

The father was very disappointed with his teenage son, no matter what he said to him he continued to spiral out of control. Finally, the father had no choice but to throw his child out on the streets. Unfortunately, even this drastic measure did not have the desired effect and still the child continued his troubling and sometimes dangerous behavior. Even in his son's twenties he saw no change, in fact, matters went from bad to worse. The young man now lived on the streets and spent all his hours in the bar barely pausing to catch his breath between one drunken stupor and another. Finally, the father unable to watch his son suffer, sent one of his trusted friends to seek out his wayward son and bring him back home. The friend found the son pounding home one drink after another and could barely get a cohesive word out of him. Finally, in the few brief moments of lucid consciousness, the friend was able to converse with the young man. The friend asked the young man if he was happy with his present station in life. The young man replied simply that his life was absolutely perfect, it just could not be any better. When the poor father heard the reply of his wayward son, he realized that in this state there was no possibility for a reunion. Before the son could come home, he would have to want to come home, but, how could he get his son to recognize the sorry state of his life and feel the need to come home?

After much deliberation, the father realized that he must open up his son's eyes to the possibility of a greater future; a glimpse, a passing hope, anything for the child to think that a better future could exist. Only after this ray of light, would the young man clearly see his sorry state.

This parable beautifully illustrates a fundamental principal of the Seder experience. The Gerrer Rebbe is puzzled by the sequence of the Seder following Maggid. After hours of dialogue, the Seder finally moves from words to food, because as Jews we all know that it would be impossible to truly imagine the slavery and exodus without the gastrointestinal experience of eating the Matzoh and the Marror. Yet our menu seems to be out of order. At the conclusion of Maggid we then wash and eat the Matzah. Only after the Matzah do we then eat the Marror. Yet, logically wouldn't it make sense to have the Marror prior to the eating of the Matzoh. The Marror which symbolizes the bitterness of our slavery should be eaten first. Only after we fully recognize the harshness of that slavery should we then remember the exodus which is symbolized by the eating of the Matzoh- the fact that when we finally did leave we left in such a hurry that our bread could not even rise. Our menu seems to have it backwards by eating the Marror before the Matzoh. It is like eating the desert before the main course.

The Rebbe explains that we as the rebellious child in the parable could not experience a Geulah, a redemption, in our sad state because we were completely unaware of the true state of our depravity. We felt no slavery; we experienced no bitterness and we certainly had no need for a change. If we did not feel a need for redemption, we could not experience redemption. Just as the child could not come home until he was aware of his sorry state; we could not come home until we recognized the true depths of our suffering.

G-D sensing this predicament gave us a ray of hope and planted in our minds the possibility of a brighter and better future. The thought alone, that an exodus could occur, that we were not destined to spend the rest of eternity bound in Egyptian slavery, just the thought that things could be different made them aware of just how much they wanted things to be different.

For many years of slavery the Jews never even realized precisely how bitter their lot was. The Gerrer Rebbe says that their ray of light, their sliver of hope came when "Vayamas melech Mizrayim," when the king died and a new dynasty arose. It is only after that moment that the Torah tells us "Vayimariru et chayyehem, the Egyptians embittered their lives". When the king died and a faint glimmer of hope crossed the mind of the Jewish people, perhaps escape would

be possible, perhaps a new king would emancipate the Jews or abolish slavery, maybe they could leave behind his horrible life of slavery- it is only then did they realize that their lives were in fact quite miserable. Matzoh – symbolizing the concept and hope of redemption is eaten first, because without the Matzoh there would be no Marror, without the hope of redemption, there is no awareness of the slavery.

Suffering and redemption are inextricably linked. Just as suffering cannot be felt without the hope for redemption, redemption obviously cannot occur without the recognition of suffering. Each one is necessary for the realization of the other. The ultimate expression of the inseparable bond between suffering and redemption is the Korech sandwich, eaten immediately after the Marror. Now, the menu far from being out of sequence, perfectly and accurately reflects the nature of our exodus from Egypt. Matzoh, Marror and Korech, the promise of redemption, the awareness of suffering, and the continuous cycle that forever links the two, do not just accurately describe the Exodus from Egypt, but they also form the most accurate description of the struggles within our very own daily lives.

Chag Kosher Va'Smeach
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