

SICHA SUMMARY

PROJECT LIKKUTEI SICHOS | 5783 - YEAR OF HAKHEL



Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 16

Shemos, Sicha 4

The Verse:

Moshe and Aharon confronted Pharaoh and demanded that he let the Jewish people serve G-d in the wilderness. Pharaoh denied their request and said:

"Why, Moshe and Aharon, do you disturb the people from their work? Go to your own labors." (Shemos 5:4)

The Midrash:

The phrase "your own labors" implies that Moshe and Aharon did not share in the labor of the rest of the people, but had their "own labors" to tend to. Our Sages explain that the tribe of Levi were not subject to forced labor, but rather, they were permitted to study Torah and teach it to the masses. Historically, every nation had a scholarly class, and Pharaoh permitted the

tribe of Levi to serve in this role for the Jewish people. (Shemos Rabbah 5:16)

The Lesson:

Practically, there was no natural way of escaping Egypt. From a Divine perspective as well, G-d's decree of exile was set for four hundred years, and it could not be shortened. Pharaoh dismissing the attempt of Moshe and Aharon to advocate for the Jews was rational and sensible. "Why are you interfering with the way things are meant to be? Be grateful that you have a unique dispensation from slave work and are able to teach a little Torah to the masses when you can."

But Moshe and Aharon didn't accept this argument. The Jewish people are not subordinate to the laws of nature; we are a miraculous people. Moshe and Aharon would not relent in the face of natural, and even Divine, restrictions on the redemption of the Jewish people. There was an urgent need to take the people out of Egypt before they became so spiritually corrupt that they

would be irredeemable. Therefore, Moshe and Aharon left the comfort of their “own labor” — the private spiritual pursuits permitted to them — to demand that the Jewish people leave Egypt.

This sacrifice can serve as inspiration to those who today are in a similar position to Moshe and Aharon. We may think that our “own labor” is more important than tending to the spiritual needs of others. But, as we have seen, this was Pharaoh’s attitude. No Jew would stand to the side when his fellow’s house is burning and claim, “it is not my place to interfere with his life and his personal choices.” Similarly, when another Jew is in need of education and a spiritual “boost,” we have the responsibility to put our needs aside and help redeem a fellow Jew.

This responsibility is reflected in the verse, “You are all standing before G-d today, from the heads of your tribes... until your woodchoppers and watercarriers.” In an army, the officers are responsible to ensure that the privates are properly outfitted and comport themselves as befits a soldier. So, too, the loftiest Jew is responsible for the spiritual growth and service of the simplest “private” in G-d’s army.

This is the true meaning of loving your fellow as yourself. Just as you dedicate your life to your “own labor” of deep Torah study, so must you ignite that same fervor in the heart of your fellow Jew.
