

BH

Likkutei Sichos Vol. 11 Mishpatim Sicha 1

A takeaway inspired by this Sicha:

TO BE FREE

When G-D took the Jews out of Mitzrayim he didn't just take us out of an evil country, nor just out of slavery. He gave us complete freedom - one in which another entity cannot control our lives or our destiny. We became G-D's people.

כי לי בני ישראל עבדים - ולא עבדים לעבדים

Yet it is possible for one to choose to sell themselves into servitude. A person might find themselves in a truly dire financial situation whereby the stress is so intense that they feel like their only option is to sell themselves for a number of years as a slave in order to pay off their financial obligations.

This is a very bad choice. For when G-D said, just subjugate yourself to me and not to anyone else, G-D thereby committed that he will come through for us and we need not worry or stress. During these incredible challenging times, G-D wants us to have trust and belief while at the same time he wants us to continuously explore all prospective avenues that may lead to success. Selling oneself is completely giving up hope. It is an attitude that is the antithesis of Judaism.

Yet the Torah is understanding of the plight and hardships of man and therefore allows one to sell themselves if they become so distraught.

The Mishnah states that there are three things that can cause a man to lose his mind and one of them is poverty. The Mishna says pray now (in good times) so that you may never fall into poverty, for if one becomes impoverished they will not have the proper mindset to pray properly let alone choose correctly to help themselves. Poverty causes one to make terrible choices for themselves.

If a slave does not want to go back to normal life after his “sentence” of servitude, and wants to remain a slave, the Torah is very bothered by this. How is it that a Jew that contains a holy soul willingly gives up on the greatest gift that G-D has bestowed upon anyone, the gift of complete freedom? This ability and energy that G-D bestowed upon us is so powerful that no matter what challenges the Jews faced throughout history, they were able to overcome them all.

The greatest non Jewish thinkers, historians and writers have always been baffled by how the Jews, that have always had the greatest challenges of all people in history, not only continually persevered, but always came out on top.

Yet somehow this individual gives up and voluntarily chooses to remain a slave. As a reprimand and a statement for the Torah’s unhappiness, the individual’s right ear is punctured, leaving a blemish, a mark of shame. Only after the individual chooses to go through this process does he then remain a slave.

The Torah doesn’t demand that the piercing be done at the onset of slavery since it is being sensitive to the challenges and hardships that can plague man and cause him to make bad decisions. It is only done after he voluntarily chooses to continue.

To be sold into slavery is the absolute lowest state. It is the hitting of rock bottom. The years of slavery are as a sentence so that the person can rehabilitate himself. The shame of being a slave should have had a great effect on him. By acknowledging the shame that he caused to himself, his family and his friends, he should look forward to getting out and becoming the free and productive man he is meant to be. At that point, he should be ready at the door with great enthusiasm and renewed hope for a great future.

The punishment is only due to the fact that the slave now has a chance to become a “mentch” again, to fulfill his unique destiny. At this point his choice to surrender is not out of financial stress but due to complete unappreciation for the gifts that G-D has bestowed upon the Jews.

The personal lesson that needs to be taken from this is that for six days of the week, we work and deal with worldly issues and all sorts of challenges, be it our jobs, debts ... All of these things enslave us and make it almost impossible to live freely, mentally and emotionally.

To free us, G-D gave us Shabbos -

a day of rest. In Shulchan Aruch it states that from the onset of Shabbos until its end, one is to completely rid themselves of all the week's challenges, pressures, deadlines... for one is to consider them all accomplished. There is nothing to worry about, you're in

G-D's hands now. On Shabbos when one throws off the yoke of the previous week and embraces the energy of Shabbos, one finds the inner strength that G-D bestowed into each and every one of us.

With the rekindling of that inner strength, the Torah promises that the challenges in the coming weekdays, will not feel like slavery again.

Every "dose" of Shabbos brings us closer to true freedom.

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