

# SICHA SUMMARY

PROJECT LIKKUTEI SICHOS | 5783 - YEAR OF HAKHEL



## Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 24

### *Re'eh, Sicha 2*

#### The Context:

When a Jewish slave's term comes to an end, the owner is commanded to give him a severance gift.

"And when you send him forth free from you, you shall not send him forth empty-handed..." The verse then supplies the reason, "And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord, your God, redeemed you; therefore, I am commanding you this thing today." (Devarim 15:13-15)

The sages in the Sifri infer the rationale: Just as when the Jews left Egypt, G-d gave them the spoils of Egypt from the Egyptian homes, and then gifted them again with the spoils that washed up on the shores of the sea, so, too, an owner must give an abundance of gifts to his former slave.

#### The Questions:

The implication of this derivation is that the gifts the Jewish people received after leaving Egypt were legally classified as severance gifts. But there are a few

important distinctions between the two scenarios.

1. A severance gift must be given by the owner. But in the Jew's redemption, it was G-d who gifted them with the spoils, not the Egyptian slaveholders.
2. A severance gift must be an item that is "in the realm of blessing," meaning, things that can regenerate themselves, such as flock. Yet G-d gifted the people utensils which are not valid for severance gifts.
3. Most critically, if this verse refers to the Egyptian spoils as precedent for the command of severance gifts, then why does the verse make no mention of these gifts! "And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and... God, redeemed you; therefore, I am commanding you this thing today."

#### Joseph's Gifts:

The Rebbe's father explains that Yosef also received severance gifts after leaving Potiphar's servitude. The main gift was the angel Michael teaching him seventy languages, so that Pharaoh's servants would recognize and respect his authority. Pharaoh gifted him the signet ring and staff

which were the symbols of his ascension to viceroy of Egypt. And Potiphar himself gave his daughter's hand in marriage to Yosef.

The same questions asked above can be asked here as well: Why did Yosef receive his main gift, the seventy languages, from the angel and not from his master? And the gifts he received were not regenerative gifts.

### **The Explanation:**

There are two elements in the severance gift: 1) the master has an obligation to show gratitude for the time and effort given to him by the slave. This gift must be generative, so that his gratitude will continuously be shown even after the slave begins his own life. 2) The slave's freedom is complete when he experiences the reverse from his previous state of poverty. When he receives an abundance of gifts, he is truly free. From the perspective of the slave's freedom, the kind of gift is not important, only the abundance of it.

This is why the spoils of the sea, and Yosef's language learning, were considered severance gifts. These may not fulfill the owner's obligation of expressing gratitude, but they do fulfill the role of completing the freedom of the slave, by gifting them with an abundance of wealth (spoils or, in Yosef's case, knowledge).

This is why the verse does not mention the details of the Jewish people's severance gift, but simply says, "and G-d redeemed you." Included in this act of redemption are the gifts given to the Jewish people which completed their experience of redemption and freedom.

### **The Deeper Dimension:**

The Rebbe's father explains that the spiritual service represented by the Jewish slave is the journey from "immature intellect," a Divine service motivated by an emotional appreciation of G-d, to a deeper, mature intellectual appreciation of the Divine Reality. The severance gift given at the end of the service is this gift of "mature intellect." Freedom in kabbalah is associated with intellect, and so the fact that the severance gift is itself the gift of freedom aligns nicely with the legal definition of the severance gift, that it is the completion of the former slave's freedom.

Based on this we can also explain the reason why severance gifts are only given to Jewish slaves and maidservants, but not to Cannanite slaves who are occasionally redeemed for the purpose of a mitzvah. The Jewish slave alludes to the spiritual service of an emotional attachment to G-d. When this service is complete, the person graduates to an intellectual appreciation of G-d. But the Cannanite slave alludes to the spiritual service of submission to G-d which never wavers or changes. For this service, there is no end, and no "freedom" or graduation to intellect, because intellectual appreciation would only interfere with the simple submission of the slave.

Nonetheless, the mainstream service of the Jewish people is that of the Jewish slave, not the Cannanite slave's submission, for the ideal form of divine service is one that involves the selfhood, emotions, and intellect of the person.

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