

LAMPLIGHTER

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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

One of the main reasons that the Exodus from Egypt occupies such a central role in Judaism (we mention it daily in our prayers) is that this original exodus symbolizes the daily spiritual exodus which must take place in the life of a Jew. The Hebrew word for Egypt, "Mitzrayim," comes from the root word "meitzar," meaning limitations and obstacles. It is up to every individual to liberate himself from his own internal limitations and boundaries, thus freeing his G-dly soul to express itself and seek spiritual fulfilment.

This week's Torah portion, Va'eira, tells of the very beginning of the events which led up to the Jews' triumphant liberation from bondage. By studying the circumstances of the Egyptian exodus, we see how we can apply these lessons to our own personal and spiritual journey as well.

The first plague to afflict the Egyptians was blood; every drop of water in the land was affected. Therefore, the first step toward spiritual liberation must also somehow be connected with transforming "water" into "blood."

Water symbolizes tranquillity, coldness, and lack of emotional excitement. Blood, on the other hand, is a symbol of warmth, enthusiasm and fervour. The Torah asks every Jew: Do you truly want to leave "Egypt," to overcome your self-imposed limitations? The first thing you must do is turn your "water" into "blood." Transform your apathy and inertia into enthusiasm and love of Torah and mitzvot (commandments). Infuse your life with a warmth and fervour directed toward G-d and holiness.

A person may claim, "Is it not enough that I simply perform the Mitzvos, learn Torah, and avoid that which is forbidden? Am I not a good Jew even if I don't feel any enthusiasm for what I do?"

Chassidic philosophy explains that coldness and apathy are the source of all evil. When one is cool toward something, it means that he is totally uninterested in it. We see that when something truly close to the heart is mentioned, our pulse quickens and we "warm" to the subject. Coldness signals the mechanical performance of the commandments and leads to eventual spiritual deterioration.

The first action to be taken toward spiritual liberation is to replace our lukewarm dedication to Judaism with warmth and enthusiasm. We should be at least as equally enthused about Judaism as we are about other facets of our lives.

One of the practical ways this expresses itself is when we perform a Mitzvah in a particularly nice way. The desire to enhance our observance leads to our observing the precepts of Judaism out of love. This, then, is the first step towards going out of our own personal Egypt and ending our collective exile.

Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

My Exodus, Your Exodus

By Mendy Herson

So you're in the office, on the highway, or maybe even in contemplative prayer, and it hits you: Some area of your life isn't working.

So you resolve to do better. That sounds good, except that the resolution doesn't materialize in actual behaviour modification. But why not? Why is change so difficult? Maybe it's because we're ingenious at outsmarting ourselves.

When you feel dissatisfaction with your personal status quo, and can even sense an inclination toward self-betterment, then it's easy to feel good about your introspective honesty. Now you can pat yourself on the back and continue on.

Why? Because, often, we don't really want to change. Ancient Jewish texts describe this problem as a "Pharaoh Syndrome."

The Exodus saga - with the Jews seeking liberty from the enslaving Egyptians - is also a personal narrative. It depicts my/your continuous struggle for freedom from our personal "Egypt" (impediments to actualization): our fears/character flaws/inaccurate perceptions etc.

And, of course, the primary blockage to liberation is...Pharaoh; he of the - Scripturally-described - "hardened heart."

What does it mean to have a hard heart?

Pharaoh understood that his actions were self-destructive and bringing ruin upon his country. He even fleetingly agreed to stop the madness. But he couldn't finalize change. Why? Because his heart wouldn't allow his recognition to translate into behaviour modification. He knew what needed to be done, but he couldn't "close the deal." This is the internal Pharaoh, stubbornly disregarding logical recognitions as it clings to self-destructive behaviour. Recognize him?

So, whence the salvation? Moses, of course.

Moses is described in our Scripture and tradition as a man of total commitment. Brilliant as he was, he didn't guide his life by intellect alone. He deeply felt a profound, super-rational relationship with the Divine, and that's what guided his behaviour. The most elemental relationships are super-rational. After all, is a parent's commitment to a child purely rational? Should a child's commitment to parents be purely logic-based? No.

Mobilizing our inner Moses means selflessly committing ourselves to our highest image, the vision of who G-d created us each to be. The "Moses method" is a matter of selfless commitment, not logical calculation. This can't be challenged by the Pharaoh Syndrome, which prevents the expression of our logical resolutions.

Simply put: The Moses method is a much deeper expression of self, and it's "working a different wavelength."

Here's the bottom line: Sometimes, life's richness is reached when we can step beyond the limitations of the mind, following the soul's lead and expression.

So the next time you resolve to change your behaviour, see it as a part of your commitment to G-d, see it as an exercise of your relationship with your Destiny, see it as an expression of your very reason for existence. Then see if excuses can block your way.

Slice of LIFE

Some five years ago a young Chabad Chassid was invited by a Chabad house in Russia to make a Passover "Seder" in a nearby town.

The young man, recently ordained as a Rabbi, arrived several weeks before the holiday. He went, together with the Chabad representative that invited him, to the Mayor of that town to look for a suitable place to hold the festive ceremony. They were expecting several hundred people and needed a big hall.

After a few minutes the Mayor decided that the only place in his town that would serve their purposes was the Communist meeting hall. It seems that when the Communists were in power, they made sure that the biggest building in every town in Russia would be their party meeting hall. The Rabbis and the Mayor went and had a look, and sure enough the place was perfect.

Posters were put up, people were invited personally, and food was brought and prepared. All the vessels had to be new, all the meat had to be strictly Kosher, the cooking had to be supervised constantly so that no one would bring "Chametz" (leavened bread products) into the kitchen, and the building had to be completely cleaned, "koshered", and decorated.

All the work paid off. Some three hundred people arrived! Young and old, men and women, all dressed in their nicest clothes and with shining faces. Some came from nostalgia, some from curiosity, some for a good time. Regardless, everyone, whether they knew it or not, came because they were Jews and tonight was Passover.

It took a while to get everyone seated and settled. The Rabbi made a short welcoming speech telling them what to expect. For some of them it was

their first "Seder" in fifty years, and for many the first in their lives. Haggadahs (Seder books) translated into Russian were handed out, cups were filled with wine, Matzot were distributed, and the evening began.

Everyone did what they were told with joy, and listened to the Rabbi's explanations with great interest. They all read aloud from their books about how G-d did great miracles thousands of years ago, and how He took the Jews out of Egypt. They all ate the Matzah, drank four cups of wine, finished their holiday meal, sang, and even danced at the proper times.

Everything went smoothly until the cup of Elijah. This symbolic "extra" cup of wine is poured at the end of the meal to remind us of the imminent arrival of Moshiach. The young Chabad Rabbi explained with enthusiasm how this fifth cup stood for Moshiach who will arrive any moment to gather all the Jews and make a beautiful new world with the revelation of G-d everywhere etc.

Suddenly one of the older men stood up, tapped on the table and said in a booming voice, "Young man! Excuse me please, young Rabbi!"

The place went silent and just as they all had listened to the Rabbi they now turned to the new speaker. He waited a few seconds and continued.

"We are very grateful to you for this beautiful evening with the wonderful food and wine. Everything is very nice, Very beautiful, and very tasty."

Everyone in the room turned to one another, shook their heads in agreement and wondered what he was getting at.

"Everything you said is also very interesting and nice." The man continued. "Beautiful stories; G-d took the Jews from Egypt, made miracles...very nice Bible stories. We all love stories.

But what you said about some Messiah coming and making a utopia,

building a Holy Temple and all this. Please Rabbi, we are grown up people. We are not little children that we believe such nonsense! You are a very nice man and we are very grateful, but please save such foolish superstitions for your children not for intelligent grown-ups. Please understand us, dear Rabbi, nothing personal but you are a naive person. You have been locked up in Yeshiva (Rabbinical College) and we live in the real world"

Everyone again shook their heads in agreement. They then looked sheepishly at the Rabbi as though to say "We are sorry, but he's right."

The young rabbi however did not lose his composure. He waited a few minutes and before the man sat down he replied.

"My friend" he said with a warm smile, "My friends!" he opened his arms and looked around the room.

"Do you realize where we are? Do you realize what we are doing? Do you realize what you are saying!?"

If someone would have told you fifteen years ago that you would make a PESACH SEDER in the COMMUNIST MEETING HALL, would you believe them?

Why, fifteen years ago there was nothing more powerful and secure than Communism, and nothing weaker than Judaism! Communism was the complete opposite and biggest enemy of G-d and everyone in Russia was sure that Communism was right.

But here we are! The impossible has happened! Communism has not only fallen, it is becoming transformed to Judaism! So is it really so far-fetched that Moshiach can change the entire world?"

The man looked at the crowd then back at the young rabbi, straightened up, smiled broadly and said..."BRAVO!!". And the entire crowd broke into applause.

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ISSUE 1069

MOSHIACH MATTERS

In this week's Parsha we find four terms used in reference to the redemption from Egypt. Following these four, there is a fifth, "and I will bring". This is a reference to the future redemption with Moshiach. On Passover we drink four cups of wine corresponding to the first four expressions. The fifth cup of the Seder night, the cup of Eliyahu is connected to Moshiach.



INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE

B"H, Tuesday of the week in which we read the *Parshah* [beginning] "And Yaakov lived in the land of Egypt," 5707

Greetings and blessings,

We received your letter of 11 Kislev in which you share the good news that communal sessions of Torah study were established at an appropriate time. As per your request, we have sent you some of our publications in a separate shipment. Please notify us that you received them. It is incumbent on you to see that many use these texts, either by placing them in a public place (a synagogue, a reading room, or the like) or by lending them to others and then lending them out again. "Whenever one brings merit to people at large..., the merit of the many is dependent on him."

We are not in possession of any copies of the *Tanya*, because they have all been sold. You should approach [the Chasidim in] Tel Aviv directly for it appears that they still possess a number of copies.

In a letter of 14 Sivan, 5701 (which I cited in *HaYom Yom*, p. 12), my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe *Shlita*, writes that when the *Tzemach Tzedek* was a young child, he studied the verse: "And Yaakov lived in the land of Egypt for seventeen years." His teacher interpreted it according to the commentary of the *Baal HaTurim*, explaining that Yaakov lived his seventeen best years in Egypt.

When he came home from school, he asked his grandfather, the Alter Rebbe: "How is it possible that the best years of Yaakov, the chosen of the Patriarchs, were the seventeen years he lived in the land of Egypt, 'the nakedness of the land'?"

The Alter Rebbe answered him:

It is written: "He sent Yehudah before him to Yosef towards Goshen to show the way." The *Midrash* -- quoted by *Rashi* -- states: "Rabbi Nechemiah says: '[He was sent] to establish a house of study' so that the Torah would [be taught there]. Thus Yaakov's sons would contemplate the Torah. [This is the intent of the words:] 'To Goshen, to show the way.' When we study the Torah, we come closer to G-d. [In this manner,] it was possible that even in Egypt, Yaakov 'lived,' i.e., experienced vitality.

It is possible to clarify an additional point: Why was it Yehudah whom he sent? It is possible to resolve the concept as follows: The Alter Rebbe's explanation (which is based on the *Baal HaTurim's* teaching) -- that through Torah study, one comes closer to G-d -- is difficult to understand. Obviously, when Yaakov [and his sons] were in *Eretz Yisrael*, "he was an elder, abiding in the *Yeshivah*," like the other Patriarchs. Why then are his years in Egypt considered his *best* years?

...Egypt is "the nakedness of the land," while with regard to *Eretz Yisrael* from which they departed, it is said: "The atmosphere of *Eretz Yisrael* grants one wisdom" in Torah study.

For this reason, [Yaakov] sent Yehudah before him, for [his Divine service] reflects the *kabbalas ol* (the acceptance of the master's yoke) demonstrated by a simple servant. [Such a servant] takes pleasure in performing his Divine service with *kabbalas ol*, obediently following the master's orders, for the Master's pleasure is his pleasure. The Master, G-d, has very deep pleasure in Torah study in the land of Egypt. With regard to the Divine service of refining [the sparks of G-dliness], there is room within logic to say that one must descend to Egypt. With regard to Torah study, by contrast, [the descent to Egypt] is illogical, unacceptable even to the intellect of the G-dly soul. It is, however, one of the deep conceptions of the Master [of the world], a revelation of His essence. Through the attribute of Yehudah, it is possible for the servant also to experience deep and essential pleasure [in this study]. Hence it was Torah study in Egypt that granted Yaakov his best years.

With the blessing "Immediately to *teshuvah*, immediately to Redemption,"

Rabbi Menachem Schneerson
Chairman of the Executive Committee

CUSTOMS CORNER

The Proper Environment for Prayer

It is forbidden to pray in a place that has idols. This prohibition includes icons that are worshipped, as well as crucifixes. Many airports and hospitals have prayer rooms. If a cross is displayed in that room, a Jew should not pray there. Similarly, if one is in a hospital room which has a cross hanging on the wall, one should cover it, especially during prayer.

One may not pray, recite any blessings, or study Torah if bodily excrements are visible within a range of four cubits. This prohibition is derived from the verse: "And you should... cover up your excrement, and your camp shall be holy" - meaning, when you are engaged in holy matters, all filth should be covered or removed.

When one touches something dirty (e.g., shoes) or a sweaty or dirty part of one's body, he must wash his hands with water before praying. This includes touching any part of the body which is normally covered.

Because when praying we stand before the King of kings, it is appropriate that we dress in a respectable manner. For this reason, one may not pray while bare-chested or barefoot (in a region that people do not go barefoot when meeting important people).

A WORD

from the Director

This Shabbos is Rosh Chodesh Shevat. The Torah specifically mentions Rosh Chodesh Shevat, relating:

"On the first day of the eleventh month in the fortieth year, Moshe spoke to the children of Israel regarding all that G-d had commanded him for them.... Moshe began to explain this Torah, saying..."

The Megillah states, "These days are remembered and carried out." The AriZal explains that when a day is "remembered" properly, all the spiritual influences which were originally expressed are "carried out" again. Thus, by remembering the events of "the first day of the eleventh month," we cause the spiritual influences of that day to be expressed again. Furthermore, based on the principle, "always advance in regard to holy matters," we can assume that, each year, these influences are expressed on a higher level.

Moshe made this address to the Jewish people in the fortieth year after their leaving Egypt. At the revelation of the Torah on Mount Sinai, G-d revealed Himself to the Jews. In contrast, Moshe's address to the Jewish people was made "in his own words." Thus, our Sages state that Moshe related the book of Devarim independently. This is not to be interpreted to mean that this book is not a revelation of G-d's Torah. Surely, it is. Rather, our Sages' intent was that, in this instance, G-d's Torah en clothed itself within Moshe's intellect to the point that the words he spoke were simultaneously G-d's and his own. This, in turn, made it possible for these words to be grasped and comprehended by the intellect of the Jewish people and, in this way, to permeate through their powers of comprehension.

Thus, each year, on Rosh Chodesh Shevat, the Moshe of each generation - - and the spark of Moshe which each Jew possesses within his soul -- declares that the service of receiving the Torah and the Mitzvos has been completed and he is prepared to lead them into Eretz Yisroel in the true and complete redemption.

J. I. Guterlich

IT HAPPENED *Once...*

Once there lived a wealthy Jewish forester named Yosef. Yosef was very kind and generous. He understood that G-d had blessed him with great wealth so that he could help others, and he was always ready to give to the poor.

As Yosef's wealth increased, so did his charitable deeds. One day, a group of Jews from a nearby village came to see him. "We've come to ask you to help a needy bride and groom," said one of the group, Yonah the shoemaker. "They are both orphans, and there is no one to help them. They're getting married on Chanukah, and they haven't any money."

"How much money do you need?" asked Yosef.

"One thousand rubles should be enough," said Yonah.

Yosef went to his desk and took out a packet of money. He counted out a thousand rubles, and handed it to Yonah with a smile. The villagers were stunned. They could not thank Yosef enough.

As they left, Yosef said, "Remember to invite me to the wedding. I want to participate in the great Mitzvah of rejoicing with the bride and groom."

Some weeks later, Yosef travelled to Danzig where he had to collect payment from a number of his customers. He expected to be away for at least three weeks and told his family regretfully that he did not think he would be home in time to kindle the Menorah with them on the first night of Chanukah.

Yosef's stay in Danzig was blessed with success. He finished up his business more quickly than expected and was delighted that he would be able to surprise his family and arrive home in time to light the first Chanukah candle.

Yosef purchased a ticket for the train ride home and entered a car that was not too crowded. He sat down, closed his eyes and dozed off. Suddenly, he heard voices whispering next to him. Opening his eyes, he saw two men sitting across from him, eying him suspiciously.

Yosef's heart skipped a beat as he thought, "They are planning to rob me!" Yosef quickly got up. He went from one car to the next, until he came to a car that was packed with people. He looked for an empty place, and sat down.

"Thank G-d, I managed to escape from those men just in time!" he said to himself. The car was crowded with farmers and peasants. Yosef felt much safer surrounded by people.

Suddenly, he noticed the two strangers standing at the doorway of the car. Yosef opened his bag and took out the gun that he always carried. He made sure the men could see that he had it. The men quickly disappeared. Yosef realized his suspicions were right.

For the remainder of the trip, Yosef stayed alert. He prayed to G-d to protect him and return him home safely. When Yosef got off the train, he went over to a policeman, handed him several rubles, and asked him to escort him home.

When he finally arrived at home, Yosef breathed a sigh of relief. But no one was home. He realized that his family and servants were all still in the city as they had not expected him to arrive until later in the week. "What a shame," Yosef thought to himself as he began preparing the oil and wicks of the Menorah for the first night of Chanukah, "after all my efforts to get here, I am still alone."

All was still in the house. Yosef sat by the candles for a while, and then took out a book and began to study. The stillness was shattered by the sound of splintering wood. Yosef jumped up and saw his two "travel companions" from the train bursting through the front door.

Brandishing guns, the thieves demanded that Yosef open up his safe and empty it out for them. They then tied him up with heavy rope and threw him on the ground. Yosef prayed to G-d, knowing that his life was in grave danger.

Suddenly, sounds of voices and musical instruments could be heard from outside. The music kept getting closer and louder. The thieves turned pale, and began looking for a way to escape, but it was too late.

From outside they heard happy shouts. "Reb Yosef. Open up. We've come to bring you to the wedding." The villagers marched through the open door. They saw Reb Yosef lying tied up on the floor and then they saw the thieves. They pounced on the villains, and easily overpowered them.

Yonah the shoemaker untied Reb Yosef. "We came to bring you to the wedding, as you asked," he said. "And look at this!"

"You saved my life!" Yosef exclaimed. "They would have killed me!"

"Surely your mitzvot of charity, looking after orphans, and the desire to rejoice at a wedding saved you," said Yonah.

The villagers escorted Reb Yosef to the wedding with much joy. As Yosef watched the happy dancing, he thanked G-d for all the miracles and the salvation that had just occurred for him.

Thoughts THAT COUNT

And G-d spoke to Moses, Say to Aaron, Take your rod, and stretch out your hand upon the waters of Egypt (7:19)

The first three plagues -- blood, frogs and lice -- were brought on by Aaron. For G-d said to Moses: the waters which protected you when you were cast into the River, and the soil which protected you when you buried the Egyptian -- it is not fitting that they should be afflicted by your hand. Therefore, I shall afflict them through Aaron. (*Mishnat Rabbi Eliezer*)

CANDLE LIGHTING: 11 JANUARY 2013



BEGINS		ENDS
8:27	MELBOURNE	9:31
8:15	ADELAIDE	9:17
6:30	BRISBANE	7:27
7:01	DARWIN	7:53
6:30	GOLD COAST	7:27
7:09	PERTH	8:08
7:52	SYDNEY	8:53
8:04	CANBERRA	9:06
8:29	LAUNCESTON	9:37
8:26	AUCKLAND	9:29
8:38	WELLINGTON	9:46
8:33	HOBART	9:43
7:30	BYRON BAY	8:28

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

439 INKERMAN STREET, CAULFIELD

PARSHAS VA'EIRAH
29 TEVET • 11 JANUARY

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	8:27 PM
	MINCHA:	8:40 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS:	9:10 PM
SHABBOS MORNING:	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	LATEST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9:50 AM
	THE MOLAD OF THE MONTH OF SHEVAT IS	
	SHABBAT JANUARY 12: 4:53 AND 12 CHALAKIM AM	
	MINCHA:	8:20 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS::	9:31 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS SUN-FRI:	8:00 AM
	MINCHA:	9:15 AM
	MAARIV:	2:03 PM
		8:35 PM
		9:25 PM