apparent by the transformation of the staff into a serpent, the first part of which the Egyptian sorcerers were at least able to replicate, as well as the first two Plagues of Blood and Frogs. The sorcerers were able to recreate these plagues on a basic level, though nowhere near to scale. By the Plague of Lice the sorcerers were unable replicate it and proclaimed, "it is the finger of G-d."

\*

Behind the veil of this debate lies a much more symbolic struggle - who really shapes reality: Hashem, or man and nature? The Egyptian sorcerers recognized two forces: nature, and man who could control nature through sorcery. Moshe Rabbeinu, through Hashem's command, revealed a new understanding to the Egyptians - that Hashem controls the world. This concept struck Pharaoh and his sorcerers like a thunderbolt. The injection of the concept of Hashem into the Egyptian psyche ultimately led to the redemption from Egypt.

#### Miraculous Signs

Exile and servitude are the embodiment of psychological fixation. A slave is not capable of thinking outside of his surroundings. He knows the outcome of all of his actions: if he lays down to rest, he will be stricken; if he tries to escape, he will be killed; if he does not complete his work, his punishment will be harsh. He hasn't dared raise his head and contemplate other actions in years, actions that could lead to redemption. Then suddenly, Moshe Rabbeinu appears and perfo

These signs and miracles begin to usher in a period of redemption. They shake up all previous notions, and give the

enslaved Jew the opportunity to understand that nature is just one small aspect of the infinite universe under Hashem's command. By Hashem anything is possible, so break free! Nevertheless, this revelation came with conflicting phenomena. The sorcerers could just as well perform miraculous feats with their sorcery.

The stories of Tzaddikim, Rabbeinu explains, require to be told properly, because corresponding to every story of a tzaddik is the story of a wicked man (L'M, 234). The guise of nature lurks close behind emunah and mimics it, and a person always hears two sides - one of emunah and one of nature. Sometimes the two are indiscernible. The Sitra Achra is a great impressionist, but is still relegated to the level of a mimicking ape.

True thoughts of emunah, though, can really move a person. Emunah doesn't allow you to think that something is impossible. If you want it, you only have to believe it will be and pray for it - Hashem is omnipotent in his ability to fulfill any good-intended desire. Emunah breaks the walls of exile and doesn't approve of us complaining about how difficult things may seem or how things turning for the better seems illogical. It requires us to be strong in our good wants and not to give up hope from attaining any level of spiritual perfection.

#### Free Will

The secular world seems to say something similar: if you want something and set your mind to it, anything is possible. Who knows, you may even have a miracle happen. The reasons for one's success is dependant solely upon one's own wants, meaning if I want something I can achieve it because I can do anything. This argument seems fair, until a person is in a situation where his own ability is constrained, where he is enslaved or exiled - such as one's spiritual exile in the hands of one's restrictive and ephemeral desires. This is where the question of free will appears. Hashem executes his will in a way that seems like man runs the world. In previous generations this was through magicians and sorcerers, and in later generations through people's cunning and strong will. The real realization of free will is to choose a life according to Hashem's will.

The implication of free will is just that - you are free to decide whether you want to be a tzaddik and be close to Hashem in any

time or place. You can decide to leave your exile, to avoid inappropriate thoughts, and no longer be slave to Pharaoh, and to reach an even better place than where you were yesterday. The secular world, however, makes personal desire, temporary wants and needs, the pinnacle of the soul, and that is where they suggest man throw himself. Emunah denies this approach and teaches that the ultimate goal to strive for in our lives is fulfilling the desire of Hashem. Living an emunah lifestyle is in itself amazing - everyday a mere human can fulfill the infinite desire of Hashem. You have been given free will to do exactly that, right now!

Before each of the plagues, Moshe would leave the city and out stretch his hands in prayer. Free will and possibilities are only limited by

one's emunah, which can be strong only through self-nullification and prayer. The Egyptian sorcerers, on the other hand, definitely didn't pray; they placed all their faith in their own abilities, and therefore they were not capable of creating anything new. For blood, they were able to produce more blood. For frogs, they were able to conjure more frogs, but to bring lice out from the dirt, ex nihilo, that they couldn't do, because that was the finger of Hashem. Emunah and prayer are the sole powers capable of creating from nothing, and to bring us towards true freedom, the freedom to fulfill Hashem's will through our own actions.

(Based on Likkutei Halachot, Morning Blessings 5)

## *The Merchant that did Teshuvah*

In the city of Nemirov, there lived a Breslover chassid whose name was Rabbi Yisrael Platinski, who worked as a trader and had set times for Torah study. One day, he landed a huge contract - supplying wheat to the Russian army. Only one person at a time was awarded this opportunity, and this time from the entire region, Nemirov was chosen, and from all of the residents of the city, he was chosen.

This contract was guaranteed to turn its recipient into a very wealthy man; however, Rabbi Yisrael found the temptation difficult, as it would require him to move to Moscow the capital and mingle amongst the gentile tradesmen.

As a chassid, he did nothing without first consulting his Rebbe. Rabbi Yisrael went to Rabbi Nachman and asked him, "Rebbe, should I travel to Moscow and take this job?"

Rabbeinu did not answer him with words, but only hinted with his expression - it was clear from his face that this prospect was not desirable. This was Rabbi Nachman's usual way: not to take away a person's free choice, but just to hint to him what he thought and to leave it up to the individual to make the final decision.

In the bottom of the chassid's heart, though, he wanted to land the contract and strike it rich. He refused to take the hint and asked again, "Rebbe, maybe I could still go to Moscow?"

When Rabbi Nachman saw his persistence, he replied to him like this, "Go into a room, and consider the 'yes' and the 'no,' and don't let your personal desires affect your judgement. Afterwards, say five chapters of tehillim and ask Hashem that he should give you good advice. Then, the first decision that comes to your mind - that's what you should do."

Rabbi Yisrael did as Rabbeinu had instructed. He then left the room and said, "Rebbe, I have decided to travel to Moscow."

Rabbi Nachman had an unsettled look on his face. He could tell that the "yea" and the "nay" were not being well thought out by Rabbi Yisrael. Regardless, in his holy way, he did not protest to his decision. Hashem works in mysterious ways. Sometimes, in the course of a journey that could take a Jew far from the path of his creator, he can wind up bringing another Jew closer. As such, who could see the secrets of Hashem's ways, besides for his faithful servants, the true tzaddikim.

Rabbeinu looked at the chassid and gave him leave with a hintful message, "Nu, with bait (in

Yiddish platitzkel) you can catch a sterlet (in Yiddish hecht, a type of large fish)."

Rabbi Yisrael did not get his message at all. He was instead focusing all his attention for the journey to his vast awaiting riches.

Rabbi Yisrael reached Moscow and was put up in some lodgings and made contact with a local Jew, whose last name was Hecht. This Jew was very far from Torah and Mitzvot, and had taken on bad habits. Despite his age, he had not yet married and it seemed that besides for his material success he had nothing else to his name.

Nevertheless, Rabbeinu's prophecy soon came true through this man. This Hecht was deeply affected by his close relationship with Rabbi Yisrael Platinski, and was captivated by his fear of Heaven. Slowly, he returned to teshuva and eventually ceased his former ways and even davened three times a day, as well as performing other mitzvot.

His friend Rabbi Yisrael found him a shidduch with a nice kosher Jewish girl from Nemirov and in a short time this Hecht became a different person. Those who had known him couldn't believe that this illustrious, G-d serving, stringent scholar whose fear of Hashem shown from his face could be the same trader they had known.

Through him another of Rabbi Nachman's words came true, "Anyone who so much as touches one of my followevers, of course will become a kosher person, and not only that, but he will become a tzaddik gamur." (Chayei Moharan, 322)

After these events, Rabbi Yisrael understood Rabbeinu's parting words that were said through Ruach HaKodesh, "by means of bait (platitzkel = Platinski) you can catch a sterlet (hecht = Hecht)." Thus, this journey which had caused him a level of spiritual descent, led to the full teshuva of this Moscovite Jew.

*Dedicated by avraham dovid karnowsky as a  
zchus for his wife and children, and lehatzlochas  
my dear friend Assaf Schreiber.*

*For Donations and Dedications: 0527694386 - 718-697-  
7196 Address: HaChida 3 Apt. 2 Bet Shemesh, ISRAEL  
To Subscribe Via Email: breslev@breslev.us Donations may  
be deposited in Bank Pagi; (052) Branch 179 Account#  
584924, Machon Aleh LeTerufah*