



*Inspired by the teachings of Rabbi Shlomo Farhi*

I want to share with you a very specific pasuk. It is one of the most famous pesukim in the entire story of the redemption from Egypt, but when I stopped to look at it carefully, I realized that there is something very deep going on here.

We ended last week's parashah with Moshe turning to God and saying, "What is going on?" You sent me. You put me in charge. I went to Pharaoh. I went into his chambers. I asked him to let the Jewish people go. And instead of things getting better, **והצלת לא הצלת את עמך** — You did not save Your people. In fact, everything got worse. Why did You do this to me? Why did You send me here?

And God responds and says, don't worry. You wait. Everything has its right time and its right place.

But then God says something very interesting. He tells Moshe: **לכון אמרו לבני ישראל**. Say to the Jewish people: **אני ה**'. I am Hashem. **והוציאתי אתכם מתחת** מתחת **סבלות מצרים** — I will take you out from under the burdens of Egypt. — **והצלת אתכם מעבדותם** — I will save you from their work. **ונגאלתיכם בזרוע נטויה** — I will redeem you with an **ובשפטים גדולים** — I will redeem you with an

outstretched arm and with great judgments. **ולקחתי אתכם לי לעם והיותי לכם לאלויקם** — I will take you to Me as a people, and I will be your God.

And then, in the next pasuk, there is another statement: **והבאתי אתכם אל הארץ אשר נשאתי את יدي** — I will bring you into the land that I swore to give you.

This sequence is known as **ארבע לשונות של גאולה** — the four expressions of redemption: **והוציאתי**, **והצלת**, **ונגאלת**, **ולקחתי**. I will take you out. I will save you. I will redeem you. I will take you to be a nation for Me.

There is also a fifth expression, **והבאתי**, and I will bring you into the land of Israel. But the four core expressions of redemption are these four.

This structure is canonized in perhaps the most experiential way we know it — the night of the seder. The four cups of wine correspond to these four expressions of redemption. And it's not just the cups. On the night of the seder we find four everywhere: the four sons, the four questions. Over and over again, the number four keeps appearing.

Each of these fours is meant to parallel the four expressions of redemption.

But the question is obvious. What does this mean? Why does redemption need four expressions? Why not one? Why didn't God simply say **ונגאלתי אתכם** — I will redeem you — and be done with it? Why break it up into stages?

Rashi comments on the opening words. God says, **אני ה**'. Rashi explains, as he so often does when the Torah uses this phrase, that God is saying: **נאמן בבהבטחתה**. I am trustworthy in what I promised.

Throughout the Torah, especially in mitzvot where no one else would ever know what your true intentions were, Hashem says, "I am Hashem." I know. I know what's in your heart. If I need to reward you, I will. If I need to punish you, I will. You can trust Me. **אני ה'**.

So when God says, **והוציאתי אתכם**, Rashi explains: this is what I promised you. I promised to take you out.

But Rashi does not explain the difference between these four expressions. So for a moment, indulge me. Let's try to understand the **pshat**, just using our own sechel, without opening any sefarim.

**והוציאתי, והצילתי, ולקחתי, וגאלתי**

"I will take you out from under the burdens of Egypt." Then it says, "I will save you from their work." That already sounds strange. If I took you out from under the burden, aren't you already saved from the work?

Apparently not.

**והוציאתי אתכם מתחת סבלות מצרים** seems to mean: I will remove you from the suffering, from the pain, from the crushing weight that is being placed on you. But you might still be working. Then comes **והצילו אתכם מגעודהם** — I will save you from the work itself.

And then comes **וגאלתי אתכם** — I will redeem you. Being freed from the work is still not the same thing as redemption. And even redemption is not the final stage. The final stage is **ולקחתי אתכם לי לעם** — I will take you to Me as a people.

What we are learning here is not just that God did many things for us. We are learning that there were many different layers that had to be addressed for redemption to be complete.

Let me explain this with an example.

Imagine a woman living in a house with her husband. Every single day, he beats her. Physical abuse. Emotional abuse. He humiliates her. He makes her clean the house on her hands and knees with a toothbrush, scrubbing every crack. No dishwasher. No washing machine. Everything by hand. She has to cook everything from scratch. She's not allowed to buy a single sauce. Tomato sauce has to be made from raw tomatoes. She has to raise animals in the backyard because she's not allowed to buy meat.

This is her life. This is her marriage.

Now imagine that someone comes into this house and says, "I figured out a way that your husband can't hit you anymore." Is that enough?

She's still living there. She's still terrified. She's still carrying the workload. The suffering is layered.

This is what the Torah is teaching us.

At the very beginning of Moshe's story, when he leaves the palace and goes out to see his brothers, the pasuk says: **וירא בסבלותם** — he saw *in* their suffering. Rav Hager points out that the word doesn't make sense. It should say **סבלותם** — he saw their suffering. What does it mean that he saw *in* their suffering?

The answer is that sometimes a situation is so overwhelming that the layers blur together. You

don't see them individually anymore. It's like lasagna. When you take a bite, do you really know how many layers there are? Everything is pressed together.

God chose Moshe because Moshe could see **בָּסְבָּלָתָם** — inside the suffering. He could see that it wasn't just slavery. It wasn't just unpaid labor. It was how they were treated. It was the crushing workload. It was the humiliation. It was layer upon layer upon layer.

When we speak to God about our problems, we often focus on the thing that hurts the most right now. But even if that one issue were solved, it wouldn't be enough. It wouldn't get us where we need to go.

## A Story About Prayer, Promises, and Blocking Mercy

There's a funny thing that I think happens sometimes when it comes to prayer. We think that if we ask too much, we're somehow bothering God. Like there's a limit. Like there's a quota.

I read a fascinating story about this.

A man comes to a rabbi. The rabbi looks at him and says, "I can see that your wife is not feeling well. Let's pray together. I'll help you. I'll tell you what to say. Let's pray for your wife."

And the man says, "I can't."

The rabbi says, "What do you mean you can't? Everyone can pray."

He says, "No. I can't."

The rabbi says, "Of course you can. Even if a sharp sword is resting on a person's neck, **אֲלֵיכֶם עַצְמָוּ מִן**, **הַרְחָמִים**. A person should never prevent himself from mercy."

I always loved that language. *Al yimna atzmo*. You are the one preventing yourself. God is ready. The mercy is there. The pipe is open. You're the one shutting it.

So the rabbi says, "Why won't you pray?"

And the man says, "I have one daughter. It was very difficult for us to have children. My wife was broken. We tried everything. Nothing worked."

He says, "I wasn't religious then. I didn't pray. But I prayed that time. I begged. I cried. I stood in front of Hashem and I said: 'If You give me a child, I will never ask You for anything ever again.'"

"And He answered me. I have my daughter."

"So I can't pray. I promised God I'd never ask again."

It's an emotional thing to hear from someone.

But if I were that rabbi, I would put him and his wife into an Uber, send them to the hospital, and do **הַתְּרָתָ נְדָרִים**.

Hashem never asked you for that promise.

God asks you to pray **Shacharit**, **Mincha**, and **Maariv** every day. On Shabbat we add **Musaf**. On Yom Kippur we pray five times.

God does not get tired of our prayers.

We don't run out of opportunities to ask Him for help.

It's the opposite.

The more a person recognizes that they can't live one day without the kindness of Hashem — like we say in **Modim**, *על חסדייך* — the more they understand that prayer is not asking for favors. It's acknowledging reality.

A lot of times people think, "I already asked for this, and this, and this, and this."

But that's not how prayer works.

Hashem says to the Jewish people: I see everything. I see that before I even stop your work, I have to take away your suffering. And even after I stop your work, you still don't belong there. And even after I take you out, you still don't know what a healthy relationship looks like.

Prayer is not about rationing requests.

Prayer is about not cutting yourself off from mercy.

This is where God says to the Jewish people: I see everything. I see that before I even stop your work, I have to remove the suffering. Working is not the whole problem. There is pain and trauma that exist independent of the labor. And even if I stop the work, you still don't belong here. You still need **וְגַאֲלָתִי** — to be taken out entirely.

And even that is not the end.

Imagine that woman again. Her husband can't hit her. He can't scream at her. She doesn't have to do the work anymore. But she's still living in the house. Is the story complete?

**וְגַאֲלָתִי אַתֶּם** is not the final step.

What is fascinating is that the last of the four expressions of redemption is not redemption at all. It is **וְלִקְחָתִי אַתֶּם לִי לְעָם**.

God is saying something very painful here. Every relationship you have ever known with power has been broken. From Avimelech to Pharaoh. From Lavan to Esav. You have never experienced a healthy relationship. You don't know what it means to be loved by someone who wants nothing from you.

Take that woman out of the house, and what often happens? She marries the same person again, because her definition of love is broken. Her understanding of relationship is damaged.

So God says, **וְלִקְחָתִי**. I will take you to Me. I will show you what a healthy relationship looks like. A relationship with power that only wants to give. That does not need anything from you.

That is where healing begins.

So to me, first of all, there are a few very practical expressions of this idea.

Number one, we have a very famous teaching in the Torah. The Torah tells us, in more than one place, that we have an obligation to mirror and to mimic God. The pasuk says, **אַחֲרֵי ה' אַלְקִיכְמָתְבָכָי** — follow in the ways of Hashem.

The Gemara asks: what does it mean to follow in God's ways?

**מַה הִוא רַחֲם אֶתְתָּה רַחֲם, מַה הִוא חָנוּן אֶתְתָּה חָנוּן.**  
Just like He is compassionate, you must be compassionate. Just like He is gracious, you must

be gracious. Just like He is slow to anger, **אָרְךָ אַפִּים**, you must also learn how to wait before getting angry. You are obligated to emulate God.

Another pasuk says, **וּבָו תְּדַבֵּךְ** — you shall cleave to Him. The Gemara explains that this means that whatever actions we see Hashem doing, those are the actions we are meant to imitate. If Hashem does **בְּיִקּוּר חַוִּילָם**, visiting Avraham when he is ill, then we visit the sick. If Hashem buries the dead, then we bury the dead. If Hashem clothes Adam and Chava in Gan Eden, **וַיַּתְפְּרוּ לְהָם עַלְיָתָה**, then we clothe the naked, **מַלְבִּישׁ עֲרוֹמִים**.

In each of these cases, Hashem becomes our paradigm of virtue. This is not optional. It is an obligation.

So far, so good.

But now let's take this one step further.

If Hashem is a redeemer — and we say this every single day — **בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' גָּנוֹן יִשְׂרָאֵל** — You are the redeemer of Israel. We open the Amidah with **בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' גָּנוֹן יִשְׂרָאֵל** — You redeemed us. You redeemed us once, and You are redeeming us still.

If Hashem is a redeemer, and we are obligated to imitate Hashem, then we need to ask a very uncomfortable question: how does one redeem?

How do you take someone out of servitude? How do you free someone who is trapped? How do you help someone who is stuck?

The four expressions of redemption teach us exactly that.

A person needs to be taken out. They need to be saved. They need to be redeemed. And they need to be taken into a new, healthy relationship — one that does not use them for what they provide, but values them for who they are.

That last piece is critical, because it resets the person's entire understanding of relationship inside their psyche.

This means that when we try to help people, we often fail not because we don't care, but because we don't understand which layer we're dealing with.

I'll give you an example.

Not long ago, there was a situation with children living in a very abusive home. The police had been called. Family services had been involved. And for reasons I don't fully understand, nothing was happening. Someone called me and said, "These kids don't have anything."

So we put some money together and bought them coats, because they were freezing. We put some more money together, but we didn't give it to the parents, because the parents were not honest actors. Instead, we arranged a monthly bill at a local grocery store so the family could get food.

I'll tell you something very clearly. Until those kids get out of that house, nothing we do is really saving them. All we are doing is kicking the can down the road long enough for them to age out of an environment of hell.

I remember another scenario from many years ago. There was a person living in a very unhealthy home. I encouraged her to go to seminary in Israel. She

asked me which seminary. And I said, "I don't care. Any."

The advantage was not where she went. The advantage was that she got out of where she was.

Sometimes the very first thing that needs to happen is **וְהַוְצָאתִי**. You take the person out. They need a new environment.

Only after that comes **וְהַצְלָתִי**.

I always thought that it's not just that there are four distinct layers of helping someone who is trapped. There is also a very specific order.

If you save a person but you don't take them out, you did nothing.

If you give someone a new paradigm of relationship but they are still under the heel of the old one, you did nothing.

There is a process. Hashem sees each layer of suffering, each layer of difficulty, and He addresses them in stages.

The sefarim explain that this is why, when we speak about Geulah in the Amidah, we use such interesting language. We say, **את צמה דוד מדרה תגמיה**. We describe redemption like a plant growing.

Why are we talking about plants when we are talking about kings and Mashiach?

Because real change must be organic. It must happen in stages, in ways that a person is capable of absorbing.

Sometimes, if you immediately remove a person from the space where the danger existed, you haven't actually healed them. They are still haunted. The threat still lives in their mind like a boogeyman. Sometimes it is necessary for the person to see that the threat has been neutralized before they are removed, so that they don't carry nightmares for the rest of their lives.

This idea is not limited to abusive relationships.

Sometimes the bad actor in a person's life is their life itself. It is what they have been through. The person needs to be saved not just from someone else, but from the internal damage caused by the process.

This pasuk is teaching us how a person moves from one place to the next.

There is another fascinating pasuk, from last week's parashah. Moshe is living in Midyan, and Hashem tells him that it's time to go back to Egypt. Hashem says, don't worry. All the people who wanted to kill you are gone. **כִּי מִתּוֹ כָּל הָאָנָשִׁים הַמְבַקְשִׁים אֶת נֶפֶשׁךְ**.

Who were those people? Datan and Aviram.

The problem is, they weren't dead. They appear again and again throughout the Torah, at the heart of every rebellion — from the complaints about the man to the rebellion of Korach.

So what does it mean that they died?

Rashi, quoting the Gemara, explains that they lost their money. **ירדו מנכסייהם**. And the Gemara says, **עֲנֵי חַשׁוֹב כְּמוֹת** — a poor person is considered like a dead person.

Now, that sounds harsh. But the idea is not that the person is dead. The idea is that there is an element of life that has been cut off.

The Gemara lists four categories of people who are considered **כַּמְתָּה**: a poor person, a blind person, someone who has no children, and a metzora. In each case, there is a dimension of possibility that has been removed. There are choices they cannot make.

But here's the question that bothered me.

Why does it matter that Datan and Aviram were poor? Snitching to Pharaoh is free. Why couldn't they still be dangerous?

One explanation is that they were wealthy overseers — kapos — slaves in charge of slaves. When they lost their money, Pharaoh would no longer grant them an audience.

But Rav Shlomo Amar shared a deeper idea.

He pointed out that the Gemara does not say **עֲנֵי חַשּׁוֹב כִּמְתָּה**. It says **עֲנֵי חַשּׁוֹב כִּמְתָּה בְּכַמְתָּה**.

A person who grows up poor has no shame asking for money. You see little kids collecting tzedakah, completely comfortable. When they grow up, they ask without embarrassment.

But a person who was once **חַשּׁוֹב** — someone who mattered — and then becomes poor, that person feels dead. He can't lift his head. He can't open his mouth. He apologizes just for existing.

**עֲנֵי חַשּׁוֹב כִּמְתָּה** means: a poor person who was once important.

Maybe Datan and Aviram didn't go to Pharaoh not because Pharaoh wouldn't see them, but because they couldn't see themselves anymore. They were nobodies now.

This teaches us something critical.

People are often trapped not because they want to be, but because their sense of self has collapsed. When you are angry at someone and ask, "How could they do this? How could they act this way?" you are often missing the fact that they are trapped in a paradigm.

Just like someone with an eating disorder who is already skinny, isn't trying to lose weight; They are trying to regain control in a life that feels completely out of control.

People are stuck.

And our job is to see the layers. To have the patience and sensitivity to understand what is actually holding someone in place.

May Hashem bless us to be like Him — not only **גָּאֵל**, who redeemed once, but **גָּוֹאֵל גָּאֵל**, a constant redeemer. Someone who notices. Someone who cares. Someone who helps whenever it is possible.

## Takeaway from the Lecture

Redemption is not a single act. It is a process with layers, and each layer matters. Being freed from pain is not the same as being freed from labor. Being freed from labor is not the same as being redeemed. And even redemption itself is incomplete if a person is not brought into a new, healthy relationship that repairs how they understand power, love, and worth.

Hashem did not rush the Jewish people out of Egypt with one word and one miracle. He addressed each layer of their suffering in order: the pain, the work, the bondage, and finally the broken definition of relationship. Only after that could they become a people who belonged to Him.

This is not only how Hashem redeemed us. It is how redemption works in human life. People are often trapped not by one problem, but by many overlapping ones. Helping someone means seeing them — **בשכבותם** — inside their suffering — and understanding what must come first, what must come next, and what healing actually requires.

To imitate Hashem as **גואל ישראל** means learning how to redeem patiently, sensitively, and in stages, without confusing relief with freedom or freedom with wholeness.

the layers within their suffering — instead of reacting only to what is most visible?

## Shabbat Table Discussion Questions

1. In the four **לשונות של גאולה**, which stage do you think is the most misunderstood in real life, and why?
2. Can you think of a situation where removing one problem did not actually free the person because deeper layers were still untouched?
3. What does **ולקחתי אתכם לי לעם** teach us about the role of relationship in healing after suffering?
4. How does the idea of **ענין חשוב כמה** change the way we judge people who seem stuck, ashamed, or unable to act?
5. When trying to help someone else, how can we become better at seeing — **בשכבותם** —