

Evoking The Narrative Of The Past To Live It In The Future

Pesach Video Series from YadAvNow.com

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Why Not Extinguish the Fire for Illumination?

A Medium For Full Reinstatement

Unleashing the Forces Of Creation Through the Seder

1. Jewish Holidays and Festivals are re-enactments of those original moments.
2. The initial energies & influences of these events & miracles are re-released at those particular times.
3. At the Seder we do many things that are only rabbinic:
4. Reclining to demonstrate freedom, eating bitter herbs to commemorate the embitterment of the bondage, the 4 cups of wine.
5. Ancient custom to provide for the poor: wheat for matzo and the means to purchase wine for the Seder.
6. The custom has been expanded to provide food for the Holiday for the needy.
7. Shalah Hakadosh: The Jews were not worthy of redemption because they were pagans in Egypt.
8. Due to G-d's indiscriminate kindness they were redeemed.
9. Becoming a Jewish People is equivalent to the beginning of existence.
10. Psalms: "The world was created due to G-d's Chesed."
11. Nisan: The month of redemption G-d unleashed forces that brought about redemption due to G-d's Chesed.
12. The Jew during the Month of Nisan displays Chesed to emulate and activate G-d's unlimited kindness.

Tracing Our DNA To Our Most Special Patriarch

1. Yaakov: The most special of the Patriarchs.
2. He fathered the 12 Tribes.
3. Midrash: Yaakov was given his name by G-d; the spelling contains 4 letters.
4. Each letter corresponds to a level of distinction.
5. Yud (10) corresponds to 10 commandments.
6. Ayin (70): the 70 elders.
7. Kuf (100): the height of the covered sanctuary in the Temple.
8. Beiz (2): the two tablets.
9. In the merit of Yaakov the Jews were redeemed from Egypt.
10. Avraham was redeemed from the kiln due to Yaakov.
11. The unique traits Jews possess – Compassion, Shame, conscience, and acts of loving-kindness – are attributed to Avraham.
12. We are beneficiaries of Yaakov for redeeming Avraham from the kiln.

Weekly Torah Commentaries Series: Pesach

Evoking The Narrative Of The Past To Live It In The Future

The Month of Nissan, a Precursor to the Ultimate

Gemara in Tractate *Taanis*: “When the month of *Adar* enters one should increase his level of joy...” Although the month of *Nissan* is a month of revealed miracles, because it is the time during which the exodus of the Jewish people from Egypt took place, the *Gemara* does not state that one should increase his level of joy when the month of *Nissan* enters. Regarding a leap year in which there are two months of *Adar*, the *Gemara* in Tractate *Megillah* rules that *Purim* is celebrated during the second *Adar* because we “juxtapose redemption to redemption.”

The month of *Nissan*, which follows *Adar* is the time of redemption because it was during this month that the Jews were redeemed from Egypt. *Purim* is the time when the decree to annihilate every Jewish man, woman, and child was annulled and our enemies, the Amalekites, were destroyed. Therefore, *Purim* is celebrated during the second *Adar*, which is juxtaposed to the month of redemption, which is

Nissan. One would think that the time in which the Jewish people were extricated from Egypt where they had fallen to the forty-ninth level of spiritual contamination, were faced spiritual extinction, and began their spiritual ascent to stand at Sinai, would be a time to increase one’s level of joy. Why is *Nissan* not considered to be a month of joy as *Adar*?

The *Torah* tells us that G-d gave the Jewish people the *mitzvah* of circumcision and the *mitzvah* of the Pascal offering as a prerequisite for their redemption. It is stated in *Yechezkel*, “And you are naked and devoid (of *mitzvos*).” Since the Jewish people were devoid of spirituality in Egypt (they were pagan), they needed spiritual merit to be worthy of redemption. G-d presented them with the *mitzvos* of circumcision and the Pascal sacrifice.

Through the sacrificing of the Pascal lamb, the Jewish people severed their relationship with idolatry (the lamb and goat were Egyptian deities). By circumcising themselves, the Jewish people reestablished their holy covenant with G-d. Regardless of all of these

levels of redemption and spiritualization, *Nissan* is not prescribed as a month to increase joy.

In the month of *Sivan*, the Jewish people received the *Torah* at Sinai. This was the pinnacle of their spiritual ascent; nevertheless, their acceptance of the *Torah* was qualitatively not at the ultimate level. Despite the fact that G-d had taken them out of Egypt with revealed miracles, split the Sea on their behalf, and destroyed the Egyptian armies that were pursuing them, the Jewish people did not accept the *Torah* out of love, but rather G-d needed to hold a mountain over their heads.

Gemara in Tractate *Shabbos*: G-d held the mountain over their heads “like a barrel and said to them: ‘If you accept the *Torah* it will be good (for you); however, if you do not, there you will be buried.’” Thus, the Jewish people accepted the *Torah* at Sinai under duress, which is not the ultimately level of acceptance.

Torah in the Portion of *Bereishis*: “and it was THE sixth day (*yom ha shishi*).” Regarding all of the other days of Creation, the *Torah* does not predicate the day with the word “the.” However, regarding the sixth day of Creation the *Torah* states, “THE sixth day” indicating that there is something special about the sixth day. *Chazal* explain that this is alluding to the sixth day of the month of *Sivan*, when the Jewish people were to receive the *Torah* at Sinai. If they were to accept it on that day, when it will be offered to them, the world would continue to exist. However, if they should choose reject it, the world would revert back to pre-existence. As it states in the *Gemara* in Tractate *Avoda Zorah*, “Existence was not tranquil until the Jewish people accepted the *Torah*.”

One would think that since all existence assumed a level of permanence because the Jewish people accepted the *Torah*, *Sivan* should be a month in which one increases his level of joy, just as in *Adar*. Nevertheless, because G-d needed to put a mountain over the heads of the Jewish people which is a secondary level of acceptance, *Sivan* is not a time that is prescribed to increase one’s level of joy.

In contrast, the Jewish people accepted the *Torah* out of love in the month of *Adar*. It was not only a month in which they were saved from annihilation, but rather they reaffirmed their commitment to the

Torah out of love because they understood G-d’s special love for them. All existence rests on the Jewish people accepting the *Torah* and fulfilling it at the ultimate level. Therefore, because when they accepted the *Torah* in *Adar* out of love, it is a time for one to increase his level of joy. It was not until *Purim* that the Jewish people accept the *Torah* as it should be accepted initially at Sinai.

Gemara in Tractate *Megillah*: the study of *Torah* has greater value than the saving of a life. *Mordechai* was pivotal in bringing about the miracle of *Purim*. He galvanized the Jewish people to repent until the decree of annihilation was annulled. Had *Mordechai* not intervened, the decree of *Haman* the evil one would have brought about the total destruction of the Jewish people.

After the miracle of *Purim*, *Mordechai* was appointed by the Persian king *Achashverosh* to be viceroy. Because he had many governmental responsibilities, he had less time to study *Torah*. The *Megillah* tells us that because he was involved to this degree in political matters, he was only accepted by a majority of his colleagues and not by all of them as before. Losing favor among the minority of his colleagues indicates that studying *Torah* is more valuable than saving a life. How do we understand this?

Mishna in Tractate *Sanhedrin*: the saving of one Jewish life is the equivalent of saving the entire world. The reason for this is because the value of a Jewish life is to do the Will of G-d. The ultimate performance of G-d’s Will is the study of *Torah*. It is only through the study of *Torah* that is able to fully appreciate the value of doing the Will of G-d.

Gemara in Tractate *Kiddushin*: “Great is the study of *Torah* because it brings one to action (to fulfill *mitzvos*).” If one engages in *Torah* study it will cause one to actualize the *mitzvos*.

Since the objective of existence is to fulfill the *Torah*, when the Jewish people do so, they are fulfilling their purpose in existence. Therefore, we are able to appreciate that when *Mordechai*, because of his political responsibilities he was not able to engage in *Torah* study at the same level as before, had fallen out of favor by a minority of his colleagues.

The Contributing Factors that Brought About Redemption

It is stated in the verse in *Yechezkel* regarding the spiritual condition of the Jewish people before their redemption in Egypt, “And you are naked and devoid (of *mitzvos*).” The *Torah* tells us that G-d gave the Jewish people the *mitzvah* of circumcision and the *mitzvah* of the Pascal offering as a prerequisite for their redemption.

Yechezkel: “I saw you wallowing in your bloods. Through your blood, you shall live. Through your blood you shall live.” *Chazal* tell us that the “bloods” refers to the blood of circumcision and the blood of the Pascal sacrifice. Since the Jewish people were devoid of spirituality in Egypt (they were pagan), they needed spiritual merit to be worthy of redemption. G-d therefore presented them with the *mitzvos* of circumcision and the Pascal sacrifice so that they should be worthy of redemption.

It seems to be difficult because *Chazal* tell us that the Jewish people merited redemption because they did not change their Hebrew names, their language (the holy tongue, Hebrew), and their attire (Jewish dress) despite the fact that they were slaves in Egypt and had become pagans.

There is yet another opinion in the *Midrash* that states that the Jewish people were redeemed from Egypt, it was because of the righteous Jewish women who never despaired that there would be a redemption, despite the hopelessness that their husbands and families were experiencing. It seems to be from the verse of the Prophet that the Jewish people merited redemption because of the two *mitzvos* that they were given by G-d; however, the *Midrash* tells us that they merited redemption because they maintained their Jewish identity and because of the righteous women. How do we reconcile these two facts?

In addition, the *Torah* tells us that G-d spoke to *Avraham* at the Covenant between the parts saying, “You shall know that your offspring will be strangers in a land that is not their own....The nation that will enslave them will be judged and then they will go out with great wealth.” G-d had promised *Avraham* that ultimately after experiencing bondage, the Jewish

people would be redeemed from Egypt. Seemingly, this promise is unrelated to any merit that allowed the Jewish people to be worthy of redemption. Seemingly, they were redeemed from Egypt because of G-d’s promise. If so, what is the relevance of the various reasons offered by *Chazal*?

Gemara in Tractate *Bava Metzia*: G-d valued every aspect of *Avraham*’s hospitality that he had afforded the wayfarers (who were angels) that had come to him on the third day after his circumcision. The Jewish people were beneficiaries of *Avraham*’s special act of hospitality during their forty-year trek in the desert. In the merit of *Avraham*’s offering the shade of his tree to the angels, the Jewish people merited to be protected by the Clouds of Glory. In the merit of offering the water to the wayfarers, the Jewish people were provided with the living wellspring, which traveled with them in the desert. In the merit of offering them bread, the Jewish people merited to have the Manna, which provided them with sustenance.

Seemingly, the Jewish people merited these three special gifts from G-d in the merit of *Avraham*’s unique hospitality that he had offered the angels. Nevertheless, the *Gemara* in Tractate *Taanis* offers another reason. The *Gemara* in Tractate *Taanis* states, “The Jewish people were given three special leaders; *Moshe*, *Aaron*, and *Miriam*. In the merit of *Moshe*, the Jewish people merited to receive the Manna. In the merit of *Aaron*, the Jewish people were protected in the desert by the Clouds of Glory. In the merit of *Miriam*, they merited the living wellspring.” How do we reconcile the two statements in the *Gemara*?

On one hand, *Chazal* tell us that the Jewish people merit these special gifts from G-d in the desert in the merit of *Avraham*’s special hospitality. On the other hand, they merited these gifts of the special merit of *Moshe*, *Aaron*, and *Miriam*? Seemingly, each one has a special role in bringing about the miracle.

Gemara in Tractate *Berachos*: the three prayer services that we recite daily, *shachris* (morning service), *mincha* (afternoon service), and *arvis* (evening service), were enacted by the three holy Patriarchs. *Avraham* enacted the morning service. *Yitzchak* enacted the afternoon service and *Yaakov*

enacted the evening service. Why was it necessary for the holy Patriarchs to enact or establish the three prayer services? It would have been sufficient for the rabbis to legislate and enact that a Jew must pray three times a day; morning, afternoon, and evening so that the Jew continually maintains his relationship with G-d. According to *Rambam*, prayer is a *Torah* obligation and not a rabbinic enactment. If so, what is the value of the Patriarchs enacting and establishing the three prayer services?

In order for the Jew to be able to communicate with G-d, through prayer, there needed to be a channel opened that would allow for such a level of relationship, communication, and intimacy with the Creator of existence. Such a channel could only be opened and established by someone of a unique spiritual dimension and accomplishment. *Avraham*, being the one who had introduced G-d to humanity through his espousal of monotheism, had the special spiritual capacity to establish a conduit to communicate with G-d. The Jewish people, being *Avraham's* descendants and spiritual heirs, are thus able to pray to G-d and enter into an audience to have their prayers heard by Him.

Similarly, *Yitzchak* and *Yaakov* also being the location of the Divine Presence in the world established the conduits to be able to communicate with G-d through prayer in the afternoon and evening. Had the holy Patriarchs not established these conduits, the prayers of the Jewish people would not be able to penetrate the many barriers to be heard by the Almighty.

When *Avraham* offered his special hospitality to the three angels, he initiated a basis for a special spiritual influence/blessing (*shefa*) of which his descendants the Jewish people could be beneficiaries. Although *Avraham* initiated this *shefa* in the spiritual realm, it needed to be brought down into the physical realm in order for the Jewish people to be beneficiaries of that influence. It is through special merit that the *shefa* that had previously been established is brought down.

In order for one to receive blessing/*shefa* one must be a proper and worthy vessel. If a vessel is broken or tainted it will not be able to contain something.

It was the merit of *Moshe*, *Aaron*, and *Miriam* that they had achieved due to their spiritual dimension of being and accomplishments that was able to draw down the blessing that *Avraham* had previously established for his children. Therefore the Jewish people were the beneficiaries of the Manna, Clouds of Glory, and Wellspring of *Miriam*.

The fact that the Jewish people retained their Jewish identity in Egypt by not changing their names, language, and attire established them as a vessel that was worthy of blessing. The merit of the righteous women who continued to believe in the redemption, despite the hopelessness of their predicament in Egypt further perfected the Jewish people as a vessel that was able to receive the influences that would bring about redemption.

The two *mitzvos* of circumcision and the Pascal sacrifice spiritualized the Jewish people making them worthy of redemption and activated the influence (*shefa*) from above that was already initiated and established by the promise that G-d had made to *Avraham* at the covenant between the parts. G-d promised that *Avraham's* children would be ultimately redeemed and go out of Egypt with great wealth. However, two criteria needed to be met. Firstly, they needed to identify as *Avraham's* children through their names, language, and attire and secondly they needed the *mitzvos* to draw the influence into the vessel so that they should merit the actual redemption.

The Jewish people, as G-d's children are the entity that is capable and qualified to receive blessing. However, in order to activate the influence to bring it down into this existence, they need to engage in the performance of *mitzvos* and study of *Torah*. On Passover, the Jew, through his performance of the *mitzvos* that pertain to the *Seder* such as the eating of *matzah* (*Torah* obligation), the drinking of the four cups of wine which correspond to the four expressions of redemption, and the recitation of the *hagadah* (bondage and redemption) one will establish the appropriate spiritual infrastructure to be able to receive G-d's blessing.

The Spiritual Equilibrium of the Jewish People

The *Torah* states in the Portion of *Shemos*, "A man went from the house of *Levi* and he took a daughter of *Levi*. The woman conceived and gave birth to a son..." The *Torah* does not reveal the identity of the "man" or the "daughter of *Levi*." *Rashi* cites *Chazal* who explain that the "man" was *Amram* and the "daughter of *Levi*" was *Yocheved*. *Amram* and *Yocheved* were *Moshe's* parents. *Amram* was the leading sage of his generation and *Yocheved* was the leading midwife (*Shifra*), who defied the edict of the Pharaoh regarding the killing of the Jewish newborn males. Why does the *Torah* conceal the identity of *Amram* and *Yocheved* regarding their marriage before the conception of *Moshe*?

Maharal of *Prague* in his work *Gevuras Hashem* explains that most often a child's ability and potential is determined by the characteristics and genealogy of the parents. By concealing the parentage of *Moshe*, the *Torah* is telling us that his spiritual dimension of being was unrelated to the innate characteristics and genealogy of his parents. His dimension of spirituality was unlike any other human being who ever existed.

The Jewish people needed an individual of *Moshe's* unique dimension to come into existence so that he could receive the *Torah* from G-d on their behalf. *Moshe* needed to be able to surpass every aspect of the natural order in to be the Redeemer who would take the Jewish people out of Egypt. No other human being had that level of spirituality. Therefore, the *Torah* did not identify the parentage of *Moshe* to indicate that his spiritual dimension of being had no relevance to who they were. However because *Amram* and *Yocheved* were very special in their own right because of their own accomplishments, G-d endowed them with the gift of *Moshe*.

It is interesting to note that the *Torah* mentions the conception of *Moshe* after the incident of the midwives. Pharaoh dictated to the Jewish midwives that they must kill every newborn Jewish male in the birthstool. However, *Yocheved* and *Miriam* did not heed the dictate of the king of Egypt, but rather, they sustained and fed the Jewish male newborns in defiance of Pharaoh. After this incident the *Torah*

states, "A man went from the house of *Levi* and he took a daughter of *Levi*. The woman conceived and gave birth to a son..."

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: because *Yocheved* had defied the dictate of Pharaoh to kill the Jewish newborn males, she merited to have *Moshe*, the most exceptional Jew as her son who is the equivalent of the Jewish people.

Chazal: the spirituality of *Moshe* was the equivalent of the entire Jewish people. Because of *Yocheved's* defiance and not heeding the decree of Pharaoh, there is a Jewish people. Had she submitted to his will, the Jewish people would have become gone into oblivion in Egypt. Based on the principle of measure for measure, just as her sacrifice was the cause of having a Jewish people, she merited having a son that was the equivalent of the entire Jewish people, measure for measure.

Moshe became the adopted grandson of Pharaoh. The Midrash tells us that he was treated as the most beloved grandson of Pharaoh. Seemingly, because of *Moshe's* position within the palace as prince and his relationship with Pharaoh that he would be have been an important advocate for the Jewish people. Despite his level of influence and importance for the Jewish people, the *Torah* tells us that *Moshe* made a choice that caused him to need to flee from Egypt, thus forgoing his position as advocate for the Jewish people.

The *Torah* tells us that *Moshe* saw an Egyptian beating a Jew and he killed him. After *Moshe* killed the Egyptian, he needed to flee from Egypt because the court had ruled that he needed to be put to death. Why did G-d allow *Moshe*, who was an individual with such unique spiritual dimension and crucial as an advocate for the Jewish people, to witness something that would ultimately cause him to flee from Egypt? Seemingly, such an important asset to the Jewish people should have been shielded from witnessing such an incident.

The Egyptian that he had killed was the one who had defiled *Shlomis Bas Divri*, the wife of the man who was beaten by the Egyptian. She was the only Jewish woman to be defiled during the 210 years of bondage in Egypt. *Chazal* tell us that her defilement

was initiated by her breach of modesty. Because she had breached the protocols of modesty of a Jewish woman, it led to her defilement.

Chazal: she was called *Shlomis Bas Divri* because she would outwardly welcome and speak excessively to whoever who would pass by her (“*Shlomis*” from the word “*shalom*” and “*Divri*” from the word that means “speech”). The Jewish women merited special Divine Protection because of the merit of *Sarah*, our Matriarch. She had fended off the advances of Pharaoh when she had descended to Egypt with *Avraham*.

However, because *Shlomis Bas Divri* breached the modesty of a Jewish woman, she was defiled. Because there was a breach in the sanctity of the Jewish people, it caused a negative consequence. *Moshe*, the most spiritual Jew needed to flee Egypt. Despite his value as an advocate for the Jewish people, he had no choice but to flee. We see from the incident of *Shlomis Bas Divri* the seriousness of the breach of modesty within the Jewish people. Such a breach causes a withdrawal of Divine Protection.

Just as the Jewish people needed to maintain their purity regarding their sexual behavior to be qualified and worthy to receive the *Torah* at Sinai to become G-d’s people, so too do the Jewish people throughout the millennia need to maintain their modesty so as to merit G-d’s Protection. Because of the breach of modesty in Egypt, it caused a spiritual void that resulted in *Moshe* needing to flee Egypt.

What is the Meaning of Freedom for a Jew?

The Men of the High Assembly, who composed the text of all the prayer services, chose to refer to the Festival of Passover as “the time of our freedom (*zman chairuseinu*).” It is true that we recount in the Seder service that it was during this time that G-d redeemed the Jewish people from Egypt. They were enslaved for hundreds of years and had suffered during their bondage under their Egyptian taskmasters. The Jewish people were the equivalent of the chattel of the Egyptians. However, had G-d freed them from their bondage through His infinite Kindness. The objective of taking the Jewish people out of Egypt was not only to free them from their

physical oppressors, but rather it was so that they should stand at Sinai and receive the *Torah*.

Every aspect of the process of their redemption and progressing towards Sinai was essential to qualify them to receive the *Torah* and become G-d’s Holy people. The Ten plagues and all the revealed miracles that had transpired relating to their redemption caused the Jewish people to be weaned from their pagan beliefs and become spiritualized. During their enslavement in Egypt they had become pagans to no less a degree than their Egyptian masters. However, at Sinai the Jewish people chose to accept the *Torah* with the unequivocal declaration of “*Naaseh V’nishma* (We will do and we will listen).” Thus, the objective of redemption from Egypt was achieved.

What is the meaning of freedom as it pertains to the Jew? The Jewish people could have chosen not to accept the *Torah*. If they had done so, they would have perished under the mountain and all existence would have come to an end. The creation of the world and its ongoing existence was contingent upon the Jewish people accepting the *Torah* at Sinai. However, they agreed to be committed to the dictate of G-d without knowing its extent and ramifications.

Regarding the Ten Commandments that *Moshe* had received at Sinai, the *Torah* uses the term “*charusengraved*.” The words of the Ten Commandments were etched through the stone Tablets.

Mishna in *Pirkei Avos* (Ethics of our Fathers): the word “*charus*” should not be read with its vowels but rather it should be read as “*cheirus* – freedom.” (Both words are spelled with the same letters; however, they are punctuated with different vowels which determine their reading). As it states, “There is no free man other than the one who engages in *Torah* study. Why is this so? If one is without a master dictating his existence, he should be considered free to do as he chooses. However, the *Torah*, through the word “*cheirus*” alludes to the fact that this is not so. The *Torah* which is replete with dictates and commandments, which guide every aspect of one’s life, seemingly would deny one’s freedom rather than making him a free man.

One who is truly free is able to make decisions based on choices that are in his best interest. One must establish an objectivity to be able to make that evaluation. In order for one to make these choices he must have a sense of clarity in order to discern between what is good and what is the antithesis of goodness. If one attempts to choose what is truly good based on his own sense, intellectualism, and experience he will be subject to his own human inclinations and desires. These human needs create a conflict of interest that do not allow the individual to appreciate all the full ramifications the issues in order to make the proper choice. Thus, one is enslaved by his own impulses and material needs. He is blinded from what he truly needs to advance his spirituality.

In contrast, one who engages in *Torah* study is able to extricate himself from the animalistic and material drives to utilize the material in order to facilitate spiritual growth. One will have an understanding that the material itself has no intrinsic value unto itself. Therefore, the one who engages in *Torah* study is truly free, whereas the one who is not involved in that process is being driven by the animal that exists within every person.

Haggadah: it was G-d Himself who took the Jewish people out of Egypt. It was not through an angel or any other spiritual entity. *Arizal* explains that the spiritual impurity of Egypt was so intense that not even an angel, who is a spiritual being, would have been tainted by the environment. Therefore, only G-d Himself could have extricated the Jewish people from that location of impurity. At the time of their redemption they were permeated and infected with impurity to the point that their spiritual system was completely shut down. They did not have the capacity to process and relate anything within the spiritual realm. G-d not only freed the Jewish people from their physical bondage, He had extricated and purged them from the spiritual impurity that they had absorbed during the Egyptian bondage.

The *Torah* states, “*Yisro*, the Minister of *Midian*, the father-in-law of *Moshe*, heard all that G-d had done for *Moshe* and Israel, His People – that *Hashem* took Israel out of Egypt.” After *Yisro* heard all that G-d had done for the Jewish people, he abandoned his position as Minister of *Midian* and his community to

join the Jewish people in the desert. Why was *Yisro* so impressed with all that he had heard?

Yisro was world renowned as a pagan priest of idolatry. He was the most proficient person in all forms of idol worship. In the past, he had been one of Pharaoh’s personal advisors. He thus understood and appreciated the intense impurity that existed in Egypt. When he had heard that G-d had taken the Jewish people out of Egypt and that they were able to express themselves at the Splitting of the Sea, as they had done as a result of processing the miracles that they had witnessed, he was amazed and taken aback.

He realized that G-d had cleansed and purged them from the impurity that they had attained in Egypt. It was not humanly possible for one to be freed from the influences of Egypt unless G-d Himself intervened. After *Yisro* had heard what had transpired, he abandoned his position of honor in order to join the Jewish people in the desert. The spiritual freedom that the Jewish people had attained was unequalled in existence. G-d gave them an objectivity, which gave them the ability to make the proper choice. The process of full spiritual emancipation culminated in the receiving of the *Torah* at Sinai.

When we mention in our prayers that Passover is the “time of our freedom (*zman chairuseinu*).” we must understand that we are not only referring to our physical freedom, but also the spiritual freedom to have the clarity to make the proper choices. We are only able to function as G-d’s people because of that special level of freedom that we had attained at the time of the exodus from Egypt.

Redemption from Egypt, the True Kindness of G-d

We recite in the Passover *Haggadah* and at every *bris* (circumcision) a verse from the Prophet *Yechezkel* which states, “In Egypt you were naked and devoid...” *Chazal* explain that the verse is referring to the spiritual state of the Jewish people when they were in Egypt. Since they had become pagans, they were devoid of *mitzvos*. The Prophet concludes, “I saw you wallowing in your bloods. Through your blood, you shall live. Through your blood you shall live.” In order

for the Jewish people to be worthy of redemption from Egypt they needed to have sufficient spiritual merit. Therefore, G-d gave them the opportunity to perform the *mitzvah* of circumcision and the *mitzvah* of sacrificing the Pascal lamb. It is through the “bloods” of circumcision and the Pascal sacrifice that the Jewish people were made sufficiently worthy for redemption. Why did G-d specifically choose these two *mitzvos* in order to give the Jewish people sufficient merit?

Shalo HaKadosh: the redemption from Egypt was a replication of the creation of the world. King David writes in Psalms, “*Olam chesed yibaneh* – the world was created with *Chesed* (Kindness).” Nothing existed before Creation. Therefore, there was no one who was deserving of Creation.

G-d created existence out of His Kindness in order to give man the ultimate opportunity to spiritually perfect himself. Just as creation initially came about in a context in which there was no one who was worthy of it, so too were the Jewish people redeemed from Egypt, despite their lack of worthiness. The only reason G-d had given them the opportunity to be redeemed was purely out of His Kindness. The redemption from Egypt, emanating from G-d’s Kindness, was a replication of the creation of the world.

Every day we conclude the *Amidah* (silent prayer) with a request that G-d should rebuild the Temple where we shall worship Him and “the offering of *Yehudah* and Jerusalem will be pleasing to G-d, as in the days of old and in former years.” One would think that “...the days of old and in former years” is referring to the time of the First Temple, or the *Mishkan* when the Divine Presence dwelt in the midst of the Jewish people. However, the *Midrash* explains that “days of old and in former years” is referring to the days of *Adam* when he had brought his offering. At the time of *Adam*, because the world was pristine and spiritually untainted by idolatry, the offering that *Adam* had brought had greater value. It was truly pleasing to G-d. Therefore, we supplicate G-d that at the end of time our offerings should be as pleasant to Him as in the time of *Adam*, when there was no impurity of idolatry in the world.

The Jewish people, by slaughtering the Pascal lamb, which was the deity of their Egyptian masters, were in effect purging their midst from idolatry/paganism. Rejecting idolatry in such a vehement manner was a reinstatement of creation at the time of *Adam*.

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: based on a *Zohar*, that *Adam* was created without a foreskin. It was only as a result of his sin, that the foreskin developed as an outgrowth of the impurity that *Adam* had brought upon himself. If the Jewish people were to be redeemed from Egypt, they needed to replicate the setting of existence that was at the beginning of Creation. They were therefore given the *mitzvah* of circumcision so that they would be in the state of *Adam*, before he had sinned.

When the Jewish people accepted the *Torah* at Sinai, they had fully ascended to the level of *Adam*, before the sin. They became eternal spiritual beings. G-d had initially created the world to be a setting in which His Presence could dwell. However, because *Adam* had putrefied existence, the Divine Presence could not dwell on the terrestrial level.

At Sinai, the world was restored to its initial setting, in which the Divine Presence could again dwell amongst the Jewish people. However, because they had sinned with the Golden Calf they once again caused existence to revert back to its impure state, as *Adam* had done through the eating of the fruit. Both *Adam* and the Jewish people had putrefied existence with idolatry.

Gemara in Tractate *Sanhedrin*: after *Adam* had sinned, he was classified as a “heretic.” Despite the fact that *Adam* was in the presence of G-d, he ate of the Tree of Knowledge, defying His Will. This was a denial of G-d’s existence similar to that of idolatry.

Ramchal explains that G-d had initially created man in a way that the soul (*neshama*) was contained within the body. *Adam*’s physicality was spiritualized to the degree that his soul could be infused within his body. However, after the sin of *Adam*, the body of man became physicalized and thus the soul needed to hover above the body. The body was no longer qualified to contain the soul. There was only one person, other than *Adam*, whose body was sufficiently spiritualized to be the vessel for the soul;

it was *Moshe*. Thus, there is a commonality between *Adam* and *Moshe*. However, just as *Adam* had failed with idolatry, so too did *Moshe's* decision precipitate idolatry among the Jewish people. *Moshe* had allowed the rabble (*eirev rav*) to leave Egypt along with the Jewish people, without consulting with G-d. It was the rabble that had instigated the sin of the Golden Calf. Once again there is a parallel between the time of creation and the exodus from Egypt.

Maharal of Prague and *Ramchal*: the Jewish holidays that are mentioned in the *Torah* are not merely commemorative (to commemorate events of the past). But rather, the Jew is meant to re-experience what had transpired on those particular moments in history.

Whatever energies/influences that G-d had released to bring about those events in the past, are once again released every year at those particular times. The Jew who observes the festival as prescribed creates an infrastructure to capture that energy—thus causing him to be the beneficiary of those influences. Therefore in order for one to be the greatest beneficiary of the Divine Kindness that is made available on *Pesach*, which is what had brought the world into existence, one must create a proper setting by observing and internalizing the laws of the festival.

The Plague, A Reaction to the Defiance of Pharaoh

The *Midrash* cites a verse from Psalms regarding the plague of darkness, “ ‘He (G-d) sent darkness and it became darker because they did not accept His dominance.’ The darkness that G-d had brought upon the Egyptians was severe. Why was this so? Because the Egyptians were unwilling to become subservient to G-d (despite all of the plagues that had preceded the plague of darkness). G-d had said to the angels, ‘The Egyptians deserve to be smitten with darkness.’ All of the angels agreed in unison and they accepted G-d’s Word. G-d sent the darkness and it to become more intense.

The darkness was more than a mere absence of light it was tangible. This is analogous to a king who gives an order to one of his loyal servants to

punish a defiant subject with fifty lashes. Rather than administering fifty lashes, the devoted servant of the king gave one hundred lashes. Similarly, G-d had commanded that darkness should come upon the Egyptians and the darkness intensified itself.” Meaning, the angels that were commanded to bring darkness upon the Egyptians, intensified the plague on their own accord. An angel is a spiritual being that carries out the Will of its Maker with total devotion as instructed.

If this is so, how could have the angels intensified the darkness that came upon the Egyptians, which was not in conformance with the Dictate of G-d? The *Torah* tells us regarding the plague of hail that it was a phenomenon of fire and ice coexisting simultaneously. *Rashi* cites *Chazal* who explain, “Although fire and water are opposing forces, they made peace with one another in order to carry out the Will of their Maker.” Because G-d Wills that fire should burn and water be the agent that extinguishes fire, that is why nature functions in this manner. However if G-d should Will that water should not extinguish fire, then water and fire will coexist with one another. If this is so, then what is the meaning of the words of *Chazal* “fire and water made peace among themselves...?” This indicates that these forces, on their own, chose to coexist without G-d Willing this new phenomenon.

Rambam in *The Fundamentals of Torah*: an angel is an intellectual spiritual being. It is a being that has a unique level clarity to understand G-d and His Will. Thus, it carries out the Will of G-d as instructed. An angel is not a spiritual automaton. It is because of its exceptional understanding of G-d that the angel is compelled to carry out His Will. This is similar to the Sinai experience at the time of the giving of the *Torah*.

Gemara: the Jewish people were compelled to accept the *Torah* at Sinai. As it states, “G-d held the mountain over them, as if it were a barrel, and had said ‘If you accept the *Torah* it will be good. If not, there you will be buried.’” According to the literal understanding of the words of the *Gemara*, the Jewish people were physically coerced to accept the *Torah* at the threat of losing their lives. *Reb Meir Simcha of Dvinsk* explains that this passage within a metaphorical context.

The Jewish people had ascended, at Sinai, to an unusual level of clarity that was compared to the angels. Choice only exists when one believes that there is an alternative. However, if one's understanding of value is unencumbered then one no longer has choice. Thus, they were compelled to accept the *Torah*. It was the equivalent of holding the mountain over them.

When G-d brought the plague of hail upon the Egyptians, the angel responsible for the function of water and the angel responsible for the function of fire chose to coexist because they understood with absolute clarity the desecration of G-d's Name that was being perpetrated through the defiance of the Egyptians. The Egyptian belief was that all existence was limited and bound by the laws of nature. Thus, fire and water, which are opposing forces could not coexist.

After Pharaoh had witnessed the plague of hail he exclaimed, "This time I have sinned; Hashem is the Righteous One, and I and my people are the evil ones." Seeing this new phenomenon which was contradictory to the laws of nature was a sanctification of G-d's Name. Pharaoh understood at that moment that there was a power outside of nature that dictates existence. Similarly, the angel that was responsible to bring about darkness appreciated the desecration of G-d's Name that was being perpetrated through the defiance of Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Therefore, when G-d ordered the plague of darkness to come upon Egyptians, the angels responsible for executing the Will of G-d, intensified the plague in order to punish the one who desecrated G-d's Name by bringing greater devastation upon the Egyptians just as the loyal servant added fifty lashes to the punishment of the defiant subject.



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