



RABBI SHALOM

ROSNER

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Who Goes to Worship Hashem?

יושב את משה ואת אהרן אל פרעה ויאמר אלהם לכו עבדו את ה' אלוהיכם מי ומי ההלכים. ויאמר משה בנערינו ובזקנינו נלך בבנינו ובננותנו בצאננו ובבקרנו נלך כי חג ה' לנו. (שמות יח ט)

And Moshe and Aharon were brought again unto Pharaoh; and he said unto them: "Go, serve Hashem your God; but who and who shall go?" And Moshe said: "We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds we will go; for we must hold a feast unto Hashem." (Shemot 10:8-9)

Moshe and Aharon went to warn Pharaoh of the impending plague of locusts, and Pharaoh's servants pleaded with him to allow Bnei Yisrael to go to the desert to worship their God. Pharaoh then summoned Moshe and Aharon to return, at which point he asked them who would be required to leave Egypt to participate in the offering of sacrifices.

The *Keli Yakar* raises a number of questions on these *pesukim*, the first being why Pharaoh used the double term *mi vami haholkhim* – "who and who shall go" instead of simply "who." Secondly, Pharaoh used the present perfect tense *haholkhim* – "those

who are going" or "the goers" instead of the future tense *yelekh* – "those who will go." Moreover, says the *Keli Yakar*, Moshe replied to Pharaoh: "We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds *we will go*." Why the repetition of *nelekh* – "we will go"? Finally, what did Moshe mean by *ki hag Hashem lanu* – "for we must hold a feast unto Hashem"? Who else would it be for?

The *Keli Yakar* answers all of these questions with one common principle: Pharaoh wasn't really asking who would be going. He basically assumed and decreed that only the men would be able to participate. He was, in essence, telling Moshe: "*Mi vami haholkhim*" – using the double language to indicate: "Look around to the right and then to the left; look around at the rest of the world – who generally goes to offer sacrifices? Only men!" Pharaoh spoke in the present tense using the term "*haholkhim*" because he wasn't asking Moshe who would go to *this* festival; rather, he is rhetorically asking who *generally goes* to bring sacrifices. Pharaoh knew Moshe would ask for everyone to participate, so Pharaoh was negotiating: "Come on, Moshe, be honest with me. You're going to sacrifice? Take the men; they're the only ones who sacrifice."

The Menachem Tzion adds that Pharaoh's view was that only the elders partake in religion. the double language of "*mi vami*

haholkhim” mirrors a statement in Tehillim
מי יעלה בהר ה' ומי יקום במקום קדשו (תהילים כד:ג)
*Who will ascend upon Hashem's mount
and who will stand in His Holy place?*

Who practices religion? Only the elders. Members of the younger generation are busy engaging in pleasures and do not have time, energy or interest in partaking in spiritual matters. Furthermore, to serve God would restrict the people in a more severe manner than under Pharaoh's rule. Pharaoh allows them to eat and do what they want when they are on a break. Hashem will limit what they can eat and the activities in which they may engage. To which Moshe replied – we educate our people from a young age to appreciate our religion. Our religious practices provide additional meaning to our lives. It is not a burden but rather an enhancement of our very being.

Moshe's adds: “We will go with our young and old.” Don't compare our worship of Hashem with the customs of other nations. We *all* go, our whole families, because “we must hold a feast unto Hashem” – all of us, collectively, *lanu*. The sacrifices are at the center of a bigger festival. All other nations bring sacrifices, and that's where the worship starts and ends. We sacrifice as part of a festival in which we all participate. Man's celebration is only complete when his wife and children can partake in the celebration.”

If the family is unable to celebrate together, then something is lacking, because

hag should bring families together. Moshe repeated *nelekh* to explain to Pharaoh that we need youths and elders so they could worship, and young sons and daughters to enhance the holiday joy. “You're right,” said Moshe, “only the older boys and men are necessary for the sacrifices, but everyone else has to be involved for the *simha* element.”

The Torah stresses the importance of educating one's children. The entire religious experience is imbued in us from childhood. It is critical for us to portray our enthusiasm and excitement when fulfilling mitzvos. To make our celebrations, even each week at our Shabbos table a fun and exciting encounter. That is why Moshe demanded that even the children and elderly had to participate in the offering of sacrifices in the desert. ■

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