
~ PESACH II ~

Nationhood, Providence & Freedom

Pesach is the story of the birth of the Jewish people and their transition from being oppressed slaves to a nation of nobles and the torchbearers of God's Torah. The first Morasha class on Pesach focused on the reasons for the slavery in Egypt and why the Jews were freed amidst a series of miracles. In this second class on Pesach we will discuss the miraculous birth of the Jewish Nation, *hashgachah pratit* (Divine Providence) during the Exodus from Egypt, and how God's involvement in the Exodus is one of the cornerstones of our belief in God. Furthermore, we will explain how the Exodus from Egypt not only granted the Jewish people physical freedom and a national identity, but also freed them spiritually, enabling them to actualize their spiritual potential through Torah study, mitzvot, and personal growth. Finally, we will discuss how the commemoration of Pesach itself enables us to relive the Exodus from Egypt.

This class will address the following questions:

- ~ What was the purpose of the Exodus from Egypt?
- ~ Why did God form the Jewish Nation before the Jews entered their homeland?
- ~ How does the miraculous Exodus from Egypt reveal Divine Providence?
- ~ What characterizes freedom for the Jewish soul?
- ~ How can we achieve the Pesach Haggadah's ideal that each individual view himself as if he *personally* left Egypt?
- ~ How does Pesach help us learn how to harness and translate inspirational ideas into productive action throughout the year?

Class Outline

Section I. The Miracle of Jewish Nationhood

Section II. Divine Providence and Belief in God

Section III. Freedom for the Jewish Soul

Section IV. Reliving the Pesach Experience

Tradition was sacred all year round, but was eminently manifest on Passover, and rightly so. After all, this festival marked the occasion of the birth of our people, and was the beginning of our uniqueness.

Grandfather had lived in Belgium prior to World War II, and had escaped just ahead of the German occupation. Prior to his leaving Antwerp, he buried many of his Judaica, in the hope that they would one day be retrieved. After the war, they were indeed unearthed and sent to us.

Among the items was a beautiful spoon, gilt and decorated with artistic design. Father was overjoyed with this spoon, for it resurrected many childhood memories for him. It had been given as a gift to his grandfather.

Father used the spoon at the Seder, and then passed it around for us to use. I was thus in possession of a fourth generation item! This was used by the great tzaddik Rabbi Motele of Hornostipol, and it was a reminder of how I was tied to him. Prior to Father's death, he divided his few family treasures among the children. "I'd rather enjoy seeing you have them now," he said. He gave me the Seder spoon.

My children use the spoon at the Seder, as do their children. To the little ones, it is just a very unusual ornate spoon. Before too long though, they will know that this spoon was used by their ancestor, Rabbi Motele of Hornostipol, and that this concrete item is evidence of the chain in which they are an important link. (From Abraham J. Twersky, Generation to Generation, Traditional Press, pp. 112-113.)

Let's rediscover the beginning of our Jewish legacy ...

SECTION I. THE MIRACLE OF JEWISH NATIONHOOD

The miraculous existence of the Jewish people has been noted even by non-Jewish historians. Not only is the survival of the Jews extraordinary, but so too was their very formation.

1. **Professor T. R. Glover, The Ancient World, pp. 184-191 – The continued existence of the Jewish people is unmatched by any other nation in history. How did the Jewish people really begin?**

No people of the East has had a stranger history than the Jews ... the ancient religion of the Jews survives, when all the religions of every ancient race of the pre-Christian world have disappeared ... Again it is strange that the living religions of the world all build on religious ideas derived from the Jews ...

The great matter [offered to historians] is not "What happened?" but "Why did it happen? Why does this race continue? Why does Judaism live? How did it really begin?" These questions will not be answered here [in my book] ... but there lies the uniqueness of the Jews.

The following sources describe the birth of the Jewish people at the Exodus from Egypt. Their birth is symbolized by the physical renewal and rebirth of nature at springtime. This is one of the reasons why the Torah requires Pesach to be celebrated in the spring (around March or April, Shemot/Exodus 33:18), as the next source describes.

2. **Rabbi Mordechai Becher, Gateway to Judaism, p. 192 – Pesach celebrates the birth of the Jewish Nation, and is mirrored by the springtime re-birth of nature.**

The Jewish festivals are not mere commemorations of past events. They enable us to access the

spirituality inherent in a particular time of year. From the time of Creation, the month of Nissan was designated as a time of beginning, birth, and renewal ...

[Therefore] Pesach is associated with spring because it is the time of the physical birth of the Jewish nation. Just as the soil produces a new crop in the spring and the first buds blossom on the trees, so too, the Jewish nation was born in the spring. The Jews were slaves, considered by society as subhuman, and continually engaged in hard manual labor. They were under constant pressure, and even their time was not their own. In this sense, the Jews as a people were in a state of non-existence in Egypt.

Pesach celebrates our redemption from that state, our physical coming into being as a nation. (This was followed closely by the beginning of our spiritual nationhood, when we accepted the Torah at Mount Sinai on Shavuot.) Pesach therefore occurs in the spring, the time of birth and creation in nature.

Pesach is the inaugural festival of the Jewish people, because it marks our emergence as a nation. The birth of the Jewish people had three phases and can be compared to the gestation and birth of a child:

1. Exile in Egypt – the fetus in the womb
2. Exodus from Egypt – the birth
3. From the Exodus until receiving the Torah – growth and maturation.

Each phase is described in the following sources.

3. **Rabbi Chaim Friedlander, Sifsei Chaim Vol. III, p. 37 – The fetus in the womb: the development of the Jewish people in Egypt was a hidden process, just as the development of a fetus in the womb is hidden from sight.**

1. Exile in Egypt is compared to the gestation of a fetus in the womb. A fetus develops internally, hidden from outside view. So too, God formed the Jewish people and prepared their redemption while He remained hidden from view ... Furthermore, the Jews did not perceive that they were becoming God's nation. It appeared to them as if there were no justice and no judge, and that evil was prevailing. However, if one looked beneath the surface, one could see that God's Providence was at work ...

[השלב] הראשון - גלות מצרים. נמשלה היא לימי העיבור כמו העובר המתקדם ומתפתח מבפנים ולא נראה מבחוץ, כך הכין הקב"ה בגלות מצרים את יצירת ישראל, וגאולתו מתוך הנהגת הסתר פנים ... ולא ראו כלל כי עם ה' הָמָּה, ונדמה היה כאילו ח"ו לית דין ולית דיין, והרשעים כביכול עושים כרצונם. אולם המתבוננים יכולים היו להבחין בהשגחת השי"ת בתוך ההסתר ...

4. **Ibid. pp. 37-38 – The astonishing and sudden emergence of the Jewish Nation from within Egypt after 210 years of slavery is compared to the birth of a child after nine months of gestation.**

2. The Exodus from Egypt is compared to the birth of a child. The birth phase is reflected in the verse, "Has any god ever miraculously come to take for himself a nation from within a nation?" (Devarim/Deuteronomy 4:34). The Sages explain: just as a person guides and pulls a fetus out of the womb, so too God extracted the Jewish

השלב השני יציאת מצרים הנמשלת ללידה. על תקופה זו נאמר "או הנסה אלקים לבוא לקחת לו גוי מקרב גוי" (דברים ד, לד). ואמרו חז"ל (ילקו"ש אות תתכח) "כאדם שהוא שומט את העובר ממעי הבהמה, כך הוציא הקב"ה את ישראל ממצרים ..."

people from Egypt (Yalkut Shimoni, 828) ...

The Exodus occurred suddenly and quickly, just as the fetus leaves the mother's womb. [Relative to the nine months of gestation, the actual birth is very fast]. After an extended period of God's concealment, we suddenly experienced open miracles ... [as the Midrash relates:] "A simple maidservant at the Reed Sea saw more miracles than the great prophet Yechezkel/Ezekiel" (Mechilta, Beshalach, Ch. 3).

היציאה ממצרים היתה פתאומית ובזמן קצר ביותר. כעזיבת העובר את רחם האם (כשמושתהית הלידה יש בכך סכנה לולד). ממצב של הסתר פנים עברו ברגע אחד לגילוי של נסים גלויים ... "ראתה שפחה על הים מזה שלא ראה יחזקאל בן בוזי" (מכילתא בשלח (השירה) פר' ג) ...

5. **Ibid. p. 39 – The growth and maturation of the Jewish people involved taking the spiritual inspiration given as a free gift at the Exodus and building it into our personalities through our own efforts.**

3. From the Exodus until receiving the Torah – The birth is followed by a period of growth and maturation. The spiritual elevation that we received at the Exodus was a gift. The next phase is for us to do the work of acquiring these spiritual levels, and building them into our personalities ...

Therefore, the forty-nine days following the Exodus are a period of spiritual preparation and growth to prepare for receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai.

השלב השלישי - הימים שבין יציאת מצרים לקבלת התורה - ...לאחר הלידה באים ימי הגדילה. כל המדרגות שקיבלנו ב"מתנה" בעת יציאת מצרים, עלינו לעשותן יסוד וקנין בנפשנו, ע"י עבודה עצמית ...

נמצא שמ"ט הימים ימי הכנה להתבססות הקניינים הרוחניים שזכו להם, כדי שיהיו ראויים לקבלת התורה ולמעמד הר סיני.

Our formation as a nation is unlike any other in history. Our nationhood is not based on revolution, triumph in battle, conquest of a land, or any of the other normal manifestations of national pride and struggle for independence (Rabbi Nosson Scherman, ArtScroll Stone Chumash, Shemot 12:14-20). As the next source shows, we were a nation before we even had a land of our own!

6. **Ibid. Vol. I, p. 422; Vol. III, p. 34 – First we became a nation, and then we received the Land of Israel. Our existence as a nation does not depend on a piece of geography.**

[Rabbi Friedlander comments on the following phrase in the Aleinu prayer:] "He has not made us like the nations of the other lands" – ... The Jewish Nation is not like other nations of the world, since our formation and existence as a nation is not connected to a piece of land ...

The Jewish people did not receive the Land of Israel in the way that other nations need a piece of land to ensure their physical survival. The Jewish people were born in the desert after leaving Egypt. We received the Torah there, and even took form there as "a kingdom of priests

חלק א', דף תכב:

"שלא עשנו כגויי הארצות" ... עם ישראל איננו כגויי הארצות, כי התהוות האומה וקיומה אינם קשורים בארץ ...

חלק ג', דף לד:

עם ישראל לא קיבל את הארץ כדרך כל העמים הזקוקים לפיסת אדמה לצורך קיומם הפיזי, עם ישראל נולד במדבר לאחר שיצא ממצרים, את התורה קיבל שם, ואף שם במדבר התגבש לממלכת כהנים וגוי קדוש.

and a holy nation” [Shemot 19:6].

We did not become a nation by settling together in the Land of Israel. Rather, on the contrary, through our being a unified nation we received the Torah, then we remained in the desert for forty years eating manna, and only after all this did we receive an additional “instrument” with which to fulfill the Torah: the Land of Israel.

לא בהתיישבם בא”י נעשו לעם אלא להיפך: עם היותם לעם קיבלו את התורה, ושוב במשך ארבעים שנה נוספות שהו במדבר ואכלו מן, רק לאחר מכן קיבלו “כלי” נוסף לקיום התורה: ארץ ישראל.

God’s plan was that the Jewish people in Egypt would become totally powerless, so that when they were reconstituted they would have nothing but what God had given them and the spiritual heritage of the Patriarchs (Rabbi Nosson Scherman, ArtScroll Stone Chumash, Shemot 12:14-20). As the next source describes, the purpose of the Exodus was for the Jewish people to become God’s nation.

7. **Ibid. Vol. I, pp. 405-406 – The whole purpose of the Exodus was to become a nation of God’s representatives, fulfilling His purpose in Creation.**

Unlike other nations which form by themselves, the Jewish people became a nation through the Exodus from Egypt. Furthermore, unlike other nations, the Jewish Nation was formed by God. And not just into any nation, but into *His* nation, the Nation of God. This is reflected in the verse, “I will take you for myself, to be a nation, and I will be your God” (Shemot 6:7).

This was the aim and purpose of the Exodus: to be a nation of God’s servants and representatives, His children who fulfill His plan in Creation. This is the deeper meaning of the verse: “I have borne you on the wings of eagles ... to be to Me the most beloved treasure of all peoples ... a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Shemot 19:4-6).

שכל מציאות עם ישראל נהייתה על-ידי יציאת מצרים, לא ככל העמים שנתהוו לעמים מאליהם. משא”כ עם ישראל השי”ת עשה אותם לעם ביציאת מצרים, ולא לעם רגיל כשאר העמים אלא לעמו, עם ה’, כמש”כ “ולקחתי אתכם לי לעם והייתי לכם לאלוקים” (שמות ו, ז).

וזהו מטרת כל יציאת מצרים ותכליתה להיות עם עובדי ה’ ובניו העושים רצונו כמש”כ (שמות יט, ד-ו) “ואשא אתכם על כנפי נשרים ... והייתם לי סגולה מכל העמים ... ממלכת כהנים וגוי קדוש” ...

KEY THEMES OF SECTION I:

- ☞ The physical birth of the Jewish Nation occurred at the Exodus in the springtime in the month of Nissan. This month was designated from Creation as a time of beginning, birth, and renewal. The physical manifestation of that spiritual energy is the blossoming of trees and flowers after the thawing of winter’s ice and snow. The historical manifestation of that energy was the birth of the Jewish people at their redemption from Egypt.
- ☞ Our birth as a nation is unparalleled in world history. Which other people was formed as a nation with no land of its own, no conquest, no revolution, and no triumph in war? Our birth amidst the blaze of the miracles of the Exodus testifies to the fact that the Jewish people are a nation above nature, a Nation of God.

SECTION II. DIVINE PROVIDENCE AND BELIEF IN GOD

The miraculous formation and survival of the Jewish people teach us a core Jewish belief – that God orchestrates world history through hashgachah pratit – Divine Providence. Divine Providence is defined as God's *awareness* of every detail of Creation – including each person's behavior and innermost thoughts and feelings – and His *personal involvement and relationship* with us based on who we are and what we're doing with our lives (Rabbi Chaim Friedlander, *Emunah v'Hashgachah*, p. 9.) The Ramban (Nachmanides) teaches below that the miracles in Egypt clearly manifested God's Divine Providence and form the cornerstone for our belief in God. (See the Morasha class *Hashgachah Pratit – Divine Providence* for a full discussion).

1. **Rabbi Mordechai Becher, Gateway to Judaism, p. 191 – Pesach means to “skip over,” and refers to God's awareness and control of existence.**

The very name of the holiday conveys an important concept in Jewish thought. The word *pesach* means to skip over. It is derived from the last of the Ten Plagues, in which God struck the Egyptian firstborn in every house, but “skipped over” the houses of the Jews. This skipping over was a clear demonstration of God's Divine Providence, His omniscience and His power over existence itself.

How did God know which Egyptians were actually the firstborn? And why are there three mitzvot in the Torah that are accompanied by the phrase: “I am God Who took you out of the land of Egypt”? The Talmud answers these questions in the next source.

2. **Vayikra (Leviticus) 19:36, 25:37-38; Bamidbar (Numbers) 15:38-41; Talmud Bavli (Babylonian Talmud), Bava Metzia 61b – God's knowledge of which Egyptians were the firstborn during the tenth plague indicates His awareness of the smallest, most intimate details of one's life.**

Bava Metzia 61b

Rava asked, “Why did God mention the Exodus from Egypt in connection with [the following three things]: (1) the prohibition against charging interest, (2) the mitzvah of tzitzit, and (3) the mitzvah to have honest weights and scales?”

1. The prohibition of charging interest

“Do not give him your money for interest ... *I am your God, Who took you out of the land of Egypt.*” (Vayikra 25:37-38).

2. Tzitzit

“... They shall place upon the tzitzit on each corner a thread of turquoise wool ... *I am your God, Who took you out of the land of Egypt*” (Bamidbar 15:38-41).

3. Honest scales and weights

“You shall have correct scales, correct weights, correct dry and liquid measures. *I am your God, Who took you out of the land of Egypt*” (Vayikra 19:36).

בבא מציעא דף סא עמוד ב

אמר רבא: למה לי דכתב רחמנא 'יציאת מצרים ברבית, יציאת מצרים גבי ציצית, יציאת מצרים במשקלות?

ויקרא כה:לו-לח

את בספקך לא תתן לו בנשך ... אני ה' אלקיכם אשר הוצאתי אתכם מארץ מצרים.

במדבר טו:לח-מא

...ונתנו על ציצת הכנף פתיל תכלת ... אני ה' אלקיכם אשר הוצאתי אתכם מארץ מצרים.

ויקרא יט:לו

מאזני צדק אבני צדק איפת צדק והין צדק יהיה לכם אני ה' אלקיכם אשר הוצאתי אתכם מארץ מצרים.

[The answer is:] The Holy One said, "I am He Who discerned in Egypt between the drop of seed which conceived a firstborn and one which did not conceive a firstborn.

"So too, I am He Who will bring to justice someone who lends money to a Jew with interest, while pretending that it went to a non-Jew, and from someone who cheats others by keeping his weight measures in salt [which make them heavier without changing their appearance], and from someone who puts fake blue dye on his tzitzit and claims that it is authentic, turquoise *techeilet*."

בבא מציעא שם

אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא: אני הוא שהבחנתי במצרים בין טפה של בכור לטפה שאינה של בכור - אני הוא שעתיד ליפרע ממי שתולה מעותיו בנכרי ומלוה אותם לישראל ברבית, וממי שטומן משקלותיו במלח, וממי שתולה קלא אילן בבגדו ואומר תכלת הוא.

The fact that God knew which Egyptian children were firstborn, even in a society which was notorious for its adultery, is a demonstration of God's *awareness* of every detail of one's life, and His *personal relationship* with each of us based on those details. The phrase, "I am your God, Who took you out of the land of Egypt" is a reference to this astounding Divine Providence during the plague of the firstborn. Specifically in those areas of life where one could hide the truth from others, God reminds us: "I am the one Who took you out of Egypt and I am aware of every detail."

3. **Ramban, Shemot 13:16 (translation from Rabbi Mordechai Becher, Gateway to Judaism, p. 198) – The miracles of the Exodus are a testimony to God's ongoing personal involvement with Creation. This lesson is something that we must teach to our children and all future generations.**

From the time that there was idolatry in the world ... belief started to deteriorate [in these three ways:] ...

1. Some people denied the existence of God altogether.
2. Some [acknowledge His existence but] denied His knowledge of events in the world ...
3. Some admitted to His knowledge but denied His personal Providence ...

When, however, God chooses a community or an individual and performs miracles for them that change the normal running and nature of the world, then the refutation of all the above is apparent. Because a miracle shows that:

1. There is a God Who creates the world.
2. That he has knowledge [of events in this world], and that
3. He acts with personal Providence and is omnipotent.

הנה מעת היות ע"ג בעולם ... החלו הדעות להשתבש באמונה, מהם כופרים בעיקר ... כחשו בה' ויאמרו לא הוא, ומהם מכחישים בידיעתו הפרטית ... ומהם שיודו בידיעה ומכחישים בהשגחה ...

וכאשר ירצה האלוקים בעדה או ביחיד ויעשה עמהם מופת בשנוי מנהגו של עולם וטבעו, יתברר לכל בטול הדעות האלה כלם, כי המופת הנפלא מורה שיש לעולם אלוה מחדשו, ויודע, ומשגיח ויכול.

And when that miracle is first decreed by a prophet, then it also demonstrates the truth of prophecy ... Therefore, the Torah states regarding these miracles: "So that you will know that I am God in the midst of the land" – to inform us of His Divine Providence. "So that you will know that the world is God's" – to inform us of the principle of Creation, to show that everything belongs to God because He created the world *ex-nihilo*. "So that you will know that there is none like Me in all the world" – to show His power, that He rules over everything and nothing can prevent Him from fulfilling His Will [commenting on Shemot 8:18, 9:29, 9:14 respectively] ...

Since God does not perform signs and miracles in every generation in front of every person or nonbeliever, He commanded us to make eternal reminders and signs of what our eyes witnessed, and that we should pass these down to our children, and they to their children until the last generation ...

וכאשר יהיה המופת ההוא נגזר תחלה מפי נביא יתברר ממנו עוד אמתת הנבואה ...

ולכן יאמר הכתוב במופתים למען תדע כי אני ה' בקרב הארץ (לעיל ח יח), להורות על ההשגחה, כי לא עזב אותה למקרים כדעתם. ואמר (שם ט כט) למען תדע כי לה' הארץ, להורות על החידוש, כי הם שלו שבראם מאין ואמר (שם ט יד) בעבור תדע כי אין כמוני בכל הארץ. להורות על היכולת, שהוא שליט בכל, אין מעכב בידו...

ובעבור כי הקב"ה לא יעשה אות ומופת בכל דור לעיני כל רשע או כופר, יצוה אותנו שנעשה תמיד זכרון ואות לאשר ראו עינינו, ונעתיק הדבר אל בנינו, ובניהם לבניהם, ובניהם לדור אחרון ...

A natural consequence of the awareness of Divine Providence is a deepened belief in God and His guidance of world events. Indeed, the Exodus story is the basis for a Jew's belief in God (*emunah*) as the next sources show.

4. **Rosh, Orchot Chaim, Ch. 26 – Knowledge of the Exodus is the basis for belief in God.**

One should trust in God with all of one's heart, and believe in His Divine Providence. By doing this, one understands the unity of God, for He sees everything that happens in the world, He sees all the actions of man [cf. Mishlei/Proverbs 16:2], and examines his innermost thoughts and feelings [cf. Yirmiyahu/Jeremiah 17:10].

Because someone who does not believe that it was God "Who took you out of the land of Egypt" [Shemot 20:2], will also not believe that "I am the Lord your God" [in other words, he will come to deny God's existence altogether]. For this belief in God [based on the Exodus] is unique to the Jewish people over all other nations, and is the basis for the entire Torah.

לבטוח בה' בכל לבבך ולהאמין בהשגחתו הפרטית, ובזה תקיים בלבבך היחוד השלם בהאמין בו, כי עיניו משוטטות בכל הארץ ועיניו על כל דרכי איש ובוחן לב וחוקר כליות.

כי מי שאינו מאמין "אשר הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים" [שמות כ, ב] אף ב"אנכי ה' אלקיך" [שם] אינו מאמין, ואין זה יחוד שלם, כי זה הוא סגולת ישראל על כל העמים וזה יסוד כל התורה כולה.

5. **Ramban, Bereishit, Introduction – The accounts of the Patriarchs in the Torah are to give us a correct approach to belief in God.**

The Torah included the stories of events from the beginning of Creation in order to instruct people in the correct approach to belief in God [*emunah*].

התורה יכלול הספורים מתחילת בראשית, כי הוא מורה אנשים בדרך בענין האמונה.

We see from the above three sources that belief in God is built on an understanding of the events that happened to the Patriarchs, and most notably the Exodus. This is because the process of developing one's belief in God is not just an intellectual process, but also involves a person's emotions. This process can be compared to looking at a picture: at first, the picture is seen as a whole, and only later do the details become clear. Similarly, a person must first know the entire Exodus narrative and God's involvement with Creation, even if the details and difficult questions regarding belief and trust in God will only be clarified later (based on correspondence with Rabbi Reuven Leuchter, Jerusalem).

KEY THEMES OF SECTION II:

- ✧ Divine Providence is God's *awareness* of every detail of Creation – including one's physical actions and innermost thoughts and feelings – and His *involvement and personal relationship* with us based on who we are and what we're doing.
- ✧ A major theme of Pesach is Divine Providence. In fact, the name *Pesach*, which means to “skip over,” refers to God's knowledge during the plague of the firstborn as to which Egyptians were the firstborn and which were not. This teaches that although a person might think that his actions go unnoticed, God reminds us that “I am the One Who brought you out of Egypt,” in other words: “Just as I knew the circumstances of every Egyptian's conception at the time of the tenth plague, I am aware of the most intimate details of your existence, including that which you are able to hide from your fellow man.”
- ✧ Not only the plague of the firstborn, but all the miracles of Egypt and the prophecies that predicted them contain the message of Pesach: God is here, He is aware of everything, and His Providence and kindness extend to every person. Indeed, this message and the events of the Exodus are the basis of our belief (*emunah*) in God.

SECTION III. FREEDOM FOR THE JEWISH SOUL

The Exodus from Egypt not only granted the Jewish people physical freedom and a national identity, it freed the Jewish soul to become actualized through Torah study, mitzvot, and personal growth. This is the Jewish legacy to achieve true freedom.

1. **Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler, Michtav M'Eliyahu, Vol. II, p. 18 – Pesach is not only a celebration of historical freedom, but also a time to find freedom for our souls.**

“The Time of our Freedom” is a special spiritual opportunity for freedom, given to every Jew at this time of year ...

This time of year, Pesach-time, is not only a commemoration and celebration of a historical event. Rather, this time every year is a spiritually auspicious and opportune time to fight for the freedom of our souls.

“זמן חירותינו” הוא השפעה מיוחדת של חירות
הנתינת לכל נפש מישראל בזמן ההוא ...

הזמן הזה אינו תאריך היסטורי גרידא לחוג בו חגיגת
שמחה שעברה, אלא שמדי שנה בשנה הנו זמן בו
מסוגלים אנו ללחום למען חירות נפשנו.

How does one fight for the “freedom of one's soul”?

A fundamental concept in Judaism is that a person's freedom is determined solely by one's ability to make free-willed moral choices. Judaism understands that a person is composed of a *yetzer hatov*, which is the inclination to act positively, productively, and build oneself as a refined human being, and a *yetzer hara*, which is the inclination to act negatively and unproductively. The goal of life is to choose to act in accordance with one's *yetzer hatov*, and minimize the control of the *yetzer hara* over one's actions.

Therefore, to achieve freedom of the soul, a person must overcome the influence of the *yetzer hara*. As described in the sources below, the mitzvah to search for and get rid of *chametz* (foods made with water and one of the five grains – spelt, rye, barely, wheat, and oat – that have had time to leaven) before Pesach (Shemot 12:18-20) symbolizes this process of breaking free from three aspects of the *yetzer hara*: (1) the drive to do evil, (2) egocentricity and self-aggrandizement, and (3) idolatry.

An example of how a person can overcome being self-centered and getting upset – triggered by the *yetzer hara* – is illustrated by the following story.

The devoted students of Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner (1906-1980), Rosh Yeshivah of Chaim Berlin, New York, regarded him with the kind of reverence usually reserved for royalty. The esteem and respect they accorded him was nothing short of imperial.

One can well imagine, therefore, what it must have been like to be at the Pesach Seder with Rav Hutner and his students. The Rosh Yeshivah sat at the head of the table, majestically leading the seder as his students participated and absorbed his words and insights.

At these Sedarim there was always one student who had the duty of filling the wine cups that stood elegantly alongside each setting. One year, as the student began to fill the Rosh Yeshivah's cup with the gleaming red wine, he nervously spilled some of it on the table and onto the Rosh Yeshivah's sparkling kittel (white robe worn at the Pesach Seder and the High Holidays).

The assembled students were aghast. A sudden silence enveloped the room. Rav Hutner looked down at his wine-spattered kittel and then, smiling, he proclaimed in his inimitable manner, "A kittel without wine is like a Yom Kippur machzor (prayer book) without tears!"

*In one pithy phrase, he elevated the event – as only he knew how.
(Rabbi Paysach Krohn, Reflections of the Maggid, p. 257.)*

The next three sources describe how *chametz* represents the drive to do evil.

2. **Talmud Bavli, Berachot 17a with Rashi – Chametz represents the yetzer hara, the drive to do evil, which stands in the way of our relationship with God.**

Rabbi Alexander, after he prayed, would say the following: "Master of the Universe, it is known and revealed before You that it is our will to do Your Will. Who prevents us? The yeast in the dough [which symbolizes the *yetzer hara*, the drive to do evil – Rashi] and the subjugation to the non-Jewish nations. May it be Your Will that You save us from their hand and that we return to do the laws of Your Will with a perfect heart."

ור' אלכסנדר בתי דמצלי אמר הכי רבון העולמים גלוי וידוע לפניך שרצוננו לעשות רצונך ומי מעכב שאור שבעיסה ושעבוד מלכיות יהי רצון מלפניך שתצילנו מידם ונשוב לעשות חוקי רצונך בלבב שלם.

רע"י

שאור שבעיסה - יצר הרע שבלבבנו, המחמיצנו.

Chametz is made by giving time for the dough to rise, and symbolizes laziness. The yetzer hara is represented by chametz because it thrives on laziness, always seeking the path of least resistance. To create matzah, which

is the opposite of chametz, it is essential to work with enthusiasm and speed (to ensure that no more than 18 minutes elapse from the moment the flour mixes with the water, until it is fully baked).

3. **Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah #117 – Getting rid of chametz symbolizes our desire to work with enthusiasm and speed in the service of God.**

Therefore, getting rid of chametz symbolizes our desire to work with enthusiasm and speed in the service of God. This is reflected in the statement of the Sages, “Be bold as a leopard, light as an eagle, swift as a deer, and strong as a lion, to carry out the Will of your Father in Heaven” [Pirkei Avot/Ethics of the Fathers 5:20].

ועל כן בהרחיק החמץ, שהוא נעשה בשהיה גדולה, מקורבנו, יקח דמיון לקנות מידת הזריזות והקלות והמהירות במעשי השם ברוך הוא, וכמו שאמרו זכרונם לברכה הוי קל כנשר ורץ כצבי וגבור כארי לעשות [רצון אביך שבשמים].

4. **Rabbi Eliezer Papo, Peleh Yo'etz, Chametz – The mitzvah to rid ourselves of chametz represents our desire to free ourselves of the yetzer hara.**

The mitzvah of removing chametz is ... to remove the spirit of impurity and the Evil Inclination from our hearts. Therefore, the more one introspects to free oneself of its influence, the more praiseworthy it is.

מצות בעור חמץ היא... לבער את רוח הטמאה ואת היצר הרע מקרבנו. ולכן כל היד המרבה לבדק הרי זה מושבח.

In the next source, we see how chametz represents the negative trait of arrogance.

5. **Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah #117 – Like a person impressed with his own magnificence, chametz is inflated, full of itself, even though it is made of the same ingredients as the humble matzah.**

The yeast in the flour raises itself up and inflates itself [which represents arrogance]. Therefore, we distance ourselves from it, as reflected in the verse, “Every arrogant heart is an abomination to God” [Mishlei/Proverbs 16:5].

לפי שהשאור מגביה עצמו ... ולכן נתרחקו, לרמוז כי תועבת יי כל גבה לב.

The following story highlights the importance of critical self-examination in the process of self-improvement, rather than being critical of others:

It is the custom in the Yerushalmi community – religious Jews living in Jerusalem who moved there in the 1700's – to throw wheat kernels and nuts at the groom on the Shabbat morning before he is to get married as a symbol of Divine blessing for his future (see Berachot 50b). The young groom also wears a streimel (wide, fur hat) for the first time on this Shabbat, as he does during the week of celebrations following the wedding (Shevah Berachot).

A young Yerushalmi groom was enjoying a Shevah Berachot meal at the home of his new in-laws on Pesach Chol HaMoed. Everything was going well until he looked down into his soup before eating. There he noticed floating in the middle of the bowl, a soup-soaked wheat kernel. Chametz on Pesach was being served to him at the home of his in-laws! He felt very uneasy, quietly got rid of the wheat kernel, and barely ate anything the rest of the meal.

The next morning at shul, Rabbi Shmuel Salant (1838-1909, the Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem at the time) asked the groom what was wrong. He explained what had happened at the previous night's meal and lamented, “Maybe I've

made a grave mistake by marrying into this family.”

Rav Salant carefully removed the streimel from the groom's head. And as he turned it upside down they both watched as other wheat kernels fell to the ground. Then the groom realized, the kernels had gotten there on the Shabbat before the wedding! They both smiled at each other with relief.

The message is: before looking at another's chametz, we have to examine our own. Before being critical of others, we must examine ourselves. (Adapted from Rabbi Paysach Krohn, Around the Maggid's Table, pp. 244-6.)

Finally, getting rid of chametz represents getting rid of idolatry in all its forms, as described in the next source.

6. Rabbi Mordechai Becher, Gateway to Judaism, p. 197 (adapted) – Ridding ourselves of chametz symbolizes the drive to free ourselves of idolatry in all its forms.

The essence of idolatry is that it takes something insignificant, with no independent existence and inflates its importance out of all proportion to its true value. Whether a person looks at a force of nature or piece of wood and calls it a god, or considers *himself* the ultimate reality, independent of God – it is all idolatry. This idea is represented by chametz, which is basically inflated matzah [based on Shnei Luchot HaBrit, Pesachim, Torah Ohr 13].

As we engage in thoroughly cleaning the house to remove all chametz, shop for special chametz-free, Passover products and prepare the kitchen for Pesach, we should think of removing any traces of negative drives, egocentricity, and idolatry from within ourselves and becoming chametz-free zones ourselves (Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, Horeb II, Ch. 26, paragraph 404).

Spiritual freedom from the influence of the yetzer hara is only a first step; it is only a means to a higher purpose. We want to be free, but free to do what? The process of attaching oneself to a higher purpose is the ultimate expression of freedom of the soul.

7. Rabbi Samson Rafael Hirsch, The Jewish Year, pp. 76-77 – Freedom from confinement is only a neutral state. But to allow one's Divine Image to shine forth and to take the next step, one has to acknowledge God as the source of that freedom.

Freedom, by which we mean deliverance from burdens and the breaking of chains, is only a negative good. This freedom is merely a state in which the impediment standing in the way of fulfillment of the human vocation has been removed. It is merely a state in which room has been made for the Divine likeness to shine forth in man.

If this vocation is to be fulfilled, if this likeness is to be realized, then the person who has become liberated and has been freed from his burdens must acknowledge Him to Whom he owed this liberation from his burdens and this freedom. The freed, unburdened person must accept his freedom from burdens and his liberty as a gift from God. He must recognize in God the *source* of his freedom, and must feel himself eternally bound to God and in service to Him precisely *because* of his freedom.

How is God the source of our freedom? God gave the Jewish people the Torah and the mitzvot as the means to build a relationship with Him, as the framework for living, and to nurture the Jewish soul.

8. **Pirkei Avot 6:2; Rabbi Chaim Friedlander, Sifsei Chaim, Vol. I, p. 45 – The study and performance of Torah are the means to gain true freedom.**

Pirkei Avot 6:2

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said ... “The verse states: ‘The Tablets of the Ten Commandments were made by God. The words thereon are the writing of God, engraved onto the Tablets’ [Shemot 32:16]. Do not read it as ‘charut’ (engraved); rather read it as ‘cheirut’ (freedom), for there is no one as free as one who engages in Torah study.”

Rabbi Friedlander

Those people who regard themselves as “free” from mitzvot are really not free at all. On the contrary, they are held in chains, each one a servant to his yetzer hara [Evil Inclination].

The study and performance of the Torah is the only means to gain freedom and control over one's yetzer hara and base desires [which would otherwise guide all of one's decisions]. Therefore the Mishnah states, “Do not read it as ‘charut’ (engraved), rather read it as ‘cheirut’ (free), for there is no one as free as one who engages in Torah study” [Pirkei Avot 6:2].

One who is successful in freeing himself from the yetzer hara and ruling over it – he is a true king!

משנה מסכת אבות פרק ו' משנה ב

אמר רבי יהושע בן לוי... 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 ...

ר' חיים פרידלנדר

אלו החשים עצמם “חופשיים” מן המצוות אינם חופשיים כלל, אדרבא, הם כבולים חזק מאוד, כל אחד מהם הוא עבד נרצע לתאוותיו.

התורה היא – ורק היא – נותנת את החירות והממשלה על התאוות. “אל תקרא חרות אלא חירות” (אבות ו, ב).

המצליח להשתחרר מתאוותיו ומולך עליהן – הוא המלך האמיתי.

The following story illustrates the eternal desire to nourish the Jewish soul, even under oppressive circumstances, as well as a hint of Divine Providence.

In the days before Glasnost, I visited the USSR to meet with Soviet Jews and help advance their Jewish study and observance. We also knew that the need for extreme caution that we had been warned about had not been exaggerated. Arriving at the pre-arranged apartment building, we knocked on the door very softly and only once, so as not to attract the neighbors' attention. It was quickly opened, and we were hastily ushered inside. To our delight, almost thirty people had gathered for the meeting, where only five or six had been expected. One young man in particular, Sasha, seemed to stand out from the rest. His sensitive countenance and soft-spoken manner signified to me a highly refined inner being.

After all the introductions had been made, the learning session began. True, there were only two Chumashim for thirty students, but there was such electrified enthusiasm and zealotry in the learning that it seemed to link every mind and soul into one body. The back-and-forth, questions and answers, comments and remarks flew. Unfortunately, so did the time. It was truly a merit to be teaching them. Their rapt attention to every syllable we uttered and their resoluteness to comprehend every nuance of every letter was inspiring. I was not sure at that point who was gleaned more from our lesson – the students or the teachers.

When we finished, one of the participants, a doctor from Vilna, went over to the piano that was standing in a corner

of the living room and begged us to teach him a Jewish melody. We sang a few notes and in a minute everyone in the room was on his feet, singing and dancing to the music. As my companion and I stood up, Sasha stood also and said, "Before you go, Rabbis, I would like to say that I cannot thank you enough for what you have given us tonight. Allow me to express a small measure of our gratitude by inviting you to a farewell meal at my home tomorrow at noon." We were touched by his gesture and accepted Sasha's invitation gladly.

The next day, I had decided to bring along a gift as a token of our appreciation for the farewell meal and as an acknowledgment of our respect and affection – a challah cover. It was made of white terylene, had a light blue Star of David embroidered on it, and across the front in blue were the Hebrew words, "Shabbat Shalom." For some reason, I thought, this is it – the perfect gift for Sasha.

Arriving at Sasha's apartment at exactly 12:00, we were astounded to see that not only were most of the participants of the previous night's lecture present, but so too were at least a dozen new people. Everyone seemed happy to see us and greeted us warmly. In the center, in a place of prominence, was one single matzah, which had probably been carefully preserved for a special occasion since the last Pesach. A crystal wine bottle, with about two inches of wine in it, had a sticker pasted on that read in Hebrew, "Wine from Jerusalem." There were some vegetables, a few cut-up fruits, and little squares of cake. Very hospitably, everyone urged us, "Please sit, have something ..."

When Sasha got up to serve the next course, I followed him into the kitchen. I wanted to present his gift to him in private. "Sasha, it's a gift for you". He looked very surprised and flustered, hesitantly taking the bag. I watched as he opened it, took out the challah cover and unfolded it slowly. Then, after taking one look at it, Sasha burst into tears. I felt bewildered and just stood there for a moment, not knowing what to say or how to react. After a few seconds, Sasha composed himself and wordlessly led me out of the kitchen and down the hall into a small vestibule, where there stood a tall bookcase with some old crumbling Torah books on the top shelf. Sasha climbed up on a stepladder and took out something very carefully from between two tall volumes.

"You don't know how long I've hoped for this," he said to me. Then he bent over and handed me what he had just taken out. It was a thin, white folded paper napkin. I slowly opened it up and looked at it. There on the front was drawn in blue marker a Star of David, and across the top in the same blue ink was written in Hebrew, "Shabbat Shalom." Sasha took the challah cover I had given him, folded it up, and placed it between the two books. He climbed down the stepladder, and pointing to the napkin I was holding in my hand, said softly to me, "This one is for you." ("A Gift in Leningrad," by Rabbi Dovid Goldwasser, from *It Happened in Heaven*, published by Feldheim Publishers.)

KEY THEMES OF SECTION III:

- ✧ Pesach is the time to find freedom for our souls. In fact, ridding ourselves of chametz symbolizes the drive to free our souls from the self-destructive drives and egocentricity of the yetzer hara.
- ✧ God gave the Jewish people the Torah and the mitzvot as the means to build a relationship with Him, as the framework for living, and to nurture the Jewish soul.

SECTION IV. RELIVING THE PESACH EXPERIENCE

Pesach is the classic example of a festival in which we eat, drink, and live the ideas that it represents. We modify our home environment by removing all leavened products, we change our diet to eat *matzah* and avoid all leavened products. We refrain from working, and we transform a festive meal into a high-impact, super-charged educational experience – the Pesach Seder.

Why do we go to such lengths? Wouldn't it be easier if we just spent some time *thinking* about the Exodus and the lessons it teaches? The following sources answer this question.

1. **Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah #16 – A person is shaped and influenced by his actions. Therefore, Pesach involves many actions to ensure that the miracles of the Exodus and its lessons are imprinted permanently into our consciousness.**

If is fitting for us to do symbolic actions [e.g. eating matzah, having a Pesach Seder and telling the story of the Exodus] that remind us of the tremendous spiritual heights we reached at the Exodus. Through these actions and symbols the experience of the Exodus is imprinted permanently into our consciousness.

You might ask: Why did God need to command all these actions and mitzvot [e.g. eating matzah, ridding oneself of chametz, telling the story of the Exodus] just to remember the miracle of the Exodus? Wouldn't it be enough just to *think* about it once a year to ensure that it is not forgotten “from the mouths of our children” [Devarim 31:21]? ...

To answer, it is important to understand that a person is affected and shaped by his *actions* [more than by his thoughts alone]. A person's thoughts and feelings *follow after* his actions, either for good or for bad ...

For example, if a complete degenerate ... will inspire himself and exert himself to study Torah and perform mitzvot – even for the wrong reasons, such as honor and prestige – he will still begin to change in a positive direction. His self-destructive tendencies (*yetzer hara*) will be weakened since he will be influenced by his positive actions.

And on the other hand, if a completely righteous and upstanding person, who exerts himself in Torah and mitzvot, will occupy himself with negativity and impurity all day long (for example,

ראוי לנו לעשות מעשים המראים בנו ממעלה הגדולה שעלינו בה באותה שעה. ומתוך המעשה והדמיון שאנחנו עושין נקבע בנפשותינו הדבר לעולם.

ואל תחשוב בני לתפוש על דברי ולומר, ולמה זה יצוה אותנו השם יתברך לעשות כל אלה לזכרון אותו הנס, והלא בזכרון אחד יעלה הדבר במחשבתנו ולא ישכח מפי זרענו ...

דע כי האדם נפעל כפי פעולותיו. ולבו וכל מחשבותיו תמיד אחר מעשיו שהוא עוסק בהם, אם טוב ואם רע

ואפילו רשע גמור ... אם יערה רוחו וישים השתדלותו ועסקו בהתמדה בתורה ובמצוות, ואפילו שלא לשם שמים, מיד ינטה אל הטוב, ובכח מעשיו ימית היצר הרע, כי אחרי הפעולות נמשכים הלבבות.

ואפילו אם יהיה אדם צדיק גמור ולבבו ישר ותמים, חפץ בתורה ובמצוות, אם יעסק תמיד בדברים של דופי, כאילו תאמר דרך משל שהכריחו המלך ומינהו

if someone forced him to do it), at some point he will turn into a degenerate. For even the strongest person is affected by his actions ...

With this principle in mind – that a person is shaped by his actions – we understand the need for the many mitzvot regarding remembering the Exodus and its miracles, for they are a central feature of the entire Torah.

באומנות רעה, באמת אם כל עסקו תמיד כל היום באותו אומנות, ישוב לזמן מן הזמנים מצדקת לבו להיות רשע גמור, כי ידוע הדבר ואמת שכל אדם נפעל כפי פעולותיו...

ואחר דעתך זה, אל יקשה עליך מעתה ריבוי המצוות בענין זכירת נסי מצרים, שהם עמוד גדול בתורתנו, כי ברבות עסקינו בהם נתפעל אל הדבר.

There is no doubt that had the Torah merely instructed us to simply *think* about the Exodus for one week a year, no one today would have heard of the Exodus from Egypt. Merely *remembering* the pivotal events of Jewish history or reading about them occasionally is not sufficient to imbue ourselves with the messages of slavery, freedom, Jewish nationhood, and Divine Providence. Therefore, Pesach is *experiential*, not merely conceptual (Rabbi Mordechai Becher, Gateway to Judaism, p. 191). It is therefore the Passover Seder and all the mitzvot of the festival that enable us to actually relive the Pesach experience. (See the Morasha class on the Passover Haggadah).

We now conclude with the idea that the Pesach experience provides a model for us to learn how to harness inspirational ideas and translate them into productive action throughout the year:

2. **Rabbi Akiva Tatz, *Living Inspired*, pp. 22-25 – Pesach teaches a fundamental secret of life. At every phase of life, a person is first given an artificial inspiration to show him what he could become, just as the Jewish people were inspired by wondrous miracles in Egypt. Then God removes the inspiration, and lets us do the work of actualizing the inspiration, just as the Jewish people had to walk through the desert to get to Mount Sinai.**

The natural pathway of all life experience begins with inspiration and soon fades to disappointment. Let us analyze this phenomenon and understand it ...

In order to save the Jewish people in Egypt outside help was necessary. God appeared and elevated us spiritually *although we did not deserve it intrinsically, we had not earned it*. But once saved, once inspired, once made conscious of our higher reality, the price must be paid, the experience must be earned, and in working to earn the level which was previously given *artificially*, one *acquires* that level genuinely. Instead of being *shown* a spiritual level, one *becomes* it.

And that is a secret of life. A person is inspired artificially at the beginning of any phase of life, but to acquire the depth of personality which is demanded of us, God *removes the inspiration*. The danger is apathy and depression; the challenge is to fight back to the point of inspiration, and in so doing to *build it permanently into one's character*. The plagues in Egypt and the splitting of the sea are dazzling beyond description, but then God puts us in the desert and challenges us to fight through to Sinai. In Egypt He demonstrates destruction of ten levels of evil while we watch passively; in the desert He brings ten levels of evil to bear against us and challenges us to destroy them [see Talmud Bavli, Arachin 15a; Michtav M'Eliyahu 2:34].

This idea recurs everywhere ... It is like a father teaching his child to walk: first the father supports the child as he takes his first step, but then the father must let go; there is no other way to learn, and the child must take a frightened and lonely step unaided. Only then, when he can walk independently, can he feel his father's love in the very moment which previously felt like desertion.

Unfortunately most people do not know this secret ... First comes a phase of *unreal* positivity, a charge of energy. And then life challenges one to climb back to real achievement independently.

The pattern of a phase of external inspiration, followed by a phase of self-motivated work to actualize the inspiration is found, for example, in moving from childhood to adulthood, in marriage, as well as in Torah study. In all areas of life, the challenge of the second phase is to remember the first, to remain inspired by that memory and to use it as fuel for constant growth (Rabbi Akiva Tatz, *ibid.*, pp. 24-28).

Rabbi Tzadok HaKohen Rabinowitz of Lublin writes (Tzidkat HaTzaddik I) that the secret to maintaining inspiration in life is to *act* relatively quickly while one is still in the initial phase of external inspiration. Thereafter, when the outside inspiration is removed, one should continue moving slowly and steadily in the direction of the vision he had while inspired.

KEY THEMES OF SECTION IV:

- ☞ The goal of Pesach is to see yourself “as if you personally left Egypt.”
- ☞ Imagine that you were there. See yourself walking out of Egyptian slavery at dawn on the most awe-inspiring spring morning in history. Imagine the palpable feeling of God’s Presence after witnessing the miracles. Imagine your thoughts and discussions with your friends about witnessing and taking part in the birth of the Jewish people – from a family of desert dwellers to a nation of nobility and the bearers of God’s message to the world.
- ☞ We are required to impress those same thoughts, feelings, and lessons upon ourselves as if we had actually been there. Therefore, Pesach is not only a time to merely *remember* the Exodus, but rather to *re-experience* it through a multitude of actions, words, foods, songs, prayers, and study.
- ☞ A secret of life is contained in the story of Pesach. At every phase of life, a person is first given an artificial inspiration to show him what he could become, just as the Jewish people were inspired by wondrous miracles in Egypt. Then God removes the inspiration, and lets us do the work of actualizing the inspiration, just as the Jewish people had to walk through the desert to get to Mount Sinai.
- ☞ The key to a life of continued inspiration is to take immediate action when one is inspired – this is “leaving Egypt in haste.” Thereafter, when the inspiration has been removed, one’s goal must be pursued slowly and consistently, using the memory of the first phase for continued inspiration and as fuel for constant growth.

CLASS SUMMARY:

WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE OF THE EXODUS FROM EGYPT?

The Exodus was a vital stage in the birth of the Jewish people. The Jews were compelled to first undergo the degradation of slavery in a foreign land and the accompanying loss of national identity characteristic of subjugation to a foreign nation. The goal of the Exodus from the bondage of Egypt was for the Jewish people to become God's nation, thereby fulfilling the purpose of the Creation of the world.

WHY DID GOD FORM THE JEWISH NATION BEFORE THE JEWS ENTERED THEIR HOMELAND?

Although the existence of a homeland is critical for the national identity of most peoples of the world, the Jewish people came into being in the desert. Its existence is therefore not dependent on a piece of geography.

HOW DOES THE MIRACULOUS EXODUS FROM EGYPT REVEAL DIVINE PROVIDENCE?

The Exodus and the Ten Plagues that preceded it demonstrate that God controls the forces of nature and intercedes in what happens in the world. The Tenth Plague in particular, in which the first born of illicit relationships that were unknown to the public also died, reveals God's knowledge of the most intimate events of people's lives.

WHAT CHARACTERIZES FREEDOM FOR THE JEWISH SOUL?

Freedom for the Jewish soul is characterized by self-control. As long as the shackles of unbridled pursuit of pleasure and honor dominate a person's life, he is not considered free. The Exodus therefore was just a preliminary stage that offered the opportunity to partake in the spiritual freedom of Sinai that followed forty-nine days later.

HOW CAN WE ACHIEVE THE PESACH HAGGADAH'S IDEAL THAT EACH INDIVIDUAL VIEW HIMSELF AS IF HE PERSONALLY LEFT EGYPT?

The Passover Seder is designed to enable us to relive the Passover experience. A person is shaped by his actions. By engaging the heart as well as the mind through active participation in the many mitzvot of the Seder night, we surpass the level achievable by merely thinking about the Exodus.

HOW DOES PESACH HELP US LEARN HOW TO HARNESS AND TRANSLATE INSPIRATIONAL IDEAS INTO PRODUCTIVE ACTION THROUGHOUT THE YEAR?

The Passover story shows that inspirational moments are transient. Just as the ecstasy of the Exodus was followed by the path through the desert to Sinai, the hard work of personal growth must be continued during the course of our mundane everyday lives. The key to success in our endeavors is to remember our moments of inspiration and to use them as a springboard toward productive action.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED READING & SOURCES

JEWISH NATIONHOOD

Sarah Yoheved Rigler, *If You Were Born a Jew* (www.aish.com)

LEARNING THE LESSONS OF PESACH FOR EVERY GENERATION

Rabbi Chaim Friedlander, *Sifsei Chaim* Vol. III, pp. 38-39

ADDITIONAL SOURCES

Rabbi Abraham Twerski, *From Bondage to Freedom* (Shaar Press, 1995)

Rabbi Shimon Apisdorf, *Passover Survival Kit* (Leviathan Press, 1997)

Rabbi Berel Wein, *The Passover Haggadah* (Shaar Press, 2004)

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