

Parshas Bo *Memories of Days to Come*

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President Bush came to make peace, and, in an aura of naiveté - and sacrificing our holiest city in the process - he believes he will be successful by year's end.

Rabbi Shmuel Berenbaum, LaHavdil, came to rest.

The fact that some here may not have heard of Rabbi Berenbaum speaks greatly to who he was and what he represented. This will not be a eulogy, rather a celebration of a lifestyle, a belief, which has over time been diminished.

Well, this is it. After reliving the life of our forefathers, after finding ourselves in great power in a foreign land, and after being dismissed with time and later turned in to slaves, it is now that we are freed. Everything that we have been promised from the days of Avraham, everything that Moshe assured us of, was about to come to fruition. Today, the Exodus knocks at the door.

Moshe, after a dialogue with the A-mighty, turns his attention to the children of Israel: he teaches them what they must do in order to be saved, a sacrifice, its blood, Matza and Marror. Then, (12:24) he informs Israel that this Law shall remain in effect indefinitely, "...for you and your children. And behold when you come to the Land that G-d will give you...your children will say to you- מה להעבודה הזאת לכם?...and the people bowed and prostrated themselves."

(Indeed, many have wondered why we seemed grateful for this information if, as the Hagadah teaches, this is the question of the wicked son, however, as the Chasam Sofer points out (Drashos 3: pg 66) the Pasuk begins by addressing the

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plural, “your sons”, not the individual as does the Hagadah, and, as the Talmud (Rosh Hashana 24b) teaches we give a group the benefit of the doubt for clearly there must be an explanation if a group all asks the same question.)

However, another question arises: Why here? What is it about this Mitzvah, as opposed to the many more “questionable” and difficult, that we are challenged? What is different about this Mitzvah when we remember then, let us say, Shabbos or Sukkos.

Indeed, we can ask further, why here? Why here, when we are commanded about the Pesach, Matzah and Marror that *will* redeem us are we also taught about a Holyday remembering what has not yet happened, and doing so in such detail as do give us parenthetical advise on the children sitting by those future tables? Were we told, *before* Nesinas HaTorah about the Holyday to come, based on events that will happen?

Let us even go further: We are not commanded on Shavous to separate from our wives three days before, or on Sukkos, to imitate the deeds of Aaron in whose merit came the clouds of glory –so, why would Pesach be different in that we recall and do exactly *what we did* as opposed to celebrating *what was done to us*?

And finally, a question we have perennially asked: Why do we celebrate the Exodus, whose whole point was to get us to Israel, and not commemorate our victory and arrival to the Holy land itself?

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His history, in many ways, is our history: The creation of the Talmud, the views of R’ Saadia Gaon, Rambam, Ramban, the Baal Shem Tov, R’ Yonason Eibeishitz and R’ Yaakov Emden, the philosophy of Ramchal, the brilliance of the Vilna Gaon, etc, etc, etc.

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However, something in the last quarter of the book shifts dramatically: after we arrive to these shores and meet freedom face to face for the first time, after we taste success unparalleled, after we gain acceptance in the modern secular world, instead of continuing as he had started, he sees our *history* change, where no more is the Torah, philosophy, religion, faith, brilliance the centre of our reality, no, no, it is not the Brisker method or how Halachah dealt with Medical Ethics, it is not the Gedolim of Mizrachi's view vs. the Chareidi world, our history in Mr. Johnson's eyes, is solely about Albert Einstein, Golda Meir and Sid Ceaser –all of whom *should and must* be discussed in great detail (well, perhaps not the last), but not at the expense of completely and totally ignoring, even shunning, how the history Mr. Johnson so beautify articulated and woven thus far was carried over to these shores and continues in B.M.G., Y.U., Mir and others, and how magnificent philosophical debates by amazing scholars continues on.

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The child wants to know what we want to know: why are you performing the actions that *caused* the Exodus and not celebrate and focus on the Exodus *itself*?

מה העבודה הזאת לכם

What is this action to you, to us, we need not the redemption through this act.

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As the Pasuk teaches, we answer that we indeed are *not* celebrating the Exodus, rather we celebrate that we *earned* the Exodus: "You shall say (to these children) 'It is a Pesach feast offering to G-d, who skipped over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when he smote the Egyptians, but he saved our houses (in that merit)', and the people bowed...."

Pesach *is* different than all other nights: we do not celebrate *that* we left, rather we remember, *why and how* we left. Indeed this may answer the famous question of R' Chaim (that we based our Shabbos Hagodel Drasha on several years ago) asking why is Pesach night different then all others when we need to recall the exodus – Pesach night *is* different for we do not recall *that* we left rather *how and in what merit* did we leave.

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We perform every year the actions in whose merit we were saved to remind ourselves that even that which is not tangible, what does not exist in the physical world, has its place in our reality.

This had to be taught to Bnei Yisroel now so they too could be aware of what precisely was happening and what they were doing and why: yes G-d's benevolence is real but it is our actions that will be the catalyst –upon hearing *this* answer they bowed in gratitude to a faith and a G-d who sees the unseen and translates the physically indefinable into the spiritual importance.

Pesach, as opposed to Sinai and the Annai HaKovad, was not about the benefits of the here and now; the Exodus itself was meaningless on a *religious* level. It was about where we are going. The eventual conquering of Israel too was a celebration of the moment we *earned* Israel. Parshas Bo.

Rabbi Shmuel Berenbaum as a young boy walked into the Beis Medrash and never left. As the New York Times put it, he never repeated himself because there was always something new for him to teach. He never looked for leadership roles, never sat on committees, never ran organizations. Yes, without leaders we will wither on the vine, without the necessary role we must and do play in the “real” world we shall falter. However, what we must never forget, and what his life reminds us of, is that that which can not be seen, the Mitzvah, the deed whose chain reaction is not visible to the naked eye, is a critical element to our survival.

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