

Parshas Bo

When our ancestors brought the first *Korban Pesach*, the *Pesach* sacrifice, in Egypt, they were commanded to do so בְּחֵפְזָם, in a hurry. They were to have their loins girded, their feet shod in shoes and their walking sticks in hand. It would seem that this was done so that they could leave at a moment's notice. However, we know that the *Pesach* had to be completely eaten prior to midnight of that eventful night and they did not leave until the next morning. So why did they *hurry up and wait*?

In the *Mechilta* (*Halachic Medrash* on the Book of *Shmos*), Abba Chanin quotes Rabbi Eliezer that this symbolic "hurrying" was to show that *Hashem* was in a hurry to get us out of *Mitzrayim*, Egypt. The common understanding is that this was because the Jewish people had sunk into the depths of Egyptian immorality and impurity. Had they remained for just a little more time, it would have been hopeless, because the Jewish people would not have been able to be extricated from the depths of the Egyptian impurity.

This explanation raises some questions. Why do the Jews have to be aware of the urgency that *Hashem* felt on that night? Isn't that *Hashem's* concern, not ours? Moreover, why did *Hashem* let us go to the brink of the precipice before he redeemed us? He could have taken us out whenever he wished to do so?

It is possible that the conduct that we were told to display as we ate and waited for *Hashem* to free us was meant to teach us two very important lessons about our personal redemption. *Hashem* is always monitoring where we are and minding that we should not be completely lost. The *Mechilta* applies the verse from Shir HaShirim, "Behold! He is always behind the (separating) wall, supervising through the windows and peeking from the cracks." This means that even when *Hashem* is nowhere to be seen, His presence is right there and very much engaged in watching and guarding us.

The second point is that *Hashem* wants us to know that although we may stray and sometimes get lost quite deeply in our fallen state, the Jewish *neshama* always will be redeemable. This is why He let us go that far in Egypt so that we will always know that there is a path of return no matter how bad things look.

The early weeks of *Sefer Shmos* are a time to read about our nation's redemption and encourage us to think about our personal need for our own salvation from our mistakes and sins. The stark contrast between our situation one moment before the *geulah* and one moment later is meant to encourage us to renew our faith and to renew our belief in personal redemption. If we feel that we've disconnected from the Source and we are alienated from *Hashem*, and people sometimes feel that way, we need to be reminded that that is only our perspective. *Hashem* is nearby and keeping a close eye on where we are so that He can make sure we don't stray too far.