

to slowly induct Bnei Yisrael into the performance of the Mitzot without overwhelming them.¹⁶ It might have been that the redemptive process would take place over time as Bnei Yisrael slowly gravitated towards God.

No matter what the explanation, one has to account for why God wants Bnei Yisrael to travel three days in order to worship God rather than just engage in whatever activity He desires inside of Egypt. The simple answer might be that which Moshe tells Paraoth after the plague of Arov. "And Pharaoh summoned Moshe and Aharon and said, 'Go and sacrifice to your God within the land.' Moshe replied, 'It would be unconscionable to do this, for that which we sacrifice to God our Lord is sacred (תועבת) to the Egyptians. If we sacrifice that which is sacred to the Egyptians before their very eyes, will they not stone us?! So, we must go a distance of three days into the wilderness and sacrifice to God our Lord as He may command us.'"¹⁷ Paraoth temporarily acquiesces to the request with the stipulation that they do not wander too far away and on condition that they pray on his behalf as well. Once the plague subsides, he predictably reneges on his pledge. Moshe's claim is so convincing that even Paraoth is willing to accede and in the remaining plagues it is the basis for the negotiations that revolve around who and what will travel with Bnei Yisrael to in order to worship God outside of Egypt.

In Sefer Yechezkel, the Navi describes God's perspective with regards to the state of Bnei Yisrael in Mitzrayim and the subsequent Exodus. God retells how He appeared to them in Egypt, most likely through His emissary Moshe, and declared that He was their God (אֲנִי יְקוֹקֶיכֶם). He promised to release them from the bondage of Egypt and to bring them to the wonderful Land of Milk and Honey. At that point, God's only request was that Bnei Yisrael renounce and dispose of their idol worship. God testifies that the people were defiant and refused to adhere to this demand and therefore God was left with no choice, but to pour out His anger upon them. The only reason God does not

annihilate them and still takes them out of Egypt is for the sake of His name so that it should not be profaned amongst the nations who were aware of God's relationship with Bnei Yisrael (וְאָעַשׂ לְמַעַן שְׁמִי) (לְבַלְתִּי הַחֵל לְעֵינֵי הַגּוֹיִם).¹⁸ This is reinforced by the Midrash Chazal regarding Bnei Yisrael's inability to hear Moshe's words of comfort and salvation because "they were short of breath."¹⁹ In the Midrash it asks, is it really possible that someone does not hear good news? Rather, it must be that people were consciously ignoring the message of Moshe because it was too hard for them to discard the Egyptian culture and idol worship they were steeped in.²⁰ In essence, the Jews were indistinguishable from the Egyptians.

In order for Bnei Yisrael to distinguish themselves from the Egyptians, God would have to compel them (see [Parshat Vaera](#)) to take drastic action to demonstrate their allegiance to God. The plan had two parts. Firstly, Bnei Yisrael would sacrifice the Egyptian god to their God which would simultaneously evidence their fealty to God while renouncing their loyalty to the Egyptian culture and idol worship. In addition, they would need to engage in this offering outside the confines of Egypt, a three-day journey into the uninhabited wilderness. Notwithstanding Moshe's concern regarding the undertaking of such an activity in Egypt, there is another, maybe more important, reason that necessitated the worship be conducted outside of Egypt. Paraoth might have expressed this fear when he calls upon his nation to deal with the large and growing Jewish presence in Egypt.²¹ He convinces his people to oppress the Jews in order to prevent them from becoming a fifth-column within Mitzrayim and "leave the land." The Gemara in Sota entertains the possibility that "leave the land" refers to the Egyptians and that Paraoth's fear was that Bnei Yisrael would join the enemy and expel the Egyptians from their own land.²² God might have had a similar fear with regards to Bnei Yisrael if the Jews threw off the yoke of their bondage within Egypt. The newly freed Jewish nation would emulate the behavior of the paradigms of free-men that had been modeled for them and they had

¹⁶ נלכה נא דרך שלשת ימים במדבר – חס ושלום שיהיה הדבור הזה ערמה כדי לברוח אלא כדי לקבל המצות. כי רצה הקדוש ב"ה להכניסם במצות מעט מעט. שהרי נצטוו תחלה על השבת במרה. וכענין שמצינו באברהם שלא אמר לו מיד קח נא את יצחק אלא קח נא את בנך את יחידך אשר אהבת את יצחק. (רבינו חננאל שמות ג, יח וגם ברבנו בחיי שם)

¹⁷ ויקרא פרעה אל משה ולאמר לכו זבחנו לאלהיכם בארץ: ויאמר משה לא נכון לעשות כן כי תועבת מצרים זבח ליהוה אלקינו הן נזבחה את תועבת מצרים לעיניכם ולא יסקלנו: דרך שלשת ימים בלך במדבר וזבחנו ליהוה אלקינו כאשר יאמר אלינו: ויאמר פרעה אנכי אשלח אתכם וזבחתי ליהוה אלקיכם במדבר רק הרחק לא תרחיקו ללכת העתירו בעדי: (שמות ח, כא-כד)

¹⁸ ואמרתי אליהם כה אמר אדני יקוק ביום בחרתי בישראל ואשא ידי לזרע בית יעקב ואודע להם בארץ מצרים ואשא ידי להם לאמר אני יקוק אלקיכם: ביום ההוא נשאתי ידי להם להוציאם מארץ מצרים אל ארץ אשר תרתי להם זבת חלב ודבש צבי היא לכל הארצות ואמר אליהם איש שקוצי עיניו השליכו ובגלולי מצרים אל תטמאו אני יקוק אלקיכם: וימרו בי ולא אבו לשמע אלי איש את שקוצי עיניהם לא השליכו ואת גלולי מצרים לא עזבו ואמר לשפך חמתי עליהם לכלות אפי בהם בתוך ארץ מצרים:

ואעש למען שמי לבלתי החל לעיני הגוים אשר המה בתוכם אשר נודעתי אליהם לעיניהם להוציאם מארץ מצרים: (יחזקאל כ, ה-ט)
¹⁹ וידבר משה בן אל-ה' ואל שבעי אל-משה מקצר רוח ומעבדה קשה: (שמות ו, ט)

²⁰ אמר להם משכו ידיכם מע"ז והדבקו במצות ר' יהודה בן בתירא אומר הרי הוא אומר ולא שמעו אל משה מקוצר רוח וגו' וכי יש לך אדם שהוא מתבשר בשורה טובה ואינו שמח נולד לך בן זכר רבך מוציאך לחירות ואינו שמח אם כן למה נאמר ולא שמעו אל משה (שמות ו ט) אלא שהיה קשה בעיניהם לפרוש מעבודה זרה שנ' ואומר אליהם איש שקוצי עיניו השליכו ובגלולי מצרים אל תטמאו (יחזקאל כ ז) ואומר וימרו בי ולא אבו שמעו וגו' ואעש למען שמי לבלתי החל וגו' (שם יחזקאל ח ט) הה"ד וידבר ה' אל משה ואל אהרן ויצום אל בני ישראל (שמות יג) צום לפרוש מעבודה זרה: (מכילתא בא – מסכתא דפסחא ה)

²¹ הבה נתחקמה לו פן ירבה והיה כפייתקראנה מלחמה ונוסף גם הוא על-שנאינו ונלחם-בנו ועלה מן הארץ - (שמות א, י)
²² ונלחם בנו ועלה מן הארץ - ועלינו מיביעי ליה! א"ר אבא בר כהנא: כאדם שמקלל את עצמו ותולה קללתו בחבירו. (סוטה יא.) וגם עיין אבן עזרא שמות א,

witnessed for generations. Free-people become masters and enslave their adversaries. As the Navi Yechezkel relates, Bnei Yisrael were more than happy with the Egyptian culture, but they were just unable to bear the physical oppression and bondage. If they were to gain their freedom in Egypt, they, in all likelihood, would have turned around and enslaved their Egyptian oppressors who had been recently "defeated" by God. It would be akin to the animals who take over for the farmer in George Orwell's "Animal Farm." They eventually start to more closely resemble the farmer they replaced than their animal peers who joined them in the revolution. In order to avoid this possibility, God insists that Bnei Yisrael travel three days before worshipping Him. The distance would make it clear that this was not simply a slave-revolt where the slaves replaced the masters, but rather a Godly-nation being born that was returning to its ancestral land. Whether they left immediately from there or returned to Egypt, since this was only the beginning, it would be clear to them that their new God wanted them to leave Egypt and not simply replace the Egyptians. Egypt was now behind them and they would not return the same way they left.

Unfortunately, Paraoh's obstinacy prevents this plan from being realized. The time for the Exodus has arrived and Paraoh had yet to permit Bnei Yisrael to take leave and worship God outside of Egypt. This compels Bnei Yisrael to demonstrate their loyalty to God and their rejection of the Egyptian god within the confines of Mitzrayim with the Korban Pesach. The plan has changed and the three-days are no longer relevant since they are going to worship God within Egypt. That is also why when Paraoh releases them, Bnei Yisrael are no longer bound to return. At this point, it will turn out that worshipping God in Egypt is a greater statement of allegiance to God because it will also require significantly more courage for the Jews to worship God in Egypt by sacrificing that which is sacred to the Egyptians. It means taking the risk and acting despite the reservations that Moshe had expressed to Paraoh about the possibility of worshipping God within Egypt. On the other hand, it appreciably raises the specter that Bnei Yisrael will turn on their masters and want to remain in Egypt thereby undermining the Exodus and its purpose.

The last Mishna in Berachot states that "one may not enter the Temple Mount with his staff in hand, wearing his shoes or his money belt or with dust on his feet..."²³ All of these behaviors are considered to be an affront to the sanctity of the Temple. Each of these items is not only an inherent indication of disrespect, but they also signal that one is rushing through their visit to the Temple and will be on their way shortly. Strikingly, the Korban Pesach in Egypt has the following additional requirements above and beyond the yearly Korban Pesach offered on Passover. "It shall be eaten with your belts girded, your shoes on your feet and your staves in your hands; you should eat it in haste..."²⁴ These unique features are nearly word for word that which is found in the Mishna in Berachot. That which was precluded in the Temple is demanded by Korban Pesach in Egypt. It seems that this innovation in the Pesach was there to mitigate the fact that the sacrifice would be brought in the midst of Mitzrayim and not a three-day journey into the wilderness. That which is disrespectful on the Temple mount is necessary by the Korban Pesach. These behaviors are considered inappropriate on the Temple Mount and that is why they are needed by the Korban Pesach. One needs to demonstrate reverence in the presence of the Temple and indicate that they have come to tarry and not run away, because it is a holy place, the location where the Shechina resides. On the other hand, in Egypt the disrespect and haste are needed so that the Jews in Egypt understand that this is their moment to leave, not just replace their Egyptian masters. These requirements make it clear that there is nothing holy or special about Egypt; it is a place, a culture and worship that need to be left behind. It is a stark reminder that God is creating a holy nation that will represent that which is moral and just and not only replicate the Egyptian society they are leaving behind. This is why so many of the social Mitzvot in the Torah also include the refrain that since you were slaves in Egypt you can empathize with those less fortunate and you will therefore not engage in those maligned behaviors towards others. It is important that our principles not only accompany us when we are downtrodden, but also when we are ascendant.

Shabbat Shalom

²³ ...לא יקל אדם את ראשו כנגד שער המזרח שהוא מכוון כנגד בית קדשי הקדשים לא יכנס להר הבית במקלו ובמנעלו ובפונדיתו ובאבק שעל רגליו ולא יעשו קפנדריא וריקיקה מקל וחומר... (משנה ברכות ט,ה)

²⁴ וְכִכְהָ תֹאכְלוּ אֹתוֹ מִתְּנִיגְתֵּי חֲגָרִים גְּעִלֵּיכֶם בְּרַגְלֵיכֶם וּמִקְלֵיכֶם בְּיַדְכֶם וְאָכַלְתֶּם אֹתוֹ בְּחִפְזוֹן פֶּסַח הוּא לִיקָוָה: (שם יב,יא)