

## **I shall take you out from under the burdens of Egypt; I shall rescue you from their service; I shall redeem you...I shall take you to Me for a People. (6:6,7)**

*Sforno* takes a somewhat novel approach to explaining the four expressions of redemption which the *Torah* employs to describe the various stages of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. The four *leshonos shel geulah* as interpreted by *Sforno* are: "h,tmuvu" "*I will bring you out,*" when the plagues begin the slavery will end; "h,kmvu"--"*I will save you,*" when you leave their borders; "h,ktdu"--"*I will redeem you,*" with the drowning of the Egyptians in the Red Sea. After the death of your oppressors, you will no longer be slaves; "h,jeku", "*I will take you unto Me as a nation,*" at *Har Sinai* with the giving of the *Torah*.

We must attempt to understand *Sforno's* words. Although *Klal Yisrael* was incarcerated in Egypt for hundreds of years, they remained descendants of a noble and dignified lineage. Why did they need to see their master's demise before they could *feel* a sense of freedom? Should not the many miracles performed *by Hashem--for them--*have been sufficient cause to establish their personal trust in Him? Would not the idea of leaving the shambles of Egypt (after the *makos*) be adequate reason to end their insecurity? Why was another step necessary to eradicate their original slave mentality from their minds?

**Horav A. Henach Leibowitz, Shlita**, derives a significant lesson about human nature from *Sforno's* words. We are our own worst enemy. Once an individual has made up his mind about himself, it is difficult to change his impressions. A negative self-image can be one of the greatest deterrents to our development. Once one has a low image of himself, either self-imposed or created by others--be it teachers, parents, or friends--it is extremely difficult to transform that picture. Although *Bnei Yisrael* were liberated from Egypt, they still remained slaves in their own minds. They were not free *men*; they viewed themselves as free *slaves*. They were afraid of the image of their cruel oppressors that was etched in their minds. It was necessary for them to see the Egyptian corpses washed up onto shore to convince them that they were finally free men.

*Horav* Leibowitz posits that this feeling extends to one's spiritual persona. In fact, probably the most common cause of spiritual deterioration is the lack of appreciation for one's own greatness. When the *yetzer hora*, evil inclination, coerces us to sin, it says, "You can do it. You're just an ordinary guy. You do nothing special. Your sin will not make much of a difference anyway. Leave the *Torah* study and *mitzvah* observance to those who are spiritual giants, not to the plain guy like you." Every Jew must recognize his own self-worth and the love that Hashem has for him as an individual--as a *Tzelem Elokim*. If we would only realize that we are princes, created in the image of Hashem, the idea of sin would be unfathomable. Our self-image and our sense of pride should deter us from sin.

As we sit at the *Seder* table on *Peasch* night, we recall the Exodus and the events leading up to

the unique moment of the giving of the *Torah*. These milestone occasions should elevate our self-image and bring about the realization that we are the children of Hashem. How can a son possibly rebel against such a loving Father? How truly fortunate are we to be endowed with so much. It is simple questions such as these that guide us to appreciate how special we are, imbuing us with a greater understanding of our responsibility to observe *mitzvos*.