

BITACHON LESSON FROM THE PARSHA

פרשת וַיְהִי בְשַׁלַּח פְּרַעַה אֶת הָעַם תִּשְׁפֹּה – Bitachon vs. Idol Worship

The Midrash (Yalkut Shmoni, Shemos 234) Relates: **זהו עבדו ישראל עבודה זרה לא עולם של רבנו של עולם לא עבדו ישראל עבודה זרה** **המים להם חומה שירד סמאל ואמר לפניו רבנו של עולם לא עבדו ישראל עבודה זרה** **במצרים ואתה עושה להם נסים. והיה משמיע קולו לשר של ים ונתמלא עליהם חמה ובקש לטבען. מיד השיב לו הקב"ה שוטה שבעולם וכי לדעתם עבודה והלא לא עבדוה אלא מתוך שעבוד ומתוך טרוף דעת ואתה דן שוגג כמזיד ואונס כרצון. כיון ששמע שר של ים אותה חמה שנתמלא על ישראל** **As Hashem prepared to split the Yam Suf, the prosecuting angel, Samael, showed up and said to Hashem, 'The Yidden serve idols in Mitzrayim and You are performing miracles for them?'. The angel in charge of the seas heard this and he became enraged at the Yidden for this affront to Hashem, and he wanted to drown them. Hashem immediately responded to Samael, 'Fool! Do you think they intentionally served idols? They did so under enslavement and due to their agitated state of mind, and you are judging erroneous sins as intentional ones, involuntary iniquities as willing ones?'. As soon as the sea's angel heard this, he directed the rage that he initially had for the Yidden and turned it to the Mitzriyim.**

This dialogue needs a bit of clarification. We know that only a fraction of Klal Yisroel was redeemed from Mitzrayim. 4/5 of Klal Yisroel were deemed wicked, and they perished during the three days of *Makas Choshech*. (See Rashi to Shemos 13:18 - (נחמשים עליו בני ישראל מארץ מצרים). If so, the remaining Yidden who left Mitzrayim were not wicked (and are even referred to as Tzadikim; see Yalkut Shmoni Shemos 208), and presumably were not the ones who worshipped idols, so why were they labeled idolaters by the prosecuting angel?

So, we have to examine what is meant by "Idol worship". When we think of idolatry, our minds conjure up images of people foolishly bowing down to wood sculptures or chanting to statues of gold and silver. However, idol worship has many forms, some more subtle than others. One form of idol worship is when one has a lack of Emunah and Bitachon in Hashem's abilities. The Gemara (Pesachim 118b) teaches: **ישראל שבאותו הדור מקטני אמונה היו...שהמרו ישראל באותה שעה ואמרו** **- The Yidden of that generation were lacking faith...they rebelled during the splitting of the sea and said "Perhaps just as we are ascending from one side, so too the Mitzriyim will ascend from the other side [and we will not be saved.]**

The Yidden who merited having the sea split for them were great people! This is the generation that merited open miracles! These are the people who "saw" Hashem at the Yam Suf and exclaimed **"יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֵין אֲחֵר"**; these are the people who heard Hashem's voice proclaim **"אֲנֹכִי ה' אֱלֹהֵי-יִדְ"**. This was the *Dor Deah - the loftiest generation!* Precisely for that reason, were they deemed "small faithed" people, because a person's accountability for lack of Emunah and Bitachon is commensurate to his level of greatness. On their exalted level, they were culpable for doubting Hashem's abilities, so much so that they were deemed "idol worshippers"!

The Posuk (Hoshea 14:4) states: **וְלֹא נֹאמַר עוֹד אֱלֹהֵינוּ לְמַעַשֵׂה יְדֵינוּ** - we will no longer refer to the work of our hands as our god. Attributing success to one's own hands, and not to Hashem, is idol worship! One needn't enter a "house of worship" to serve idols. One can be an idolater while sitting at his desk in his office, or on his couch at home. By thinking thoughts like "This is MY successful business", "I am so shrewd", "I know how to make a good deal", "I am a skilled trader", "I have good luck", "My moves made me wealthy" and the like, one is serving idols. Having such an attitude can transform one's entire business into a pagan cathedral! Such an approach to life can transform one's entire existence into idolatry!

The Posuk (Shemos 20:19) states: **לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ אֱלֹהִים כֶּסֶף וְאֱלֹהִים זָהָב לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ לָכֶם** - You shall not make gods of silver or gods of gold. This doesn't just mean not to fashion gods out of gold and silver; it also means not to turn our money into a god! It demands of us not to worship affluence or the pursuit thereof, and not to worship ourselves and "our abilities" to make money, or make shiduchim, or heal sickness or any other talents loaned to us by Hashem.

Bitachon is not about getting stuff; Bitachon is about getting close to Hashem. Similarly, a lack of Bitachon is getting distant from Hashem; that is a form of idol worship.

The Gemara (Pesachim ibid.) teaches: **קשין מזונותיו של אדם כקריעת ים סוף** - Finding one's daily sustenance is as difficult as the splitting of the sea. If one thinks his Parnassah is his own doing, he should keep in mind that those who see it that way are deemed idol worshippers, and indeed not worthy of having the sea split for them.

Good Shabbos!