**Bo 5776: Help Yourself**

By Rabbi Joshua (favorably known as The Hoffer) Hoffman

*With gratitude to the Almighty for sustaining me, and prayer that He continues to do so, this week’s message marks the completion of eighteen years of Netvort. Thanks to all readers for their questions and comments, and to all those who helped print and send out Netvort, particularly during my time in hospitals and rehab centers. As always, a special tip of the Hoffer hat to my long time editor and gabbai, for his continued help.*

After the plague of the first born, Pharaoh’s call to Moshe and Aharon to take the Jew out of Egypt, we are told, “The Bnei Yisroel did according to the word of Moshe: they requested from the Egyptians silver vessels, gold vessels, and garments. The Lord granted the people favor in the eyes of the Egyptians and they lent them...” (Shemos 12:35-36). The rabbis tell us that during the plague of darkness, when the Egyptians could not sit down or stand up, the Jews entered their homes and saw where they kept their valuables, and, the Egyptians were therefore unable to deny having them when the time later came to ask for loans of such. Still, we are told that they gave over their valuables willingly, because the Jews found favor in their eyes. We have mentioned in the past, the explanation of Rav Eliyahu Meir Bloch, in his Peninei Da’as, that when the Egyptians were in a helpless state during the plague of darkness, they weren’t able to eat on their own. In order to stay alive, they needed the assistance of the Jews, who came to their homes and fed them, and in the process, saw where they kept their valuables. That is how the former slaves now attained charm in the eyes of the Egyptians, who willingly handed them their valuables, to the people who had saved their lives. Why, however, was it necessary for the fulfillment of God’s promise, “and afterwards they will go out with great possessions” to occur in this way? After undergoing so many plagues at Moshe’s word, in the name of God, particularly after the plague of the first-born, pure fear of any further plagues would have moved them to agree to give over their valuables. Why does the Torah tell us that they did so because God granted them favor in the eyes of the Egyptians?

Rabbi Baruch Leff, as cited by Rabbi Yissachar Frand, explains that the redemption from Egypt was to serve as the paradigm of all future redemptions, as the prophet tells us, “as the days of your going out from Egypt, I will show you wonders.” The role of the Jewish people, as the prophet Yeshaya tells us, is to be a light unto the nations, to lead them to accept God’s sovereignty and control over the universe, by exemplifying a proper living human being. Finding favor in the eyes of the Egyptians, in this context, was very important in advancing the goal of redemption. We may add that Yosef, who expressed concern for Egyptian prisoners, and cared for the Egyptian people to the point that he suggested a plan to Pharaoh to help them survive the years of famine, served as an example of how to lead the nation to a recognition of God. Indeed, according to one midrash, Pharaoh accompanied the coffin of Yosef as the Jews left Egypt.

*Editor's note: please continue to have Yehoshua ben Yonina in mind in your prayers, among the ill of the nation.*