

ספורנו פרשת בשלח

שמות פרק טז, ו

(ו) וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן אֶל-כָּל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲרֹב וַיִּדְעֶתֶם כִּי ה' הוֹצִיא אֶתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם:

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(ו) ערב וידעתם. יהי רצון שמה שאמר לי שיתן לכם מזון יהיה באופן זה שיתן לכם בערב צרכי הערב, בענין שתדעו שהאל-ל יתברך הוציא אתכם לגמרי מארץ מצרים, כי יוציאכם גם ממנהגיה, שהייתם יושבים שם על סיר הבשר, בלתי זמן סעודה קבועה כבהמות, כאמרם ז"ל בתחילה היו ישראל כתרנגולים המנקרים באשפה, עד שבא משה וקבע להם זמן סעודה (יומא עה ב):

Haggadah of Rav Yosef Zvi Rimon

Why do we eat the *karpas*?

There are those who are of the opinion that *karpas* is eaten in order to stimulate the interest of the children, in that there will be two dippings, as we state in the Mah Nishtanah: "On all nights we need not dip even once, but on this night we do so twice!" *Bach*, as opposed to this, explains that the *karpas* signifies special freedom in that it stimulates one's appetite before the meal.

This explanation elicits amazement. For the Jewish People, food is a **means** and not an **end**. We do not have any aim in eating except to strengthen our bodies. Thus, *Tur* (155) wrote regarding one's morning meal, and that was the ruling of *Mishnah Berurah* (155:11): "It is a positive commandment to act properly (to eat breakfast) and to guard one's health, in order to be healthy and strong to serve the Creator, may He be blessed."

Why, then, do we eat the *karpas*? Why, at the *seder*, do we have an "appetizer", and attempt to whet our appetite by eating food which will do just that? Is that the proper behavior for a free person? Do truly free people enslave themselves to food and transform their enjoyment of food into an aim in itself, by trying to whet their appetites?

However, if we pay attention, we will see that this is indeed a case of true freedom. It is true that we eat "appetizers" - the *karpas* is meant to whet our appetites, but we do not eat the meal soon thereafter. We wait for a considerable period of time before we actually get to the meal. Meanwhile, we discuss Torah thoughts, read the haggadah, and tell of the Exodus from Egypt. That is true freedom! A free person is able to wait for his meal even when he is very hungry. **A free person can immerse himself in feelings of thanks to God and concentrate on the Exodus from Egypt, even after eating "appetizers" that whet the appetite.**

Karpas - for which those who expound the Torah found a hint in the slavery in Egypt, in that they rearranged the four letters, *chaf, resh, peh, samekh*, to stand for *samekh* (sixty) *ribo* (ten thousands) = 600,000 worked *befarech* (*peh, resh*) in hard labor - is now eaten by free people who declare: the spirit rules over the body. It is the spirit which dictates to the body the proper course of life. *Karpas* whets one's appetite, but - unlike slaves who devour everything they can when it becomes available - we, free people, are not enticed by it. We will smell the food, and will choose to engage in discussing Torah thoughts. We will choose to be servants of God, and only afterwards will we descend to eating our fill.

"Only one who serves God is truly free."