

SICHA SUMMARY

PROJECT LIKKUTEI SICHOS | 5783 - YEAR OF HAKHEL



Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 17

Behar, Sicha 3

The Tragic Sale:

The Torah describes an unfortunate scenario where a destitute Jew sells himself as a slave to a gentile, or as an attendant to an idol. His relatives are to make every effort to redeem him by purchasing his remaining years of labor from the gentile:

“After he is sold, he shall have redemption; one of his brothers shall redeem him. Or his uncle or his cousin shall redeem him, or the closest [other] relative from his family shall redeem him; or, if he becomes able to afford it, he can be redeemed [on his own].” (Vayikra 25:48-9)

Because the verse listed the relatives in order of their closeness to the slave — brother, uncle, cousin — the Talmud derives that the obligation to redeem the enslaved relative falls on the closest relative who can afford it. First the brother has the

obligation, if he cannot, then the uncle, and so on.

The Questions:

- 1) If this is the case, then the “closest” relative to the slave is the slave himself! Why does the verse only list the possibility of the slave redeeming himself at the very end, “or, if he becomes able to afford it, he can be redeemed [on his own],” and not as the very first possibility?
- 2) In the list of relatives, the father’s absence is conspicuous. Why did the verse not list the father of the enslaved before the brother?

The Inner Dimension:

The saga of the slave alludes to a spiritual tragedy. When a person “sells himself as an attendant to an idol” it is the lowest of possible places a Jew can fall. Granted, he is not worshiping the idol, only tending to its external upkeep, because the Jewish soul is incapable of actually submitting to a foreign god. But tending to the idol alludes to the

complete severing of the conscious level of soul's connection with G-d.

This is only possible if the Jew "forgets his father in Heaven." The core dedication of the Jewish soul to G-d is rooted in the faculty of Chochmah which, in mystical terminology, is called "the father" (because it is the generative spark of faith). When this dimension of the soul is forgotten, then a Jew is not sensitive to the deleterious impact of his sins. Thus, the tragedy of being sold as an attendant to an idol is only possible where there is no "father," no recollection of the core bond between the Jew and G-d.

Because this soul is so deeply disconnected, he cannot "redeem himself." One who is

bound cannot untie himself. This soul requires Divine compassion and inspiration to become awake to his own predicament, and to therefore become redeemed. Once the soul is stirred from its slumber and recalls its connection with G-d, then it can muster its own resources to redeem itself from its foreign master.

Therefore, the verse first mentions the "relatives," the Divine assistance that awakens the soul, and then concludes with the slave himself redeeming himself. Because the ultimate objective is for the enslaved soul to leave his confinement on his own feet, with his own inspiration.
