

"TOMORROW" IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE RASHA AND THE OTHER SONS

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 402, Doing Work on Rosh Chodesh. Good Shabbos!

"Tomorrow" Is The Difference Between the Rasha and the Other Sons

This week's reading contains the essence of the story of the Exodus. The parsha contains the words of three of the "Four Sons" mentioned by the author of the Hagaddah. The Shemen HaTov notes that we find something very interesting if we look at the three sons who ask questions (the fourth son is the "One who does not ask"): the Torah introduces the questions of both the Wise son (Chochom) and the Simple son (Tam) with the words "And it will be when your son will ask you tomorrow..." However, the Torah does not use the word "tomorrow" when introducing the Wicked son (Rasha).

The Shemen HaTov explains that the Wise son and the Simple son have questions about the story of the Exodus. They have questions of faith, perhaps. But the questions are asked "tomorrow". They may have inquiries to make on the day after the bringing of the Pesach. But on the fourteenth of Nissan and the night of the fifteenth of Nissan they do what they need to do. Only after they have done what they are supposed to do, do they raise their questions about what they've done.

The Wicked son, on the other hand, is different. If he does not understand, he is not willing to do. That is what makes him into a wicked son. The basis of being a Jew is Na'aseh V'Nishma. Once we understand the overall picture, we realize that we must perform. First we do and then we seek understanding.

The Kotzker Rebbe points out that the definitive statement "Ein K'Elokeinu" (There is no one other than our G-d) precedes all the questions of "Mi K'Elokeinu" (Who is like our G-d?); "Mi K'Adoneinu" (Who is like our Master?); "Mi K'Moshienu" (Who is like our Redeemer?). Only after we have firmly established the basic principle that there is no one like our G-d, can we start raising questions. The questions are deferred until tomorrow.

Rav Chaim Soloveitchik once had a disciple who left the Yeshiva and abandoned the Torah way of life. Unfortunately, this was not all that uncommon in the days of the Volozhin Yeshiva. It was a very turbulent time. Judaism was under assault. There were some very precocious minds in Volozhin. Not everyone withstood the temptations of the Haskalah, of Socialism, of Communism, and the other "isms" that were prevalent in that era.

Many years later, Rav Chaim happened to be in another city and this wayward student came to see him. He said to his old Rebbe, "I have so many questions about Judaism, so many questions of faith. Will you sit down and talk to me about them?"

Rav Chaim responded, "I'll be glad to sit down and talk to you about your questions. I'll talk to you the whole night. But just tell me one thing: When did you get these questions -- before you became a Sabbath desecrator or after you became a Sabbath desecrator?" The student answered, "These questions arose after I became a Sabbath desecrator." Rav Chaim then said, "If that is the case, you have 'Terutzim' [excuses], rather than 'kashes' [questions]. You have already made the break with the G-d of Israel, now you are trying to rationalize your actions. I will answer questions. I will not answer excuses. You can answer 'kashes'; you cannot answer 'Terutzim.'"

Questions are fine -- as long as they come "tomorrow". As long as the commitment and bedrock faith is there, there can be an abundance of questions that may be asked. However, when questions are a pre-condition to action, then we are dealing with the Son who is the Rasha.

The Redemption Can Come Any Time

The pasuk in Shir HaShirim says, "Behold the sound of my Beloved is coming" [2:8]. The Medrash there cites the following narration: Moshe came to the Jewish people and told them that the current month would be the first of months for them, for this was the month in which they were about to be redeemed. They asked, "How will we be redeemed -- we have no good deeds to our credit?" Moshe responded, "Since He wants to redeem you, He will not look at your evil deeds."

This Medrash is revealing an amazing insight: When G-d wants to bring about our redemption, he will not stop to worry about our evil actions. There is a pre-ordained time, when G-d has made up his mind that redemption will arrive, regardless of anything. We can not ask "How can it be that redemption did not arrive in the generation of the Rambam or the Vilna Gaon or the Chofetz Chaim and yet it might come in our generation?" This Medrash is saying that when G-d's pre-ordained time for redemption arrives, redemption will come.

Rav Pam quotes from Melachim II, Chapter 14: Yeravam ben Yoash was a wicked King. The prophet testifies that Yeravam did not deviate from the sins of (his namesake) Yeravam ben Nevat, who caused Israel to sin. He promoted idolatry, he sinned, and he caused the nation to sin. And yet, the Navi says that he extended the borders of Israel from Levo Chamas until Yam Ha'Aravah. This wicked King was successful in extending the boundaries of the Land of Israel far beyond those enjoyed by his predecessors. The pasukim there explain how it was that he was able to accomplish

this despite his wickedness: "For HaShem had seen that Israel's suffering was very severe, with none surviving and none remaining, and there was no helper for Israel." Things were so dark and so bad that HaShem saw the redemption had to come. Through whose hands did it come? It came through the hands of Yeravam ben Yoash.

Rav Pam said that this chapter must be a tremendous source of inspiration and solace for us. We look around and see the status of the Jewish people -- intermarriage rates, anti-Semitism, and a host of other problems. There is none surviving and none remaining! We ask the question that the Jewish people asked thousands of years ago: How can we be redeemed? We have no good deeds to our credit! What is going to be with us?

As the Medrash points out, since G-d wants our redemption, he will not look closely at our deeds. When the Master of the World wants our deliverance to come, he will bring it about, not because of who we are, but despite who we are. We can never say that the situation is spiritually hopeless and therefore we are doomed. It is no worse than it was in the days of Yeravam. When G-d sees that the situation is hopeless, He knows that He must bring the redemption -- may it come speedily in our days.

Transcribed by [David Twersky](#); Seattle, Washington.
Technical Assistance by [Dovid Hoffman](#); Yerushalayim.

This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic topics covered in this series for Parshas Bo are provided below:

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