

1. Rabbi Shlomo Goren, "Human Freedom in the Light of the Torah"

The essential point of departure in the historic experience of the redeemed Jewish nation, when it left the furnace of slavery in Egypt, the solid foundation of our social outlook that serves as motivation, justification, and telos, because of which and for the sake of which all events of this world came to be, those prior to the Exodus and those following it, and which compelled G-d to alter the orders of nature, and to work the array of open and concealed miracles of that era, so as to root it in human consciousness, is the Torah of Israel's sacred recognition of human freedom, in all the life-conditions of individual and public life, and in all social and national conditions, because the human being was created in the tzelem Elokim. Every subordination of one human being to another, whether willing or coerced, injures the purity of his connection to Divinity and his obligations to Heaven, forms an obstruction between the human being and his Creator, and an obstruction to attaining faith in the Above's overall direction of the world. Furthermore, domination and subordination among human beings is antithetical to the possibility of accepting the higher lordship of the Divinity, because only one who is free in body and soul, not subordinated to external ideas, or to external laws and statutes, can subordinate himself to the Divine eternal ideas, and accept upon himself the true Yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven. This is made clear by the words of the Yerushalmi cited below, that accepting the mastery of flesh and blood leads to breaking away from the Kingdom of Heaven, and constitutes abjuration of the Second Commandment of the Ten Commandments: "You must not have other gods before Me". We also find in Mishnah Avot 3:14 establishment of the elevation of the human being in this world, as Rabbi Akiva states: "Dear is humanity because it was created in the Mold; additional belovedness in that he was informed that he was created in the tzelem."

2. Avot Chapter 6

ואומר והלוחות מעשה אלהים המה והמכתב מכתב אלהים הוא חרות על הלוחות –
אל תקרא חרות אלא 'חירות',
שאין לך בן חורין אלא מי שעוסק בתלמוד תורה,

And Scripture says: *and the tablets were the work of G-d, and the writing was the writing of G-d, charut/chiseled on the tablets* - do not read "charut/chiseled" but rather "cherut/freedom" because there is no one free other than one who engages in the study of Torah

3. Divine Will and Human Experience, p. 13

אין לך בן חורין אלא מי שעוסק בתורה
אין לך בן תורה אלא מי שעוסק בחרות
*Only those who engage in Torah can be free;
Only those who engage in maximizing freedom can be b'nei Torah*

Practical implications:

Agunot, patient autonomy, elected leaders, labor law, avoiding welfare dependency, etc.

Counterexamples:

Halakhah per se, eved ivri, eved kna'ani, eved Hashem

Issues:

Definition of freedom, for example

Negative = no external (human) constraining (will) vs.

positive = widest variety of choices, especially regarding self-development/actualization

individual vs. collective

Area of freedom, for example political, religious, theological

4. Rashi to Genesis 1:1

אמר רבי יצחק:

לא היה צריך להתחיל [את] התורה אלא מהחודש הזה לכם, שהיא מצוה ראשונה שנצטוו [בה] ישראל, ומה טעם פתח בבראשית? . . .

Said Rabbi Yitzchak:

It was not necessary to begin the Torah except from *This month shall be for you*, which is the first commandment which Israel was commanded, so why did it open with *In the beginning*? . . .

5. Exodus 12:1-2

וַיֹּאמֶר יְקֹנֶן אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל־אַהֲרֹן בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לֵאמֹר:

הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לָכֶם רָאשׁ חֳדָשִׁים

רִאשׁוֹן הוּא לָכֶם לְחֹדְשֵׁי הַשָּׁנָה:

Hashem said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt:

This month shall be for you the head of months;

it shall be first for you of the months of the year.

6. Jeremiah 34:12-14

וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְקֹנֶן אֶל־יִרְמְיָהוּ מֵאֵת יְקֹנֶן לֵאמֹר: כֹּה־אָמַר יְקֹנֶן אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
אֲנֹכִי כָרַתִּי בְרִית אֶת־אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם בְּיוֹם הוֹצֵאִי אוֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עַבְדִּים לֵאמֹר:

מִקֶּץ שִׁבְעַת שָׁנִים תִּשְׁלַחֻּ אוֹ אִישׁ אֶת־אֲחִיו הָעֶבֶרִי אֲשֶׁר־יִמְכַר לָךְ

וְעַבְדְּךָ שֵׁשׁ שָׁנִים וְשִׁלַּחְתּוּ חֹפְשִׁי מֵעִמָּךְ

וְלֹא־שָׁמְעוּ אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם אֵלַי וְלֹא הָטוּ אֶת־אָזְנוֹם:

The word of Hashem came to Jeremiah from Hashem, as follows:

Thus said Hashem, the God of Israel:

"I made a covenant with your ancestors on the day that I took them out of the land of Egypt, the house of slaves, saying:

'At the end of seven years you must send off, each man his brother Hebrew who may be sold to you; he will have served you six years, and then you must send him off free away from you.'

But your ancestors did not obey Me, and they did not incline their ears."

7. Exodus 21:1-2

וְאֵלֶּה הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר תִּשִּׂים לִפְנֵיהֶם:

כִּי תִקְנֶה עֶבֶד עֶבְרִי

שֵׁשׁ שָׁנִים יַעֲבֹד וּבְשִׁבְעֹת יֵצֵא לְחֹפְשִׁי חָנּוּם:

These are the statutes that you must place before them:

Should you buy a Hebrew slave,

six years he must slave, and in the seventh, he must exit to freedom unencumbered.

8. Exodus 6:13

וַיְדַבֵּר יְקֹנֶן אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וְאֶל־אַהֲרֹן

וַיֹּצִאֵם אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶל־פַּרְעֹה מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם

לְהוֹצִיא אֶת־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם: ו

Hashem spoke to Moses and Aaron

He commanded them toward the Children of Israel and toward Pharaoh king of Egypt

to take the Children of Israel out from the land of Egypt.

9. Talmud Yerushalmi Rosh HaShannah 3:5

דא"ר שמואל בר רב יצחק:
 וידבר ה' אל משה ואל אהרן
 ויצום אל בני ישראל –
 על מה ציום? על פרשת שילוח עבדים

because said R. Shmuel son of Rav Yitzhak:

Hashem spoke to Moses and Aaron

He commanded them toward the Children of Israel and toward Pharaoh king of Egypt –

Regarding what did he command them? Regarding the topic of sending off slaves.

10. Exodus 20:2

אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עֲבָדִים

I am Hashem your G-d Who took you out from the Land of Egypt, from the house of slaves

11. Daf al haDaf to Rosh HaShannah 11b

. . . ובעיקר דברי המהרש"א נבין היטב ענין השופר במעמד הר סיני, משום שנעשו אז בני חורין . . .

via the essential point of Maharsha we can understand well why a shofar blew at the Sinaitic Revelation, because at that time they became free

12. Leviticus 25:55

כִּי-לִי בְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲבָדִים עָבְדֵי הֵם אֲשֶׁר-הוֹצֵאתִי אוֹתָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

because the children of Israel are slaves to Me, they are My slaves, whom I have taken out of the Land of Egypt; I am Hashem your G-d

13. Talmud Bava Kamma 116b

כי לי בני ישראל עבדים - ולא עבדים לעבדים.

Because the children of Israel are slaves to Me – and not slaves to slaves

14. Talmud Sanhedrin 38b

אמר רב יהודה אמר רב:
 בשעה שבקש הקדוש ברוך הוא לבראות את האדם, ברא כת אחת של מלאכי השרת.
 אמר להם: רצונכם נעשה אדם בצלמנו?
 אמרו לפניו: רבונו של עולם, מה מעשיו?
 אמר להן: כך וכך מעשיו.
 אמרו לפניו: רבונו של עולם, מה אנוש כי תזכרנו, ובן אדם כי תפקדנו!
 הושיט אצבעו קטנה ביניהן ושרפם.
 וכן כת שניה.
 כת שלישית אמרו לפניו: רבונו של עולם, ראשונים שאמרו לפניך - מה הועילו? כל העולם כולו שלך הוא - כל מה שאתה רוצה לעשות בעולמך עשה.
 כיון שהגיע לאנשי דור המבול ואנשי דור הפלגה, שמעשיהן מקולקלין, אמרו לפניו: רבונו של עולם, לא יפה אמרו ראשונים לפניך?
 אמר להן: ועד זקנה אני הוא ועד שיבה אני אסבל וגו'.

Said Rav Yehudah said Rav:

When The Holy Blessed One sought to create the human, he created a group of ministering angels.

He said to them: Is it your will that *we will make a human in our mold*?

They said before Him: Master of the Universe, what are his deeds?

He said to them: Such and such are his deeds.

They said before him: Master of the Universe, *what is a man that you should mention him, and a son of Adam that you should command him!*

He extended His little finger among them and incinerated them.

The same with a second group.

The third group said before Him: Master of the Universe, the earlier ones who spoke before You – what did they accomplish? The whole universe is Yours – whatever You will to do in Your world, do!

When He reached the men of the Flood Generation, and of the Split Generation, whose deeds are corrupted, they said before Him: Master of the Universe, did not the earlier ones speak well before You?

He said to them: *even aged I am He, and until hoar I will endure etc.*

15. Shemot Rabbah Ki Tisa 41

מהו חרות? ר' יהודה, ור' ירמיה, ורבנן:
 ר' יהודה אומר: אל תקרי חרות אלא חירות מן גליות;
 ר' נחמיה אומר: חירות ממלאך המו;
 ורבתינו אומרים: חירות מן היסורין.

What is the meaning of *cherut*/freedom? Opinions from R. Yehudah, and R. Yirmiyah, and the Rabbis:

R. Yehudah says: Do not read *charut* but rather *cherut* from exiles;

R. Nechemyah says: *Cherut* from the Angel of Death;

And our masters say: *Cherut* from travails.

16. Rabbi S. R. Hirsch to Genesis 14

הרי לפנינו הסיפור ההיסטורי הראשון על מלכים ומלחמותיהם. נתבונן במציאות המתוארת כאן למען ניטיב להבין את תפקידו של אברהם ועמו. . . אמת כללית נודעה כאן לאברהם אבינו: השפע מביא שעבוד לאומות - כלפי פנים וכלפי חוץ. לכל אומה הרי הוא אומר: אל תקרא "חרות", אלא "חרות", **אין חרות פנימית וחיצונית אלא תחת שלטון החוק המוסרי (עי' לעיל ט, כז).**

We have before us the first historical account of kings and their wars. We will meditate on the reality described here in order to understand well the task of Abraham and his nation ... A general truth was made known here to Abraham our Forefather: Abundance brings subordination to nations, both internally and externally. It says to all nations "do not read *charut* but rather *cherut*". There is no internal nor external freedom except under the reign of the ethical law.