

Q AND A

CAN WE REVEAL G-D IN THIS WORLD BY EATING MATZAH?

BY ARYEH GUREWITZ



The whole idea of Hashem revealing Himself in the world, as He will do when Moshiach comes, seems quite profound. How can something like this be achieved by simple people doing such simple actions as keeping kosher, eating matzah, and giving tzedakah? Even if this is something that human beings can accomplish, wouldn't we expect it to be done through deep spiritual meditations and things like that?



This question is not really uniquely about Moshiach and Geulah per se, but about the whole way that gashmiyus and ruchniyus interact according to Chassidus. Much of Chassidus involves this idea that physical mitzvos have the power to transform the world into a place where Hashem is revealed, and two entire chapters of Tanya are dedicated to explaining this.¹ Still, it is not enough for us to know that Chassidus states this as fact. Rather, we must internalize this concept to the point that it gives us chayus in the performance of mitzvos and strengthens our emunah in the coming of Moshiach—all based on the realization that the Geulah is nothing more than the revelation of the effect of the actions we do now. What can we do to better internalize the fact that our mitzvos have such great spiritual power? One approach is to reflect on the process by which the physical mitzvos came to have this power. This process is explained in Chassidus and emphasized in the maamarim that explain the deeper aspect of the question of the Ben Chacham in the Haggadah.²

The question of the Ben Chacham is: "What are the eidos, chukim, and mishpatim that Hashem, our G-d, commanded you?" The answer to this question as it is recorded in the Chumash³ (but not the Haggadah) is, "We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and Hashem took us out of Egypt with a strong hand. And Hashem set great and harmful signs and wonders upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon his entire household as we watched. And us He took out of there in order to bring us into, and to give us, the land He swore to our forefathers. Hashem commanded us to perform all these chukim to show that we fear Hashem, our G-d, to benefit us for all time, to keep us alive like this day. And it will be to our credit if we are careful to fulfill this entire commandment before Hashem, our G-d, as He commanded us."

If we wish to explain this on the simplest level, the question is, "What are mitzvos?" and the answer is that (1) they are our obligations to Hashem (in return for taking us out of Mitzrayim) and (2) that

they are good for us. However, Chassidus insists that there must be something deeper going on in this conversation, for this basic question cannot be the question of a Ben *Chacham*—among many other diyukim and questions brought up in the maamarim.

The classic explanation that Chassidus gives instead is that the Ben Chacham is asking a question about the difference between the mitzvos that were done by the Avos and the mitzvos that we do, after Matan Torah. We know that in the form of mitzvos that the Avos did, the main avodah was the kavannah, with physical objects only playing a supporting role. After Matan Torah, though, our main obligation is to do the proper actions, even though kavannah is still significant. The Ben Chacham's question, then, is: how could this form of mitzvos, where the action is the main thing, be the way to cause Hashem to reveal Himself in this world in the ultimate way?⁴

The corresponding answer, according to Chassidus, is that this is the role of Yetzias Mitzrayim in the deeper aspect of our history. Leaving Mitzrayim was not only about our comfort—i.e., that we were slaves and that now we are free—but rather about our nation's mission to create a Dirah Betachtonim. The two hundred-plus years of work with bricks and mortar, followed by all the miracles that Hashem did for us when He took us out, were not only relevant to that generation. They were spiritual events that changed the very nature of the relationship between gashmiyus and ruchniyus, preparing us and the world for Matan Torah, when the power would be given for physical actions to, little by little,⁵ negate the barrier between the higher and lower worlds, such that we can experience Hashem's complete revelation in the physical world. The more we understand this process and see our avodah as a result and continuation of this process, the more natural it will seem to us that simple physical actions can bring about Hashem's revelation.

In light of this, we can answer parenthetically another question of Pesach which is known to bother many Yidden. The question is, even though Hashem truly did do amazing things for us back then, how can we still connect to that and feel that it is relevant today? According to the above explanation from Chassidus, we see clearly the relevance of Yetzias Mitzrayim today. The story is not only about what Hashem did for our ancestors thousands of years ago. It is also the story of the very beginning of the great task that we, the Dor HaShvii, are about to complete—the bringing of the true, complete, and eternal Geulah.

¹ Chapters 36 and 37.

² Regarding all that follows, see the maamar Ki Yishalcha Bincha 5738, ois alef, and the sources cited there.

³ Devarim 6:20-25. Translation taken from Metzudah Chumash.

⁴ In the words of the maamar cited above: eich nimshach Gilui Ohr Ein Sof al yedei avodah zu?

⁵ See maamar V'hechrim 5713.

