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By the Hakham
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Waera: Israel Wants Physical Freedom, G-d wants Spiritual

וְלִקְחָתִי אֶתְכֶם לִי לְעָם... וִידַעְתֶּם כִּי אֲנִי ה' **וְלִקְחָתִי אֶתְכֶם לִי לְעָם** "And I shall take you to be my people ... and you shall know that I am the L-rd your G-d" (Shemoth 6:7).

When the Children of Israel were in Egypt, the Egyptians afflicted them both physically and spiritually. Obviously, G-d considered their spiritual redemption to be even more important than their physical one. However, as far as the Children of Israel were concerned, the opposite was true. Their preoccupation was the relief from slavery. It was only after they left Egypt and received the Torah that they understood the degree of their spiritual deterioration in Egypt.

We can compare this to a jeweller who was forced to run away from his home town. He had to leave behind all the expensive tools of his trade in his home, and they got stolen. Because of his poverty and hardship away from his home and his suffering on the way, he didn't give his tools a second thought. His whole concern was about his pain and suffering. It was only when he was finally able to return home, the suffering ended, and he wanted to start working again, that he realized his loss and started crying bitterly.

When G-d mentions the four expressions of redemption, He begins with the physical redemption and ends with the words, "When I take you to be my people [only] then will you know that I am the L-rd your G-d".

(See Kether S'addiq,
Parashath Waera)



מדרש בן איש חי
Midrash BEN ISH HAI

5780 פרשת וארא

When a Malnourished Horse Is Better than a Strong One

שֶׁקֶר הַסּוֹס לְתַשׁוּעָה וּבָרֵב חִילוֹ לֹא יִמְלֹט *It is false that a horse brings salvation; nor shall he escape through his great strength* (Tehillim 33:17).

This can be likened to a poor man who was transporting his load from one town to another, through a forest. He was traveling with a malnourished horse, pulling a rickety old cart, which was in constant need of repair. The horse was so weak, that it could not pull the cart and carry the man at the same time, so the man walked behind the horse, puffing and panting. Suddenly he heard the sound of galloping hooves and was soon passed by a man in the very latest model chariot pulled by eight powerful horses. As the chariot passed him, filling the air with dust, the man got a little upset with G-d in his heart and complained as to why G-d could not give him such a chariot and horses also.

While he was still upset at his lot, he heard a voice crying out, "Save me from the hands of these murderers". He understood that the man in the chariot had been attacked and killed in the forest by bandits. When he, himself, left the forest in peace, he blessed G-d for not giving him a fancy chariot with powerful horses, because he might have been killed as well.

The verse can also be translated as follows: *Sheqer Haṣus* – the horse does not function well, but even so it can be *Lithshu'ah* (salvation) for its master. *Ubrob Heilo* can mean that if, on the contrary, the horse can run fast, *Lo Yemalet*, it will not let its master escape.

The message here is that sometimes we think that what we have received is second rate, and we complain about our lot, but we must realize that it is actually for our good and the best thing for us.

(See Dibrei Hayyim on Qoheleth, 11:9)

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The Importance of Hakhnasath Orhim

It says in the Kaf Haḥayyim of Ḥakham Ḥayyim Falaji (as opposed to the Kaf Haḥayyim of Ḥakham Ya'aqob Sofer) that the commandment of Hakhnassath Orhim (welcoming guests) is an exceedingly great one and very important in the eyes of G-d. Not only is there no limit to the reward in the world to come for the fulfilling of this commandment, but success in this world also tends to depend on it.

Eliyahu Hanabi (Elijah the Prophet) usually comes to bless a person with success in this world, including wealth and honor, only on account of this commandment. It says in the Midrash (Rabbah) that the reward for welcoming guests into one's house is to be blessed with sons. There are several examples of this.

Abraham Abinu, 'a"ḥ, who was renowned for his performance of Hakhnassath Orhim, was informed that he would have a child, as a result of fulfilling this commandment. When Ya'aqob Abinu came to the home of Laban, the latter was blessed with both sons and possessions. Yithro (Jethro) had seven daughters but did not have any sons, which is why he had to send his daughters to be shepherds for his cattle. When Moshe Rabbenu 'a"ḥ, came to his home, Yithro was blessed with boys.

(See Kaf Haḥayyim [H' Falaji] 5, Oth 9, 16)

May a Father Use the Priestly Blessing to Bless His Son?

Is a father permitted to bless his sons with the Birkath Kohanim (Priestly Blessing)? This question was answered in Dibrei Mordekhai by Maran Mordekhai Eliyahu, 'a"ḥ.

He mentions that the Rama, 'a"ḥ, states that one who is not a Kohen is forbidden to bless the Priestly Blessing. In fact, one who is not a Kohen is forbidden to raise his hands, separate his fingers in the manner of the Kohanim, and bless the Priestly Blessing, even without saying the actual Berakha (Barukh Atta etc.).

One who blesses his son, however, as well as one who blesses a friend who's going on a trip, does not have the intention of performing the Priestly Blessing that is commanded in the Torah, but rather, he just wishes to use the words of the blessings that are written in the Torah, and it is as if he is merely reading from the Torah. Therefore, there is nothing forbidden about it.

Nevertheless, there are those who are strict and start the blessing from the beginning till the end of the portion, from *Waydabber* till *WaAni Abarekhem*. However, there is no requirement to do so.

(See Dibrei Mordekhai, Parashath Naso, Halakha BaParasha)

Women's Corner - by Rabbanith Ruth Menashe 'a"ḥ

Tell Me Who Your Friends Are - Part 2

When asked by three men to find out which of them had stolen the wallets of the other two, King Solomon changed the subject and asked the men who the most praiseworthy person was in a case where a woman who had promised to marry another man. On the night of her wedding her husband gave her permission to go to the first man and have her vow annulled. On the way a thief, who wanted to steal her jewelry, heard her pleas and let her go.

The one who felt that the thief was the most praiseworthy, explained that it would have required a tremendous amount of effort to overcome his desire and let her go. Immediately upon hearing this King Solomon said: "You are the thief! Since you valued the thief's actions and then praised him, you must be a thief yourself."

We should carefully choose our friends, select the best ones around, and associate ourselves with them. We feel attached to the people with whom we connect ourselves. We will then wish to emulate them, be like them and praise them. As King Solomon wrote in Proverbs **אִישׁ לְפִי מְהַלְלֵוּ** (Mishlei 27:21) *Man is tried according to his praise*. Tell me who your friends are and I will tell you who you are.