



Parshas Bo 2019, Stockholm Syndrome

This week's Parsha Perspective is dedicated by the Pershin family In honor of their father's birthday. May he have success, health, and nachas from his entire family.

This week's Parsha Perspective is in honor of the complete and speedy recovery of Sasson Betzalel Ben Batya, Shaul Ben Berta, and Sapir Bas Ariela.

Our Parsha begins with Moshe and Aaron warning Pharaoh about the upcoming plague of locusts. After Moshe and Aaron left, Pharaoh's ministers begged him to set the Jewish nation free; they argued that the Egyptian people suffered excessive pain.

Pharaoh then called back Moshe and Aaron and told them he would allow them to serve G-d in the desert, but they must leave their children behind as collateral. Moshe and Aaron rejected his offer, and Pharaoh stubbornly refused to allow the Jewish people to go with no prior conditions.

When the plagues of locusts and darkness concluded, Pharaoh called Moshe back and offered to let the Jewish nation leave without their animals.

When Moshe refused, Pharaoh sent him away and warned him never to appear in his presence again (10:28) *"You shall no longer see my face, for the day you see my face, you shall die!* The last plague, the passing of all firstborns, began at midnight and started to wreak havoc on Egyptian people.

As the death toll rose, Pharaoh, a firstborn himself, ran to Moshe and told him to lead the Jewish people out of Egypt immediately. The Jewish nation gathered their belongings and the Egyptians' valuables and left Egypt midday on the fifteenth of Nissan.

However, a question comes to mind: During the plague of darkness there were two stages; the first was complete and utter darkness, and the second was darkness so thick that it incapacitated Egyptian people. Rashi gives two reasons for the stages, one of which is that the darkness gave the Jewish people the chance to find treasures in the home of the Egyptians.

But the main reason is that G-d killed the people within the Jewish nation who did not believe in leaving Egypt, but he did not want the Egyptian people to see this happen and say that they are punished the same way we are.

A question comes to mind: was it possible that after over 200 years of slavery, persecution and oppression, anyone would want to stay in that situation and not have their freedom?

Furthermore, in the past two week's Parshas, we read about many instances of the Jewish people not trusting Moshe and his message of freedom, telling him to let them suffer in peace and not give them any hope. Why would some people, after years of abuse not want any notions of freedom?!

There is a condition called Stockholm syndrome, where a hostage develops a psychological alliance with his captor as a survival strategy, resulting in a bond between captor and captive.

The Jewish people were enslaved for 210 years, many of them being born after Yosef and the rest of his brothers passed away, and thus only knew persecution and oppression.

So when Moshe foretold their freedom, they did not listen because they made peace with their situation.

Pharaoh had not only enslaved them physically but rather also spiritually mentally and emotionally too. Using backbreaking labor, he took away their ability to process any notion of freedom, condemning them to a life of servitude.

The Jewish people had Stockholm-like syndrome; they found comfort in being slaves to a foreign King, being persecuted just because of their identity, and therefore disapproved of any action that will change their mindset or situation.

In our daily life, we tend to find comfort in situations even though they are harmful to us, like an addiction we push away anyone who tries to help us find the way out and therefore stay cozy in our situation which is filled with unhappiness stress, and misery.

However, just like most of the Jewish people, it is imperative that you keep your mind and heart open to the possibility of growth, happiness, and achievement. Never sell yourself short on your talents and abilities that can propel you from your current circumstances to a life of fulfillment and satisfaction.

***"I have freed a thousand slaves.
I could have freed a thousand more,
if only they knew they were slaves".***

-Harriet Tubman

*Have a meaningful Shabbos,
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*