

עזרי דשע

**Alei Deshe - Weekly Torah Insights and inspiration on
the Parsha from the Rosh Yeshiva Shlit"za of Gur**

True Freedom

When the time of redemption from Mitzrayim arrived, Hashem commanded Moshe (Shemos 11:2), **דַּבֵּר נָא בְּאָזְנֵי הָעָם וַיִּשְׁאַלּוּ אִישׁ מֵאֵת** **וְכָלִי זָהָב** **וְכָלִי כֶסֶף וְכָלִי זָהָב** - *Please speak in the ears of the people: Let each man request of his fellow and each woman of her fellow silver vessels and gold vessels.* The Gemara (Berachos 9a) explains **וְכָלִי** as an expression of request. The Gemara explains this with a parable: An imprisoned man was approached and told that the following day he would be freed and given great wealth. The man responded, "Please, free me today, and I will make do without the riches!" In the same way, the focus of Bnei Yisrael was solely on leaving Mitzrayim, to the extent that Moshe had to beg them to borrow the gold and silver vessels.

However, the *mashal* doesn't seem to fit the *nimshal*. The imprisoned man refused the wealth because it would delay his freedom until the next day. But no one in his right mind would refuse an offer of freedom *and* wealth, to take place immediately. *Yetzias Mitzrayim* was set to be on the fifteenth of Nissan, regardless of whether Bnei Yisrael gathered the riches. So why did they need to be urged to do so?

Tzlach explains why in fact the *mashal* represents the *nimshal* perfectly. If Bnei Yisrael were to borrow gold and silver vessels from their Egyptian neighbors, their departure from Mitzrayim would not be complete until the Egyptians relinquished ownership of the vessels. Indeed, Bnei Yisrael were pursued in the desert by the Egyptians seeking

to regain their wealth. Full freedom would not be achieved until *krias Yam Suf* – all for the sake of fulfilling the promise of (Bereishis 15:14) **וְאַחֲרַי כֵּן יֵצְאוּ בְּרִכְשׁ גְּדוֹל** **וְאַחֲרַי כֵּן יֵצְאוּ בְּרִכְשׁ גְּדוֹל** - *and afterwards they will leave with great wealth.*

Bnei Yisrael preferred to attain full freedom immediately, without the wealth, and this was why Moshe had to make a special request that they borrow the vessels.

But this begs the question: why did **וְאַחֲרַי כֵּן יֵצְאוּ בְּרִכְשׁ גְּדוֹל** have to be fulfilled by borrowing the wealth? Hashem could have arranged that it be gifted to them, and then the Exodus *and* the transfer of wealth would have been swift and complete.

The Gemara (Berachos 32a) relates that following the *cheit ha'eigel*, Moshe said to Hashem, "It was the gold and silver that you showered upon them until they said, 'Enough!' that brought about the *eigel*... It is comparable to one whose father bathed him,

anointed him, gave him to eat and drink... what can he do not to sin?" Perhaps for this reason, too, Bnei Yisrael didn't want to take the riches with them; they understood the harmful effects that material abundance can have on one's spiritual development. They wanted complete freedom, including freedom from the shackles of material riches.

The Gemara (Berachos 9b) understands **וַיִּשְׁאַלּוּם** - *and [the Egyptians] lent them* (12:36) as an expression of coercion; the Egyptians forced Bnei Yisrael to borrow their possessions. The Gemara explains that Bnei Yisrael didn't want to be weighed down by the Egyptians' goods.

This seems difficult to understand, because the Gemara

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לעילוי נשמת
מרת
עקא עדנה
צפורה ע"ה
בת משה מנחם הלוי ז"ל

(Bechoros 5b) says that every Yid had at least ninety donkeys transporting the wealth of Mitzrayim; clearly, they were not burdened by it. If needed, Hashem could have provided another ninety donkeys per person. So what was the 'burden' that made Bnei Yisrael reluctant to accept Mitzrayim's wealth?

Based on the above, the answer is clear. Bnei Yisrael didn't want to be weighed down by material possessions, by the burden of gold and silver which would place their souls in *galus* in this world. They wanted freedom, absolute freedom of the soul.

For this very reason, Hashem commanded that the wealth be borrowed. The message would then be clear: in this transient world, all of one's belongings are only borrowed, not truly owned. As Chazal¹ say, on a person's final journey he is accompanied not by his silver, gold, and precious stones, but only by his Torah and good deeds. With this lesson internalized, Bnei Yisrael could take Egypt's wealth in safety.

(בנאות דשא – בא תשכ"ב)

1 Avos 6:9

Making Room for Hashem

וְהָיָה לְאוֹת עַל יְדְכָה וּלְטוֹטוֹפֶת בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ כִּי בְחוּזֶק יָד הוֹצִיאָנוּ ה' מִמִּצְרַיִם - *And it shall be a sign upon your arm, and an ornament between your eyes, for with a strong hand Hashem removed us from Egypt* (Shemos 13:16).

It is a general rule that all mitzvos are performed with the right hand, which is considered more prominent than the left hand.² *Tefillin*, however, are an exception: the Gemara (Menachos 37a) reads the word יְדְכָה as יד כהה, the weak hand, deducing that *tefillin* are to be worn on one's left arm. Why is *tefillin* different from all other mitzvos? Why isn't it performed with the more prestigious hand?³

The Gemara⁴ derives from the pasuk (Devarim 11:18) וְשַׂמְתָּם אֶת דְּבָרֵי אֵלֶּה עַל לִבְבְּךָ - *You shall place these words of Mine upon your heart*, that *tefillin* must be placed opposite the heart. Simply, this is meant to indicate the proper spot on one's arm; his biceps, adjacent to his heart. However, some *Rishonim* also understand this as another reason why *tefillin* are to be laid on the left arm;

it is to be next to his heart which is on the left side of the chest.⁵

*Shulchan Aruch*⁶ states: "One should have in mind when laying *tefillin* that we are commanded by Hashem to don these four *parshiyos* – which contain the Oneness of Hashem and *yetzias Mitzrayim* – upon the arm opposite the heart and upon the head opposite the brain, so that we may remember... and so that our *neshamah*, which is located in the brain, as well as our heart, which is the location of our desires and thoughts, should be subservient to Hashem. With this, one will remember his Creator and minimize his indulgences."

It now seems clear why *tefillin* – unlike other mitzvos – must be performed with one's left hand. Since the purpose of wearing *tefillin* is to yield one's *neshamah* and heart to Hashem, it must be laid on the arm closest to the heart.

However, according to this reasoning there should be no difference between a right-handed person and a left-handed person; as a rule, the heart is always on the left. Since a left-handed

person in fact wears *tefillin* on his right arm⁷ – his יד כהה, weak hand – it is obvious that adjacency to the heart is not the main reason why *tefillin* are worn on the left arm.⁸ What then is the reason for this difference between *tefillin* and other mitzvos?

In *Halachos Ketanos*,⁹ R. Yaakov Chagiz wonders why the left hand is generally weaker than the right hand. After all, the left hand is adjacent to the heart, so it ought to be stronger. In explanation, he cites the halachah¹⁰ that when finishing *Shemoneh Esrei* one is to take three steps backwards and recite "Oseh shalom..." while bowing first to the left, then to the right and finally straight ahead. Since he stands facing Hashem, he is to bow first to Hashem's right, which is his left. At the beginning of *Shulchan Aruch*, the Rema writes, "One who internalizes that the great King, Hashem, stands over him and watches his actions... will immediately be

7 *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 27:6

8 See *Eretz Tzvi* (vol. 1, 115) and *Dovev Meisharim* (vol. 2, 46), whether one whose heart is on his right side should wear *tefillin* on his right arm so that it will be opposite his heart. They conclude that he should not, just as a left-handed person wears it on his right arm although it is not opposite his heart. See also *Piskei Teshuvos* vol. 2, 159.

9 Vol. 1, 187

10 *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 123:1

2 See *Shabbos* 61a with *Tosafos s.v. d'avad; Shulchan Aruch Harav* 2:4

3 See *Ohr Hachaim hakadosh*

4 *Shabbos* 37b; *Berachos* 13b

5 See *Meiri, Shabbos* 103b (see, however, *Meiri to Sukkah* 37b and *Yevamos* 104b); *Maharsham*, vol. 2 *siman* 140 and other locations; *Mordechai, Halachos Ketanos, Hilchos Tefillin* 969

6 *Orach Chaim* 25:5

fearful and humbled out of fright and humiliation of Him.” R. Yaakov Chagiz concludes, since one’s left hand stands opposite the *Shechinah* of Hashem’s right side, it is weakened out of awe and fear.

We may add that the weakness of the left hand is not merely a *result* of the *Shechinah* resting opposite it, but rather it is what *allows* the *Shechinah* to rest there. As the Kotzker once famously remarked, “Where is Hashem? Wherever He is let in.” Since one’s left arm is physically weak, there is ‘room’ for Hashem’s *Shechinah* to reside opposite it.¹¹

We may now understand that the two reasons given for wearing *tefillin* on the left arm – כהה ך and its position opposite the heart – are actually one reason. We have seen that the physical strength of the left hand is minimized so that the

Shechinah can reside opposite it. Since the *Shulchan Aruch* writes that *tefillin* are placed opposite

we must weaken our physical character¹² so that we can merit the Presence of the *Shechinah*.

(בנאות דשא – בא תשכ"א)

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11 See *Sefer Hachaim, Chaim Tovim* beginning of chap. 8; *Toras Chaim, Sanhedrin* 26b s.v. *mipnei; Haflaah, pischa ze'ira* 14 and *Panim Yafos, Shemos* 15:23; *Sfas Emes, Kedoshim* 5663

the heart to subjugate it to Hashem, we wear it on our weaker arm in order to internalize that

12 See *Ohr Hachaim hakadosh, Vayikra* 26:3, the twenty-fifth explanation

Pidyon Haben With a Kohenes

Chazal relate¹³ that Rav Kahana – whose wife was a *kohenes* – would use items given to his wife for *pidyon haben*. Similarly, the halachah is that one may give *matnos kehunah* of an animal to a *kohenes* who is married to a non-*kohen*. *Chasam Sofer*¹⁴ asks: since the *peiros* (‘fruit,’ i.e., usage) of a woman’s acquisitions belong to her husband,¹⁵ the *matanah* in its entirety had not been given to the *shevet of kehunah*; how can such *matnos kehunah* be valid?

This question has been challenged: if, theoretically, a gift could consist of only a *guf* (‘body,’ i.e., the item itself) and no *peiros*, one could certainly give it as *matnos kehunah*. So where an item contains both, why wouldn’t one be allowed to give only the *guf*, and not the *peiros*, to *kehunah*?¹⁶

13 See *Chullin* 132a

14 *She'elos U'Teshuvos, Yoreh Deah* 301

15 *Gittin* 77a

16 See *Igros Moshe, vol. 9 Yoreh Deah part 5, 42*

Where one gives *matnos kehunah* but retains the *peiros* for himself, it seems clear that he has stolen from *kehunah*. This is because in order to maintain ownership of the *peiros*, he must maintain partial ownership of the *guf* as well; otherwise, the *peiros* would be considered *lo ba l'olam* (not-yet existent).¹⁷ This is different from giving an item that has no *peiros*; there, he has given over full ownership of the item, which consists only of *guf*.

One might draw a parallel from the halachah that *matnos kehunah* can be given as a *matanah al menas l'hachzir* (a gift given on condition that it be returned).¹⁸ Perhaps giving an item’s *guf* and not its *peiros* would likewise be permitted. However, these cannot be compared. A *matanah al menas l'hachzir* is not a gift given while withholding certain rights to it – like giving an item for its *guf* only – rather, it is given in its entirety, only there is a stipulation that it be returned.

17 *Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat* 209

18 *Kiddushin* 6b

*Ketzos Hachoshen*¹⁹ famously maintains that a *matanah al menas l'hachzir* is considered given on a time-constrained basis; but *Chemdas Shlomo*²⁰ points out the difficulty: how could *matnos kehunah* be given for a limited time? In fact, however, even following *Ketzos Hachoshen*, a *matanah al menas l'hachzir* is superior to a gift of *guf* only. A *matanah al menas l'hachzir* may be time-constrained, but at least during that time it is given in full, unlike a gift of *guf*, which at no time is given in its entirety.²¹

It seems evident that one cannot give *matnos kehunah* while retaining the *peiros* for himself. But perhaps this is different from where one gives it – in its entirety – to a *kohenes*, whose husband, a non-*kohen*, will assume ownership of its *peiros*. The *Rishonim* disagree about the concept of a husband's ownership of *peiros* in his wife's acquisitions: does this ownership necessitate partial ownership of the *guf* as well, as is generally the case with ownership of *peiros*; or did the *Chachamim* grant him independent ownership of the *peiros*? According to the second approach, perhaps *matnos kehunah* given to a *kohenes* can be seen as given fully, since her husband does not maintain any ownership of the *guf*.

This idea would be relevant with *matnos kehunah* such as *terumah* and the *matanos* of an animal. But in the case of Rav Kahana using his wife's items of *pidyon haben*, it would not seem applicable. She had been given objects worth the five *sela'im* of *pidyon haben* (*shaveh kesef*)²²; it would seem that since she didn't own their *peiros*, she would not attribute a worth of five *sela'im* to them.²³

*Avnei Nezer*²⁴ discusses the concept of *shaveh kesef*: does it carry value because it can be exchanged for money, or does it have intrinsic monetary value? Following the second approach, we may suggest that although Rav Kahana's wife may not have attributed to the items a value of five *sela'im*, since they intrinsically had that value – and were given to her in their entirety, as above – they were acceptable for *pidyon haben*.

There is another reason the items may have been acceptable for *pidyon haben*. The *Acharonim* suggest that a husband's ownership of *peiros* comes *after* his wife acquires the object. In other words, the wife initially acquires both the *guf* and the *peiros*, after which the husband assumes ownership of the *peiros*.²⁵ Accordingly, since the items were originally given in full to Rav Kahana's wife, the *pidyon haben* was valid; it makes no difference that Rav Kahana acquired the *peiros* afterwards.

However, even according to the opinion that a husband gains ownership of the *peiros* immediately – and not that his wife first has full ownership – Rav Kahana's wife's *pidyon haben* would have been valid (aside our first explanation). One who borrows money from a woman who subsequently gets married may repay her with *shaveh kesef* – although her husband will gain ownership of its *peiros*.²⁶ Similarly, since *pidyon haben* is considered a debt to *kehunah*,²⁷ it is clear that it may be paid to a *kohenes* even with *shaveh kesef*, although her husband will own the *peiros*.

If we would assume that a husband's ownership of *peiros* in fact would invalidate *matnos kehunah*, he may be able to renounce ownership to the *peiros*, thus validating the *matnos kehunah*. This is accordance with the *Acharonim*'s suggestion that a husband can renounce all ownership to a specific item of his wife's property. In fact, he may not need to take the step of making this pronouncement; perhaps it can be assumed that he has this intention, so that his household will gain the *matnos kehunah*.

Because of his question, *Chasam Sofer* says that one who gives *matnos kehunah* to a *kohenes* must stipulate that her husband not assume any ownership over it.²⁸ There is an opinion, however, that such a stipulation can only be made regarding what she will place in her mouth; otherwise, one cannot prevent her husband's share of ownership. If so, *matnos kehunah* given in this way may not be considered properly given, since they will only belong to the *kohenes* vis-à-vis her right to eat them.

(בבאות דשא – בא תשפ"ב)

19 241

20 *She'elos U'Teshuvos, Choshen Mishpat* end of *siman* 10

21 See *Minchas Baruch*, 89

22 See *Kiddushin* 8a with *Tosafos*

23 In fact, as is evident from the above Gemara in *Kiddushin*, the objects were in any case lacking the value of five *sela'im*; Rav Kahana allowed their use since to *him* they were worth five *sela'im*. But how could his value of them determine if they could be used; he was not a *kohen*, only his wife.

24 *Even Ha'ezer* 387

25 See *Hagahos Yad Efraim to Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah* 61

26 *Tosafos, Bava Metzia* 34b

27 *Ketzos Hachoshen* (243) suggests that all *matnos kehunah* are actually payment to *kohanim* for their *avodah*.

28 One can consider whether *Chasam Sofer* would require one repaying a debt to a married woman to make this stipulation.