

Suffering – Asking The Right Questions

פרשת ויקרא

As the Coronavirus spreads rapidly across the globe wreaking havoc, people are looking for answers. As we try to make sense out of the suffering and pandemonium, it is critical that we realize that the situation we find ourselves in is not happenstance, but rather all from Hashem. We hope that the same way the Makkos in Egypt were here today and gone tomorrow, so will be the fate of the coronavirus. The Rambam tells us in Hilchos Taanis, that when a community is faced with a tragedy they should cry out to Hashem in Teshuvah. He then writes that the mere realization that this is not happenstance, but rather from Hashem will cause the tragedy to be removed. Hence, it is clear that the call of the hour is to realize that the situation we presently find ourselves in is from Hashem, and that every virus has its address.

Many people have woken up to this reality and are constantly asking, what does Hashem want us from us? What is the message? What should I change? These are all valid questions

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and one can find many shiurim that address this. Finding answers to suffering is no simple task, and cannot be taken lightly. In the Hagaddah of the Tosfos Rid he offers an optimistic perspective on suffering that can help us during these difficult times. The Hagaddah states, "From the beginning, our ancestors were idol worshippers. And now, the Place [of all] has brought us close to His worship, as it is stated (Joshua 24:2-4), Yehoshua said to the whole people, so said the Lord, God of Israel, Over the river did your ancestors dwell from always, Terach the father of Avraham and the father of Nachor, and they worshiped other gods." Tosfos Rid in his commentary addresses the question of why the Hagaddah mention our blemished past as

being descendants of idol worshippers. He explains that in truth we can ask why are we praising Hashem for taking us out of the suffering of Egypt? And why are we thanking Hashem for granting us freedom? If He wouldn't have put us in Egypt in the first place He wouldn't have had to free us?

It is this question that the Hagaddah is answering by mentioning our blemished past. The Hagaddah is saying, Hashem wanted to give us Shabbos, the Torah and the Beis Hamikdash. However, even with all His mercy and compassion, our past of descending from idol worshippers, left a genetic imperfection that made us undeserving of these gifts. Therefore Hashem had to subject us to the suffering of Egypt, so that He would be able to have compassion on us and bestow upon us the greatest gifts ever given to mankind.

We can glean from this Tosfos Rid a powerful insight in regards to suffering. Suffering should cause us to ask, what good does Hashem have in store for us? Often Hashem wants to give us unimaginable good, but we are undeserving, possibly to no fault of our own. He then sends suffering upon us as a means to entitle us to this good. The Pesukim tell us that the miracles of the final redemption will completely overshadow those of the exodus of Egypt. Perhaps it is these miracles that he is preparing us for.

BASED ON THE WEEKLY SHMUSS GIVEN BY HARAV SHAYA COHEN, ROSH HAYESHIVA ZICHRON ARYEH

לעילוי נשמת גיטל בת הרב אליעזר מנוח
לעילוי נשמת הרב יוסף חיים בן מאיר
לעילוי נשמת רפאל חיים דוב בן ריסא שושנה
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