

“Pesach Redemption:

If you cast your minds back to Parashas Lech Lecha, you will recall Hashem’s famous assurance to Avrohom Avinu – giving the latter a clear indication of the impending suffering that his descendants would endure before their ultimate redemption. Only after great suffering, ‘*v’acharei-chein yeitz’u birchush godol*’, would Bnei Yisroel be delivered from tortuous slavery and exit Egypt with abundant wealth.

In his famous work, “Haksav Vehakabalah”, Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Meklenburg comments on the phrase ‘*birchush godol*’ (great wealth) as meaning a spiritual and inner devotional wealth as opposed to material possessions. This is why the Torah states ‘*rechush godol*’ – a term referring to the qualitative nature of something, as opposed to ‘*rechush rav*’ which is a more finite and quantitative measure.

Indeed, Chazal explain that the very purpose of Klal Yisroel’s harsh labour in Egypt was to remove any internal spiritual impurities before receiving the ultimate gift of the Torah. Why then, asks the Dubno Maggid, were Klal Yisroel commanded to physically ask the Egyptians for money, jewelry and valuables? In his inimitable way, the Maggid answers with a powerful moshul: *A young lad, seeking to earn a living, had decided to go and work for a wealthy man for 6 years, for which his recompense would be a bag of silver coins. When the time finally came to release the lad, the wealthy gentleman realised that his initial promise of payment was far less than what he owed the young man, decided instead to replace the coins with a cheque worth much more than the silver coins. Bemused by this, the lad merely put the ‘piece of paper’ into his pocket and left his former master in tears – without a word of thanks. The following morning, the young lad’s father paid a visit to the wealthy man’s house. He apologised on behalf of his son, explaining than in his relative inexperience, his son did not understand the workings of a cheque and despite the amount of money far exceeding that of a bag of silver coins, the absence of his promised, tangible wealth had left him rather disconsolate. The father then explained, he would be grateful if at least part of the lad’s payment could be in silver.*

It is for this reason, that the Gemoro explains that Klal Yisroel were commanded to ask the Egyptians for their money and valuables, for it was a tangible wealth and one that they could cherish in interim. In the mindset of a fledgling nation, who as we see later, had their moments of volatility, the physical wealth of the Egyptians proved that Hashem’s promise had true validity. As Klal Yisroel journeyed further beneath the kanfei hanesharim, they realised that their ultimate wealth was not to be found in material belongings, but rather in the shleimus of Torah.

The yetzia from Egypt started with material wealth, although this was by no means the apex of their journey. Over yom tov, let us put into perspective how lucky we are to be part of Klal Yisroel’s everlasting journey. Whilst the world continues to engage purely in the olam gashmi; relentlessly chasing material pursuits 24:7, we pursue a deep and meaningful connection with the Ribono shel Olam, our families and the wider community. In the run up from Pesach to Shavuos, may we be zoche to strengthen and enhance our lives in ruchniyus, as well as gashmiyus, in preparation for the ultimate reward of kabolas haTorah.

(Rabbi Zach Ford, UK)