

# The Narrow Bridge

## גשר צר מאוד

### PARSHA PERSPECTIVES

#### Short Divrei Torah on Parshas Bo

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רפואה שלמה פעסל בת גאלדא / לזכות חילינו

#### **ALWAYS BY OUR SIDE**

##### **Rabbi Moshe Schochet**

*"And Hashem said to Moshe, 'Come to Pharaoh.'" (10:1)*

The Kotzker Rebbe (Emes V'Emunah) seems to wonder why Hashem instructed Moshe to "bo" - "come" to Pharaoh instead of commanding Moshe to "lech" - "go" to Pharaoh.

The Kotzker Rebbe explains that Hashem was communicating to Moshe that even when Moshe would go to the palace of Pharaoh, he would not be leaving the presence of Hashem, as He fills the world. Instead, Hashem would come together with Moshe to confront Pharaoh. It is for this reason that Hashem used the word bo - "come," as opposed to the word lech - "go."

In life, when confronting challenges, we often feel as though we are alone and isolated from Hashem. We try to navigate and face difficulties without asking for His help. The Kotzker Rebbe is reminding us that we are never left to fend for ourselves. Hashem stands by us through thick and thin. The only condition is that we need to make room for Hashem in our lives. Once we do so, Hashem is guaranteed to be with us throughout it all.

#### **COMING HOME**

##### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*"And Hashem said to Moshe, 'Come to Pharaoh.'" (10:1)*

We would expect G-d to tell Moshe to "go to Pharaoh" rather than to "come to Pharaoh." By saying "come to Pharaoh," G-d is teaching us how we should understand the Exodus from a broader perspective, including our personal process of redemption from our own states of "bondage" and "exile."

Redemption can only happen if we are "coming" rather than "going." Going somewhere implies that our home base is where we already are; we are simply visiting the place we are headed toward. Coming somewhere, in contrast, implies that we are moving our home - that we are going where we are headed with our whole being.

Thus, when we free ourselves of the bondage of materiality by communing with G-d in Torah study or prayer, we should be sure to "come home," immersing ourselves in the words and ideas completely, rather than just "going" there for a visit. In this way, our study and prayer can affect us and change us; it can take us out of our personal Egypt.

Moreover, going out of our personal Egypt hastens the advent of the collective redemption of the Jewish people and all humanity, as well. (Sichot Kodesh 5740, vol. 1, pp. 843-845) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

#### **INFLUENCED BY INFLUENCING**

##### **Rabbi Moshe Kormornick**

*"And so that you should relate in the ears of your son and your son's son that I have mocked Egypt... that you may know that I am Hashem" (10:2)*

Hashem said to the Jews: "If you will diligently impress the greatness of G-d upon your children and grandchildren, you yourselves will grow in strength of faith and in knowledge of G-d, and you will know that I am G-d."

#### **LENGTHENING OUR DAYS**

##### **Pardes Yosef**

*"And so that you should relate in the ears of your son and your son's son that I have mocked Egypt... that you may know that I am Hashem" (10:2)*

The word "ul'ma'an" (and so that you should) appears in the Torah in only one other place: Ul'ma'an ta'arichu yamim - "And so you may lengthen your days" (Devarim 11:9).

The connection is based on the words that the Rambam wrote to his son, that each person has an allotted number of years to live and accomplish his goals. However, even if one has lived a long and fulfilling life, if he teaches his children Torah, then Hashem may extend his life. One can lengthen his days if he relates the Torah to his sons and his sons' sons.

## **LOUD AND CLEAR**

### **Rabbi Moshe Kormornick**

*“And so that you should relate in the ears of your son and your son's son that I have mocked Egypt.” (10:2)*

Why does the verse include the seemingly superfluous words “relate in the ears of your son” why not simply say “relate to your son”?

Rav Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman explains that when it comes to teaching our children, sometimes we are able to speak to them and convey a message clearly. However, there are times and environments where there is background noise and so we must shout a little bit. Occasionally, that approach is still not sufficient and the only way to get over our message is to say it directly into our children's ears.

In our verse, the message that Hashem specifically wanted to convey in such a way, explains the Ohr HaChaim, was His complete control over nature, leaving no doubt Who created the world and Who is in complete control of it.

Furthermore, says the Ohr HaChaim, the purpose of the plagues was not to bring revenge upon the Egyptians - which could have been done in any natural way in This World or the Next - rather it was solely for our sake, to inculcate within the Jewish People throughout the generations this message, one which was crucial for the Jewish People in Egypt as they faced immense physical and spiritual challenges just as it is for us today as we too are distracted by the significant “background noise” of today's society which all too often blocks out our recognition of Hashem's role in the world.

One person who is remarkably successful at speaking in the ears of the Jewish People and awaking their inner desire to come closer to Hashem is Rav Yitzchak Dovid Grossman, lovingly known as the “Disco Rabbi” after he first arrived in Migdal HaEmek (then a city notoriously rife with poverty and crime) and asked where he could find the youth so that he could speak to them about Hashem. He was pointed to the local disco, something which he had never heard of from his upbringing in Meah Shearim. Yet, this did not perturb him as he entered the dark room and approached a group of young men. Speechless at the sight of a Chassid in his full garb, Rav Grossman took the opportunity to start speaking about Hashem's role in the world.

The group were spell-bound, and thus began Rav Grossman's career literally and figuratively speaking in the ears of the youth.

Within a year he was appointed the city's Chief Rabbi with a lifetime tenure; and sixty years later, Rav Grossman is internationally acclaimed for the work he has done for orphans, the impoverished, and prisoners, winning several prestigious awards, as well as running the world's largest orphanage!

## **HEARTFELT FAITH**

### **Belzer Rebbe**

*“...that you may know that I am Hashem” (10:2)*

This means that one must have complete faith.

“That you may relate in the ears of your son and your son's son” means that your teaching must be words that come from the depths of your heart so that you will be able to persuade another.

## **ROOTED IN CONCEIT**

### **Rabbi Moshe Kormornick**

*“And Moshe and Aharon came to Pharaoh and said to him, ‘So said Hashem, G-d of the Hebrews, ‘How long will you refuse to humble yourself before Me?’” (10:3)*

The verse relates Hashem's primary criticism against Pharaoh - that he was arrogant and refused to humble himself. Rav Shteinman asks, is this really Pharaoh's biggest fault?! What about the fact that he systematically murdered and enslaved an entire nation? Would that not have made a stronger and more worthy accusation?

Rav Shteinman answers that of course Pharaoh was responsible for the most heinous of crimes, but Hashem was revealing the source of Pharaoh's evil acts - his unwillingness to humble himself. Such is the great danger of being arrogant that there are no boundaries in the quest to fulfill one's desires! Indeed, arrogance distances a person from Hashem so much that, frightfully, Hashem declares about such a person, “I am not able to dwell with him in This World” (Sotah 5a).

In stark contrast to Pharaoh, Rav Shteinman - the world's leading Torah figure of his time - was famous for his humility. Despite being worthy of every honor he received, he viewed the esteem awarded to him as something which could potentially distance him from Hashem, and sought every opportunity to rid himself of any vestige of arrogance that may have potentially come from it...

While honor may not reach us to the same degree, we must still be very careful to avoid all forms of self-righteousness and conceit. For, even if we do have attributes, skills, or possessions that others look up to or desire, if we just take a moment to remember Who gave us these gifts, we will immediately realize to Whom the honor we receive should really be directed. And rather than distancing us from Hashem, it will only bring us closer.

## **NEVER TOO LATE**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*“[Moshe said to Pharaoh,] ‘For if you refuse to send forth My people, I will bring locusts.’” (10:4)*

The fact that G-d warned Pharaoh that he would be punished for not obeying Moshe's demand means that the door to repentance was still open. True, G-d had made Pharaoh stubborn, but that just meant that it was difficult for him to repent. Had Pharaoh summoned the inner strength to listen to his conscience, he still could have let the Jews go and spared himself and his country the impending ruin.

The lessons for us are as follows: First, no matter how estranged we may feel from G-d, even if it seems as though G-d has shut the door on us, nothing can resist our sincere efforts to return to Him. The apparent estrangement exists only in order to inspire us to summon a deeper, more powerful resolve.

Second, no matter how far another person may seem to have strayed from G-d, we must never despair of him. With true love and friendship, we can encourage him to mend his ways, and with G-d's help he will come back to his true, inner self. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 6, pp. 64-68) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

## **PEOPLE OF PROMINENCE**

### **Sefas Emes**

*"Send out the men so that they may serve G-d." (10:7)*

Pharaoh's men meant to send out only the most prominent among the Israelites. Pharaoh's response was "Which ones shall I send?" for they are all prominent.

## **COMPLETE PARTICIPATION REQUIRED**

### **Satmar Rebbe**

*"With our youngsters and with our elders shall we go... for it is a festival to Hashem for us." (10:9)*

Moshe was also concerned about future redemptions. He said that we need the elders to teach Torah, and the young and innocent to perform the mitzvos. The youth will go with the older generation who are not ashamed of their deeds. Together they will bring the redemption.

## **REASON TO CELEBRATE**

### **Yismach Moshe**

*"With our youngsters and with our elders shall we go... for it is a festival to Hashem for us." (10:9)*

When our youth and elders go together, then it is a "chag Hashem lanu" - a festival of Hashem for us.

## **CONNECTING TO THE SPIRITUAL**

### **Rebbe Nachman**

*"Stretch out your hand towards the heavens, and there will be darkness over the land of Egypt. The darkness will be palpable." (10:21)*

The darkness became matter, a tangible thing. (Rashi)

Va'yameish (וימש, will be palpable) is similar to yamush (ימוש, will be removed). G-d commanded Yehoshua: "This Torah scroll will not be removed from your mouth" (Yehoshua 1:8). We can also read this verse as "This Torah scroll will not be made corporeal in your mouth" - i.e., Yehoshua should not treat it as a secular wisdom devoid of spirituality.

One who appreciates the spiritual nature of the Torah can retain it in his mind and heart. If he treats it as something corporeal, he cannot truly retain it, for now - like any other material object - it takes up space. Since it takes up space in his mind, which can only hold a finite amount of materiality, some of it must inevitably be lost. (See Likutey Moharan I, 110)

When a person respects the Torah as an instrument of spirituality, its words illumine his mouth with G-dliness.

Should he think of the Torah as a corporeal body of knowledge, however, it becomes dark and obscure for him, and it will not direct him towards G-d. (See Likutey Moharan I, 11:2)

## **LIGHT OF SPIRITUALITY**

### **Reb Noson of Breslov**

*"G-d said to Moshe, 'Stretch out your hand towards the heavens, and there will be darkness over the land of Egypt. The darkness will be palpable.'" (10:21)*

The darkness became matter, a tangible thing. (Rashi)

Why was there a Plague of Darkness? There were wicked Jews who refused to leave Egypt. They died during the Plague of Darkness and were buried at that time [so the Egyptians would not see the Jews suffering]. (Rashi on Shemos 10:22)

There is a body, there is a soul. There is matter, there is form. There is darkness, there is light. There is death, there is life. The first of each pair are all one concept, as are the second (Likutey Moharan I, 37:2).

Those who pursue the material - the body - are actually pursuing matter and darkness. Those who pursue spirituality merit to form and light.

Therefore, the Egyptians, who were steeped in bodily lusts, literally felt the darkness envelop them. And the wicked Jews who did not want to leave the materialistic lifestyle of Egypt died, since matter, body, darkness and death are the same concept.

But those Jews who sought spirituality and anticipated the salvation had light in their homes, for spirituality and light are synonymous. In fact, they merited the light of the Future, which is similar to the light of Creation that enveloped the entire world (see Rashi on Bereishis 1:3). (Likutey Halachot V, p. 149a)

## **FUTURE REDEMPTION**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*"G-d said to Moshe, 'Stretch out your hand towards the heavens, and there will be darkness over the land of Egypt. The darkness will be palpable.'" (10:21)*

G-d did not force those Jews who did not want to leave Egypt to do so. By choosing to remain in Egypt, their lives lost all meaning and had spiritually ended. In contrast, in the future Redemption, even those Jews who do not consciously want to be redeemed will be taken out of exile. This is because when G-d gave us the Torah, He connected our essence with His essence, making it impossible for us to really oppose our connection with Him.

Of course, we can go through the motions of opposing our connection to G-d, but this is only superficial. Sooner or later, our deep, inner essence will surface, and this will make us all indeed worthy of being redeemed. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 11, pp. 1-7) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniefsky

## **IMPENETRABLE DARKNESS**

### **Sforno**

*"G-d said to Moshe, 'Stretch out your hand towards the heavens, and there will be darkness over the land of Egypt. The darkness will be palpable.'" (10:21)*

Ordinary "darkness" is no phenomenon in itself, it merely signifies the absence of light. When there is no light, it is dark. Darkness of this sort has no existence in its own right and can be readily dispelled by the kindling of a light. But the darkness that came over the land of Egypt was a phenomenon in its own right, so real (Hebrew: mamash) that it could be felt (va'yameish) and could not be dispelled by light.

## **THE SOURCE OF IT ALL**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*"But for all of Bnei Yisrael there was light in their dwellings." (10:23)*

The Egyptians, like many ancient peoples, assumed that the opposing forces of day and night - light and darkness - were the manifestations of two opposing deities. G-d therefore caused darkness and light to occur simultaneously, so the Egyptians could see that nature is ruled by one supreme power.

We, too, should realize that both the "darkness" and the "light" in our lives originate in the one and only G-d. We can then realize that the darkness is really an opportunity for us to bring more Divine light into our lives. This hastens the advent of both our own personal redemption and the Redemption of the world at large. (Ohr HaTorah, Bo, p. 250; Sefer HaMa'amarim 5663, pp. 83-84) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniefsky

## **THE WORST DARKNESS**

### **Chiddushei HaRim**

*"They [the Egyptians] did not see one another, nor did any of them rise from his place." (10:23)*

The worst darkness is the blindness in which one person will not "see another," refusing to notice another person's misery and help.

One who will not "see another" will become incapable of "rising from his place"; that is, incapable of growth and development.

## **BLINDING PURSUITS**

### **Avnei Ezel**

*"They [the Egyptians] did not see one another, nor did any of them rise from his place." (10:23)*

This may also have been the thought of the Sages of the Midrash when they stated that the darkness that enveloped the land of Egypt was as thick as a golden dinar. The pursuit of the golden dinar causes people to be selfish so that they become unwilling and unable to "see" others and their needs.

## **UNIQUE DIAMONDS**

### **Reb Baruch of Mezhibuz**

*"But for all of Bnei Yisrael there was light in their dwellings." (10:23)*

Every Jew has a Divine spark within him. This spark shines like a diamond. However, it depends on where one finds the diamond. In some, the diamond is found in Torah and prayer; in some, it may be found in food and drink; in some, it may be in the pocket; and in others, it may be found in the heart.

## **WILLING TO SACRIFICE**

### **Malbim**

*"Our cattle also shall go with us... for from it we shall take to serve Hashem our G-d..." (10:26)*

Moshe said to Pharaoh: "Our cattle will go with us of their own free will, for they are willing and ready to die in order to be offered up as sacrifices to G-d."

The Sages related that the bullock that Eliyahu HaNavi wished to offer as a sacrifice to G-d on Har Carmel (Melachim I 18:19-39) ran to the altar of his own accord, while the bullock that the false prophets planned to slaughter on the altar of Baal refused to go.

This teaches us the proper spirit in which to worship G-d. If even a mindless beast offers itself to G-d of its own accord, then we humans, who are endowed with intelligence, should certainly do so of our own free will.



## **INCOMPREHENSIBLE WORTH**

### **Chidushei HaRim**

*“And we will not know how we shall serve Hashem until we arrive there.” (10:26)*

We are unaware of the true worth of our service to Hashem and our observance of the mitzvos. We will not fully comprehend until we are judged at the appropriate time. That is why the Pasuk says, “And we will not know how we shall serve Hashem until we arrive there.”

## **SLAYING THE INTELLECT**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*“G-d said to Moshe, ‘I will send one more plague upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt.’” (11:1)*

Allegorically, the term “firstborn” refers to the intellect, the first faculty of the soul that emerges in our conscious minds. The intellect is followed by the emotions and the faculties of expression.

It is self-evident that natural human intellect cannot grasp G-d's essence. None of us has the capability to fully understand the true nature or essence of G-d on our own. Nonetheless, we can still “grasp” G-d's essence non-intellectually, through the inner yearning of the heart (see Zohar 3:289b). In order to reveal this yearning, however, we have to temporarily suspend our intellect in order that it not obstruct our experience of our heart's inner dimension.

“Egypt” in Hebrew (Mitzrayim) means “limitations.” In order to completely liberate ourselves from “Egypt” - that is, from all the limitations in our lives that keep us from relating directly to G-d - the first stage is to “slay the Egyptian firstborn,” which allegorically means to temporarily “neutralize” our limited, human intellect. This way, our hearts' inner yearning for G-d can assert itself and energize our lives. (Ma'amarei Admor HaZakein HaKetzarim, pp. 33-34) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniefsky

## **CUTTING ALL TIES**

### **Sefas Emes**

*“When [Pharaoh] shall let you go, he shall surely thrust you out from here altogether.” (11:1)*

G-d wanted no trace of Egypt's impurity to remain with the Jews. He therefore brought it about that they would be “thrust out” from there. By literally expelling the Jews from Egypt, Pharaoh broke off all their ties with Egypt so that they no longer had any contact with the corruption in the land of their exile and could easily and speedily rise to the superior moral level at which they would be worthy of the appellation “host of G-d.”

Had Pharaoh allowed them to depart in a spirit of peace and goodwill, a “clean break” in this sense would have been impossible.

## **FAVORABLE KINDNESS**

### **Ostrovitzer Rebbe**

*“Speak now in the ears of the people and let every man ask of his neighbor, and every woman of her neighbor, vessels of silver and vessels of gold.” (11:2)*

When Jews perform deeds of kindness and help each other, especially in times of need, then even their enemies will notice the favor that Hashem has granted them.

## **PROMISED WEALTH**

### **Sichos Tzaddikim**

*“Speak now in the ears of the people and let every man ask of his neighbor, and every woman of her neighbor, vessels of silver and vessels of gold.” (11:2)*

The Hebrew word “na,” which G-d employed in commanding Moshe to speak to the people (“Speak now”), is an expression that always denotes entreaty. Here it means: “I entreat you to do that which will follow, so that Avraham, that righteous man, may not say: ‘The prophecy that the Jews should serve the Egyptians and that the Egyptians should afflict them, He permitted to be fulfilled, but the promise that, afterwards, they should leave Egypt with immense wealth, He did not fulfill for them.’” (Rashi)

G-d's promise that “afterwards, they shall leave Egypt with immense wealth” could be construed to refer to a higher, spiritual wealth, meaning that the Jews were to take with them from Egypt not mere silver and gold but whatever sparks of goodness and holiness they could find among the Egyptians. But then Avraham might have protested, saying. “The prophecy that the Jews should serve the Egyptians and that the Egyptians should afflict them G-d fulfilled in an extremely obvious manner so that every Jew - even the simplest among them - could sense it. Therefore, it is only right that the promise that ‘afterwards, they shall leave Egypt with immense ‘wealth’ should also come true, not symbolically but literally, so that every Jew may be able to see the ‘wealth’ with his or her own eyes.”

It was out of these considerations that G-d commanded the Jews to ask their Egyptian neighbors for vessels of silver and gold to take with them when they left the land.

## **RESPECTED BY ALL**

### **HaDerash VeHalyun**

*“Moreover, the man Moshe was very great in the land of Egypt, in the eyes of Pharaoh's servants and in the eyes of the people.” (11:3)*

It is rare that someone is accepted and respected in equal measure by both the aristocracy and the masses. In most cases, someone popular with the masses will be despised by higher society, and someone who enjoys the upper

classes' respect will be disliked by common people, for each class of society has its own standards and requirements.

What was so unusual about Moshe's personality was that he was respected not only by "Pharaoh's servants" - Egypt's nobility - but also by the Egyptian masses.

## **AMIDST THE DARKNESS**

### **Reb Noson of Breslov**

*"So said G-d, 'At around midnight, I will go out into the midst of Egypt.'" (11:4)*

All seems blackest at midnight, yet it is precisely then that redemption and salvation began. "Around midnight" indicates that it is very difficult to know exactly when salvation will come, but we must know that it lies waiting to spring at the darkest moment.

This teaching also applies to the New Moon. It is difficult to know exactly when the New Moon appears; Moshe himself did not understand what a New Moon looked like until G-d showed it to him (Rashi on Shemos 12:2). (Likutey Halakhot I, p. 117a)

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By calling the Jewish nation "My firstborn son" (Shemos 4:22), G-d saw the good in the Jews in Egypt, even at their lowest point and darkest moment.

Our Sages speak highly of the practice of rising at chatzos, in the middle of the night, to beseech G-d to end the exile and bring about the Final Redemption. There is so much to accomplish at this hour because chatzos represents the ability to find the light and good within the evil and the darkness. (Likutey Halakhot, I, p. 5b)

## **A MIDNIGHT MOMENT**

### **Baal Shem Tov**

*"So said G-d, 'At around midnight, I will go out into the midst of Egypt.'" (11:4)*

The verse states, "The spirit of G-d was hovering over the face of the water. And G-d said: 'Let there be light'" (Bereishis 1:2-3).

What is the spirit of G-d? It is the soul within you. It hovers over the surface of your water, meaning the Torah that you study, because the Torah is compared to water. You hover with all your soul over a single topic, unable to continue your journey through the ocean of Torah wisdom, because you cannot reach a true conclusion in a topic with which you are experiencing difficulty. You hover because you care too deeply to move on.

G-d then announces, "Let there be light!" He commands that your eyes be illuminated by the light of Torah, so that you can resolve the matter with sudden clarity.

"At around midnight, I will go out into the midst of Egypt." The word ka'chatzos, at around midnight, indicates a

doubt whether that precise moment belongs to the first or second half of the night. Ka'chatzos alludes to a Torah concept that lacks clarity.

Due to your diligence in toiling over the issue, G-d announces, "I will go out into the midst of Egypt." G-d intervenes to rescue you from your intellectual constraint - Mitzrayim (Egypt) is related to meitzarim (constraint). He will illuminate your eyes with the Torah's truth.

## **CONFUSED CANINE**

### **Rav Aharon Yaakov Greenberg**

*"...but not a dog shall sharpen its tongue at any of the Israelites..." (11:7)*

Chazal tell us that dogs bark when the Angel of Death is in town and become playful when Eliyahu Hanavi is in town (Bava Kamma 60a). That night in Egypt, when the geulah was happening at the same time that the Egyptian firstborn were dying, the dogs were confused. As a result, lo yecheartz kelev lishono - the dogs in Egypt just kept quiet.

## **THE TZADDIK'S COUNSEL**

### **Rebbe Nachman**

*"Then all these servants of yours will come and bow down to me, saying: 'You and all the people who are at your feet - leave!' After that, I will leave." (11:8)*

The tzaddikim are called "feet" because of the advice that they give, which is compared to the feet upon which a person stands and walks. The tzaddikim are also called "feet" because they go to the people in order to teach them G-d's word. (See Likutey Moharan I, 22:1)

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The people who follow the tzaddik and accept his advice are considered to be his "feet." It is extremely beneficial for people to be attached to the tzaddik, for the "feet" sense what the mind sees.

Thus, our Sages teach that at the Splitting of the Sea, due to the presence of Moshe, a Jewish maidservant witnessed a revelation of G-d even greater than that experienced by the Prophet Yechezkel, who saw the Chariot of G-d (Mekhilta, Beshalach 3).

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"The people who are at your feet" - those who follow your advice and ways (Rashi).

"Feet" correspond to advice. The Jewish people are compared to the feet of the tzaddik in that his intellect far transcends their level. The tzaddik must draw his intellect down to them by revealing some of his attainments, while at the same time keeping its full brightness concealed from them. Thus, the word "feet" indicates drawing down spiritual insights from the tzaddik.

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People who are spiritually sensitive realize that G-d consulted with their souls when He created the world. Though a person might feel lowly (i.e., the “feet”), the source of his soul is incredibly lofty. If he sensitizes himself, he will be able to reconnect to that awesome moment, and thereby repent and draw close to G-d. (See Likutey Moharan I, 17:8)

## ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

### Rabbi Efreim Goldberg

*“He [Moshe] left Pharaoh’s presence angry.” (11:8)*

After Moshe relayed to Pharaoh Hashem’s warning about the final of the ten plagues, מכת בכורות (the death of the firstborn), the Torah says, ויצא מעם פרעה בחרי אף - “He left Pharaoh’s presence angry.” What is the meaning of Moshe’s חרי אף - anger? Why was he “angrier” now than after all the previous times when he warned Pharaoh about the consequences of his ongoing defiance?

Rav Zaydel Epstein explained this pasuk to mean that Moshe was disappointed with Pharaoh.

As evil as Pharaoh was, Moshe never lost his sense of הכרת הטוב (gratitude) for having been brought as an infant into Pharaoh’s palace, where he was cared for and raised. Moshe maintained a delicate balance between firmly confronting and challenging Pharaoh, and feeling profound gratitude for all that Pharaoh had done for him.

Moshe did not want Pharaoh to be punished. Throughout this process, Rav Zaydel writes, Moshe hoped that Pharaoh would change, that his heart would be softened, that he would finally recognize the truth and obey G-d. This is what Moshe wanted. He felt indebted to Pharaoh, and in this indebtedness, he genuinely hoped that Pharaoh would yield to G-d and avoid punishment.

And so now, after delivering the final warning, seeing that nothing had worked, and Pharaoh remained defiant, ויצא מעם פרעה בחרי אף - Moshe left upset, disappointed, and exasperated.

There is a remarkable command in Sefer Devarim (23:8): לא תתעב מצרי כי גר היית בארצו - “Do not despise an Egyptian, because you were a foreigner in his land.” The Egyptians treated our ancestors with unspeakable cruelty, enslaving them, using their infants as bricks and throwing them into the river. And for this reason, we are not to allow an Egyptian to marry into the Jewish People for ten generations. But at the same time, we must never forget that when Yaakov’s family faced grave danger, when they had no food, they were cared for in Egypt. The Egyptians later enslaved them and killed their babies - but this does not entitle us to forget their earlier kindness. This is how far the Torah value of הכרת הטוב extends. Our sense of indebtedness to someone does not end when that person treats us improperly. Both as individuals and as a nation, we recognize the goodness that others have shown us even if we also have legitimate grievances against them.

## MONTHS OF RENEWAL

### Reb Noson of Breslov

*“G-d said to Moshe and Aharon... ‘This month will be for you the beginning of the months.’” (12:1-2)*

The New Moon represents the smallest phase of the moon’s cycle. Specifically at that time, the moon starts its new cycle. So too, even if a person is at his lowest level (or specifically because he is at his lowest level), he can still attain an incredible revelation of G-dliness to renew himself. This message is so important that it is the first mitzvah given to the Jews as a nation. (Likutey Halakhot III, p. 85a)

The commandment to sanctify the New Moon was the first mitzvah given to the Jews because it mirrors the realities of each person’s life. Just as the moon waxes and wanes, every person experiences ups and downs throughout his lifetime. Just as the moon receives an illumination - a rectification - each month, each mitzvah a person performs rectifies his soul a little bit more. And just as the time will come when the moon will attain a full rectification of its blemish and “shine like the sun” (Yeshayahu 30:26), each person will ultimately attain his own rectification. (Likutey Halakhot III, p. 114a)

The word Chodesh (חודש, month) is related to the word hischadshus (התחדשות, renewal). Just as the moon wanes and waxes anew, the Jewish people - who possess the power of self-renewal - count their months according to the lunar cycle. (Likutey Halakhot I, p. 136)

Chodesh (חודש, month) implies hischadshus (התחדשות, renewal), the power to renew oneself continually, never backsliding into an “old” mentality. In contrast, the evil inclination is called an “old king” (Koheles 4:13). One who wishes to avoid the snares of the evil inclination should seek opportunities for renewal. (Likutey Halakhot III, p. 119a)

## BRIGHTNESS DESPITE DARKNESS

### Sefas Emes

*“G-d said to Moshe and Aharon... ‘This month will be for you the beginning of the months.’” (12:1-2)*

The nations of the world build their calendar around the sun, while the Jewish people base theirs on the moon. This symbolizes the difference between the heathens and the Jews. The heathens can survive only as long as the light shines upon them. As soon as darkness descends upon them, they perish and disappear from the scene of history. But like the moon, which can shine even through the darkest night, the Jewish people can survive and spread light even in darkness.

## **CONSTANT RENEWAL**

### **Rabbi Efrem Goldberg**

*"G-d said to Moshe and Aharon... 'This month will be for you the beginning of the months.'" (12:1-2)*

When Hashem presented to Moshe the instructions for the night of Yetzias Mitzrayim, He introduced these instructions with the command **החודש הזה לכם ראש חדשים** - the mitzvah of **קידוש החודש**, the system of declaring the new months based on the sighting of the new moon. (Nowadays, we use a fixed lunar calendar, but in ancient times, witnesses who saw the new moon would testify before the Sanhedrin, who would then declare the new month based on their testimony.) Rashi, in his famous opening comments to his Torah commentary, observes that this is **מצוה ראשונה שנצטוו בה ישראל** - the first mitzvah given to Am Yisrael as a nation.

What is the particular significance of this mitzvah, on account of which it was chosen to be the first mitzvah given to Am Yisrael?

One answer relates to the theme of **חידוש**, renewal. The month is called **חודש** precisely because it begins when the moon starts to renew itself, when it has reached its smallest point and now starts growing larger. The very first mitzvah given to Am Yisrael is the mitzvah that expresses the idea of renewal, that we are always capable of renewing ourselves just as the moon is renewed each month.

Each morning, we say about Hashem, **ביום המחדש בטובו ביום** - "Who renews each day, in His goodness, the act of creation." Rav Chaim of Volozhin, in *Nefesh Ha'chaim* (1:2), explains this to mean that the world exists only because G-d renews the act of creation at every moment. The world was not just created and then put into motion; all of creation comes into existence anew at every fraction of a second.

This perspective on the world is especially empowering. It means that at every moment, we can recreate ourselves. If all of existence is created anew each fraction, then necessarily, we, too, are being created anew. Therefore, we are never "stuck" in the same place. The way we were last year, last month, yesterday, or even the last moment, does not dictate who we are right now. At every moment, we have the capacity to change. Our past selves do not define who we are now and who we can be going forward.

This is why **החודש הזה לכם ראש חדשים** is such a crucial mitzvah. It tells us that we are endowed with the power of **חידוש**, of renewal, given the ability to recreate ourselves at any time.

Tu B'Shvat is observed in the dead of winter, when the trees are bare, when nature seems lifeless. But even then, beneath the surface, in the soil, processes are taking place preparing for the beautiful spring blossom. This shows us that even when we seem spiritually "lifeless," nevertheless, deep within our souls we have the capabilities that we need to blossom and to shine brightly.

It is never too late to change and improve, regardless of our current condition.

**החודש הזה לכם**. At every moment, we have new opportunities, a chance to rewrite our story and recreate ourselves.

## **GLOWING IN THE DARK**

### **Rabbi Moshe Schochet**

*"G-d said to Moshe and Aharon... 'This month will be for you the beginning of the months.'" (12:1-2)*

The Sefas Emes points out that unlike the rest of the world, which follows the solar calendar, Klal Yisrael follows the lunar calendar.

The reason for this is that while the rest of the world can only thrive when they have clarity, as the sun shines in the sky, the Jewish people have the unique ability to persevere and succeed even in the face of darkness. Klal Yisrael can see the hand of Hashem and illuminate the world even when the world seems to be consumed by gloom and dread.

The Sefas Emes is teaching us what it means to be a Jew. As Jews, we must always look for the hand of Hashem. The secret to our success is realizing that Hashem is always present and with us. Let us continue to see Hashem in our everyday, which will provide us with the light to not only survive but thrive.

## **DESIRING KINDNESS**

### **Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev**

*"G-d said to Moshe and Aharon... 'This month will be for you the beginning of the months.'" (12:1-2)*

In taking us out of Egypt, G-d exhibited His attribute of judgment against the Egyptians and His attribute of kindness toward the Jewish nation (Zohar 2:36a), as we say in our prayers, "All their firstborn you killed, but the firstborn of the Jewish people You redeemed." This was a demonstration of the aspect of judgment that is contained within the attribute of loving-kindness.

On account of the kindness that G-d showed the Jewish people, He exhibited His trait of severity against their enemies. Accordingly, G-d displayed both attributes when He took us out of Egypt. Which attribute does G-d prefer? Certainly the attribute of loving-kindness, as the verse says, "He does not maintain His anger forever, because He desires kindness" (Michah 7:18). It is only on account of His kindness toward the Jewish people that severe judgments are executed against their enemies.

This is what is meant by the verse "This month shall be for you... It shall be for you the first." The renewal of G-d's two attributes is "for you," meaning "for that which is relevant to you." Namely, His loving-kindness was for the sake of the Jewish people, and His judgments were necessitated by that kindness.



That is why it says, "I am Hashem, your G-d, Who has taken you out" (Shemos 20:2), meaning, "Even though you witnessed both loving-kindness and severity when leaving Egypt, G-d's will was principally directed and focused on that which was important to you: showing kindness by taking the Jewish people out of Egypt."

The use of the Name Havayah in this verse indicates the attribute of loving kindness. This is what the Torah means when it says, "I am G-d... Who has taken you out" - that this was His true desire.

## **TAKING AN ACTIVE ROLE**

### **Rabbi Moshe Schochet**

*"G-d said to Moshe and Aharon... 'This month will be for you the beginning of the months.'" (12:1-2)*

The Gemara (Gittin 60b), based on the pesukim in Parshas Ki Sisa, teaches us that Hashem structured the Torah to be in two parts: Torah She'Bichsav - the written Torah, and Torah She'Baal Peh - the oral Torah.

The Beis HaLevi in his shailos u'teshuvos asks why Hashem designed the Torah in this way. Why didn't Hashem have the entire Torah written down to begin with? Wouldn't that have been a much clearer and easier way to understand it?

The Beis HaLevi explains that Hashem wants Klal Yisrael to play an active role in the ongoing existence and development of Torah. He doesn't want us to just be robotic and simply follow a manual. He wants the Jewish people to be invested in the transmitting of our mesorah. The Beis HaLevi illustrates with a metaphor: We, Bnei Yisrael, are the klaf that the Torah She Baal Peh is written on.

It is possible to suggest that this may be why Rosh Chodesh, which is the first mitzvah that Hashem commanded Klal Yisrael as a nation (recorded in this weeks parshah), is given even before Hashem gives us the Torah. On the surface, one could certainly wonder why Hashem would choose this mitzvah more than Shabbos, emunah or any other mitzvah for that matter. What about Rosh Chodesh is so fundamental to our relationship with Hashem? Yet, when you think about it, it makes a lot of sense. With the mitzvah of Rosh Chodesh, Hashem was communicating that He wanted to relinquish partial control over time in order to partner with Klal Yisrael. Similar to the Beis HaLevi's explanation that we mentioned, Hashem wants us to play an active role in our relationship with Him. Hashem chose this mitzvah specifically to highlight that Judaism is not a spectator sport. Rather, Hashem wants us to get on the field and play our part.

Let us identify new ways to connect with Hashem, not by standing on the sidelines, but by getting in the game! Let's look for new opportunities to strengthen our relationship with Hashem by actively pursuing new initiatives in our spiritual growth.

## **WAYS TO CONNECT**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*"G-d said to Moshe and Aharon... 'This month will be for you the beginning of the months.'" (12:1-2)*

The commandment to declare a new month whenever the moon begins anew its cycle of growth and decline is the first law that G-d gave to the Jewish people as a collective entity.

Moshe personifies the "downward" revelation of the Torah from on high, which we re-experience whenever we study the Torah. In contrast, Aharon personifies the "upward" striving of the soul toward Divinity, which we experience primarily in prayer.

It was therefore appropriate that G-d addressed the very first, all-encompassing commandment to us through both Moshe and Aharon, for the essence of the commandments is the connection between G-d and the people, the twin sides of which we experience through the study of the Torah and prayer. (Sefer HaMa'amarim 5626, p. 41; Sefer HaMa'amarim 5632) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

## **FLEEING EGYPT**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*"You must eat [the lamb or kid goat] in haste. It is the Pesach sacrifice to G-d." (12:11)*

Although the Jews had renounced their involvement in Egyptian culture, the glamour of Egyptian materialism still maintained an inner grip on them. G-d therefore had to hurry them out of Egypt while they were still sufficiently impressed by the ten plagues that they were willing to leave the only home they knew and venture into the double unknown of the inhospitable desert and a lifestyle of holiness.

The same is true whenever we go out of a personal "Egypt," i.e., whenever we leave behind the familiarity of a previous way of living and rise to a new level of Divine consciousness and its accompanying way of life. In order to stay on our new path, it is crucial to sustain our momentum and take all necessary measures in order not to slide back into previous habits.

In the Messianic Redemption, however, this caution will be unnecessary. Since this redemption will be absolute and encompass all reality, there will be no possibility of backsliding into the mentality of materialism. (Tanya, chapter 31; Ohr HaTorah, Bo, pp. 291-2; Toras Shmuel, VeKachah (5637), chapters 1-4; Sefer HaMa'amarim 5737, pp. 191-199) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

## **UNITED PESACH SACRIFICE**

### **Reb Noson of Breslov**

*"You must eat [the lamb or kid goat] in haste. It is the Pesach sacrifice to G-d." (12:11)*

The Jews offered the Paschal lamb in the heart of Egypt, a land filled with idolatry. Because of their courage and self-sacrifice, this offering ascended to G-d and caused His revelation to occur.

The maror (bitter herbs) which were eaten together with the Paschal lamb (Shemos 12:8) bring home the message that one can earn a revelation of G-dliness if he is willing to sacrifice for it. (Likutey Halakhot II, p. 17a-34)

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The law of the Pesach sacrifice stipulates that it must be eaten in one house, even if many families participate in the meal. It is impossible to receive the light of the Torah except in unison with others. For this reason, the four passages of the hand-tefillin are written on one parchment and housed in one box.

## **AVOIDING VIOLENCE**

### **Rabbi Joseph Ber Soloveitchik**

*"I will go through the land of Egypt on this night and strike down every [male] firstborn in the land of Egypt." (12:12)*

On the night of the Plague of the Firstborn, the Jews were explicitly warned not to walk outside. Of course, Hashem could have allowed them to go out and ensured that no harm would befall them. But there was another purpose there.

When a nation that had been ruled and often oppressed by others gains their independence, they tend to exact revenge upon their former occupiers, killing, looting and destroying any semblance of what was. The Jews were forbidden to go out on this night of death, lest they feel the psychological impulse of a former slave to violently seek vengeance against the Egyptians, their former masters!

## **SPIRITUAL LIBERATION**

### **Meshech Chochmah**

*"You shall celebrate it as a festival to Hashem; throughout your generations you shall keep it a festival by a decree forever." (12:14)*

If one considers the festival commemorating the Exodus from Egypt as nothing more than the anniversary of liberation from physical oppression and slavery, it would be justifiable to argue that there was no sense in celebrating it as long as the Jews continue to be exiled and enslaved among the nations of the world.

But if the Exodus is understood in its proper meaning as the spiritual liberation of our people in which G-d Himself led us from the corruption of Egypt to take us to Himself as His people and to have His Presence rest upon us so that we became a holy nation, then it can be readily seen why the festival of Pesach must be observed - even while we remain in physical exile and suffer from persecution and oppression.

The Torah states: "You shall celebrate it as a festival to Hashem." If you will celebrate this festival as "a festival to Hashem," as a Divinely-commanded festival marking the anniversary of the Jews' spiritual liberation, then "you shall keep it a festival by a decree forever"; i.e., you will be able to observe it always, even through the worst periods of your exile.

## **ATTAINING SPIRITUAL FREEDOM**

### **Rebbe Nachman**

*"You should eat matzos for seven days." (12:15)*

Matzos (מצת) is an acronym for the phrase Tzedakah Tatzil Mi'maves (צדקה תציל ממות, charity saves from death) (Mishlei 10:2). (Just as matzah is a symbol of physical freedom, giving charity is a sign of spiritual freedom.) (See (Likutey Moharan I, 201)

## **SUSTENANCE FROM ABOVE**

### **Reb Noson of Breslov**

*"You should eat matzos for seven days." (12:15)*

The Jews tasted manna in the cakes they took with them from Egypt (Kiddushin 38a).

The holiday of Pesach reinforces our faith in G-d and His Providence. Matzah, the central food of Pesach, represents the ability to rely totally upon G-d to sustain us as He pleases, whether in wealth or otherwise. After gaining the benefits of this spiritual food during Pesach, we can then partake of chametz (leaven) after the holiday, for we will not waver in our belief that G-d provides for us. The Zohar (II, 183b) calls matzah the "bread of healing," since it first heals our souls and then allows us to partake safely of material nourishment.

## **GRABBING INTELLECT**

### **Reb Noson of Breslov**

*"Guard the matzos..." (12:17)*

Do not read Matzos (מצות), but Mitzvos (מצוות, commandments). Just as you would not let matzah ferment, don't let a mitzvah ferment. If one comes your way, do it immediately. (Rashi)

Matzah represents faith, an acknowledgement that we cannot understand everything in life. Chametz (leaven) represents an inflated perspective, the belief that we can understand things that are beyond us. When a person begins to draw close to G-d, he must strengthen his resolve to serve G-d with absolute faith, even though he doesn't understand everything.

Each mitzvah is a channel for G-dly intellect. When we perform a mitzvah, we draw intellect with which to come closer to G-d and understand His ways. Therefore, we should never delay the performance of a mitzvah, but grab hold of it as soon as it comes our way.

## **REVELATIONS OF COMPASSION**

### **Reb Noson of Breslov**

*"For seven days, leavening should not be found in your homes." (12:19)*

According to the halakhah, the search for chametz (leaven) is conducted on the night of the fourteenth of Nisan, the eve of Pesach. We begin our search only on the fourteenth of the month because the first thirteen days of Nisan correspond to the Thirteen Attributes of Compassion.

One who works to attain these Thirteen Attributes (by emulating the Attributes) is then able to search for and reveal that which is hidden, doing away with the forbidden and taking in the permitted. (Likutey Halakhot III, p. 180)

## **UNITED HUMILITY**

### **Reb Yechezkel of Kuzmir**

*"And you shall take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike some of the blood that is in the basin to the lintel and to the two doorposts. (12:22)*

This is to teach you that even if you are as lowly as the hyssop, which grows low on the ground, as long as you are bound together into one united group, ready to "dip it in blood" - give of your lifeblood for Judaism, you will be able to "strike (lit., reach) the lintel"; you will be able to attain high places.

## **READYING FOR REDEMPTION**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*"And you shall take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and strike some of the blood that is in the basin to the lintel and to the two doorposts. (12:22)*

The right doorpost signified good deeds, the left doorpost signified prayer, and the lintel above them signified the study of the Torah. Together, these three constitute a complete, balanced life that enables us to fulfill our Divine mission of making the world into G-d's home.

The door itself signified our readiness to obey G-d's will, since this commitment is the entrance into our active partnership with G-d to rectify the world. The lowly hyssop used to apply the blood to the door frame signified the self-abnegation we must cultivate in order to be receptive to G-d's presence in our lives. The blood itself signified the vitality of our animating soul, with which we must perform good deeds, pray, and study the Torah.

Every personal exodus from an "Egypt" requires that we humbly apply our vitality to action, prayer, and study of the Torah, all performed with renewed commitment to our Divine mission in life. (Sefer HaMa'amarim 5632, vol. 1, pp. 129, 284-285; Sefer HaMa'amarim 5678, pp. 239, 244-245; Sefer HaMa'amarim 5706, pp. 69-70, 76)

## **ACHIEVING PERSONAL REDEMPTION**

### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*"G-d will pass over the entrance [to your homes] and not allow the destructive plague to enter your houses." (12:23)*

The purpose of the first nine plagues was to bring the Egyptians to the knowledge of G-d (Shemos 7:3-5). The Jewish people already believed in G-d, so there was no concern that these plagues would strike them.

The tenth plague, however, was meant to slay the firstborn of the idolatrous Egyptians, not to educate them. Since many Jews had lapsed in their loyalty to G-d during their Egyptian slavery - some even serving idols - there was an acute need to counteract their liability to the death penalty.

This was accomplished by the Passover sacrifice. The lamb was one of the deities of Egypt, so by slaughtering a lamb, the Jews were risking offending the Egyptians, thereby putting their lives in jeopardy. The Jewish people's willingness to suffer martyrdom in order to fulfill G-d's instructions expressed their essential bond with Him. The merit of this act neutralized their culpability for whatever sins they had committed during their slavery in Egypt.

Similarly, whenever we summon up our unconditional and genuine devotion to G-d, it wipes our past, blemished record clean, affording us a fresh start in our relationship with Him. (Likutei Sichot, vol. 3, pp. 864-866) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisniewsky

## **SKIPPING THE ENTRANCE**

### **Reb Baruch of Mezhibuz**

*"G-d will pass over the entrance..." (12:23)*

Our Sages teach: "Open the door as little as the sharp end of a needle and I will open the door as wide as the door of a hall" (Shir HaShirim Rabbah 5:3). Heaven will help those who will make a beginning to repent. The repentant must first open the door and Heaven will open it wider.

However, in Egypt, the Jews had been influenced and immersed in the impurities of the land. Therefore, it was impossible for them to show any signs of repentance. The Almighty had pity and opened the door for redemption, for as the Torah tells us, "Hashem will skip over the entrance."

## **OBSERVING OUR WORDS**

### **Koznitzer Rebbe**

*"You shall observe this matter as a decree for yourself and for your children forever." (12:24)*

The word used for "matter" in this verse is "davar," which can also mean "word." This teaches us that one should heed his word and guard his tongue. This should be "a decree for yourself and for your children forever."

## ADVANCING LEVELS

### Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev

*"You will say, 'It is a Pesach sacrifice to G-d...'" (12:27)*

The verse implies that when you speak the words of the Torah and prayer, it is a "Pesach" - that is, the word "Pesach" (פסח) can be broken into the two words for "a mouth that speaks" (פה סח). Contemplate and analyze this well.

The verse thus tells us, "If you do this, then you will experience the transformation of it, i.e., the hidden third person, alluding to G-d's hiddenness, into 'to G-d,' i.e., the state in which G-d's light is revealed to you."

(In the merit of their Torah and prayers, the Jewish people advance from one spiritual level to the next, experiencing greater revelations of G-d's light.)

When we wish to bring an offering today, in our bitter exile, when we no longer can bring offerings, the Torah tells us, "you shall say it is a Pesach offering to G-d." That is, "say words of Torah and prayer with a focused mind, so that they are exclusively to G-d." In this way, the words of Torah and prayer are substitutes for the offerings.

## MOUTH THAT SPEAKS

### Reb Noson of Breslov

*"You will say, 'It is a Pesach sacrifice to G-d, Who passed over the homes of the Jewish people in Egypt...'" (12:27)*

Pesach (פסח, Passover) is like Peh Sach (פה סח, a mouth that speaks). Mitzayyim (מצרים, Egypt) is like Meitzar ha'garon (מיצר הגרון, the narrowness of the neck) - i.e., the narrow area that houses the vocal chords, which produce speech. In order to leave the exile, we must engage in holy speech and recount the miracles of G-d.

The central idea of Pesach (פסח, Passover) is Peh Sach (פה סח, a mouth that speaks). When a person articulates his good desires and longings for G-d, he merits to a Pesach, an exodus from his spiritual exile.

## ILLUMINATION OF FAITH

### Reb Noson of Breslov

*"They were driven out of Egypt and were not able to delay." (12:29)*

The Jews' willingness to leave Egypt quickly, without proper preparation for their journey through the desert, displayed great faith. From whence did they derive that faith? Moreover, the Jews were steeped in the lowest levels of idolatry, without any means of understanding the truth about G-d. Had they been in possession of the Torah, they would have had the means to learn about G-d and to have faith in Him. Without Torah, what motivated them to follow G-d?

This is the miracle of the Exodus - that G-d, knowing the Jews were not quite ready, nevertheless gave them an illumination of faith and truth by which they could accept Him and follow Him into the desert. (Likutey Halakhot III, p. 149a)

The same holds true for anyone who seeks G-d today. When a person displays a willingness to accept G-d, G-d will send him an illumination of faith and truth to help him begin his spiritual journey. (ibid., I, p. 151a)

## YEARNING FOR REDEMPTION

### Lubavitcher Rebbe

*"The Egyptians urged the people on." (12:33)*

Despite the horrors of slavery, some Jews had second thoughts about leaving Egypt. G-d had to force these reluctant Jews out of Egypt by having the Egyptians urge them to depart.

Nowadays, as well, some might prefer to remain in exile rather than face what they incorrectly imagine to be the "oppression" of living constantly in G-d's presence - as we all will after the Messianic Redemption. Nonetheless, G-d will redeem these people, too - even against their will. Since G-d's mercy extends to all His creatures, He always does what is best for us on all levels, even if we do not presently realize or appreciate it.

On the other hand, if we study the Torah's teachings about the Redemption, we will truly yearn for it. Our increased, collective yearning for the Redemption will, in turn, hasten its arrival. (MiMa'ainei HaChassidus, vol. 2, p. 61, quoting Sichot Kodesh 5730) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

## HUMBLE TRUST

### Reb Noson of Breslov

*"The people picked up their dough before it could rise." (12:34)*

Chametz (leaven) corresponds to the natural order; matzah corresponds to Divine Providence and miracles. Chametz, which "rises," symbolically proclaims: "My efforts caused this to happen." The flatness of matzah, in contrast, connotes a humble spirit that has faith and trust in G-d. Matzah proclaims: "It is G-d Who provides, not my efforts." (Likutey Halakhot I, p. 236-119a)

Matzah is like the manna, as it requires almost no preparation. This reminds us that G-d is the One Who provides everything we need. (Likutey Halakhot I, p. 132a)

## FAITH IN REDEMPTION

### Lubavitcher Rebbe

*"And they [Bnei Yisrael] requested silver and gold utensils and clothing from the Egyptians." (12:35)*



By also bringing along timbrels, the women demonstrated more faith and trust in G-d than did the men. The women of our generation, too, can lead the way by demonstrating their faith that the final Redemption is imminent.

To be sure, until the moment of redemption arrives, we should all feel the bitterness of the exile and pray fervently that G-d bring it to an end.

But at the same time, our unshakable confidence that G-d will fulfill His promise of redemption should fill us with overflowing joy.

Women, on the strength of their innately more deep-seated faith, can already begin celebrating the Redemption - even with music and dance - and this will inspire the men to follow suit. (Sefer HaSichot 5752, vol. 1, pp. 303-307) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

## **CRUNCH TIME**

### **Rabbi Dovid Hoffman**

*“Since they were driven out of Egypt and could not delay, they had also not prepared provisions for themselves.” (12:39)*

Mashal: The old Russian culture center was where the local villagers gathered to watch reels of film, which were activated manually by a man who sat in a box slowly turning the handle.

One day, as they were watching the film, the picture suddenly froze on the screen. It turned out that the one manually turning the reel had fallen asleep upstairs.

The people began protesting and shouting - but to no avail. The man was closed off in his box, sleeping soundly.

For the first fifteen minutes they watched the show as usual, and for an hour and a half they stared numbly at the frozen picture.

Finally, the man in charge woke up with a start. Frantically, he looked at his watch and realized that according to the schedule, the show was to end in a few short minutes. He quickly began turning the handle as fast as he could.

After an hour and a half of staring at a frozen screen, the picture began moving at dizzying speed, and the audience left dumbfounded.

Nimshal: For generations, Bnei Yisrael lived in Egypt in a tortured pattern of galus. Then, suddenly, hysteria overcame their entire existence - plagues, redemption, Krias Yam Suf, Amalek, and Matan Torah, one event quickly rushing after another.

In our lives, as well, the picture had been “frozen”; the world was quiet for a long time. But as our redemption draws near, world events are occurring quickly and frantically. There is no time; Mashiach is rushing to arrive! (Aram Tzovah)

## **SAFEGUARDING KINDESS**

### **Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev**

*“It is a night of guarding for G-d.” (12:42)*

As a rule, G-d continuously bestows kindness on the Jewish people. To prevent the external forces, i.e., the forces of evil, from also benefiting from the kindness that G-d bestows on the worlds, G-d forbid, the Jewish people perform mitzvos. By performing the positive commandments, they ensure that G-d continuously bestows His kindness on the Jewish people, and by observing the negative commandments (i.e., the prohibitions), they preclude the external forces from receiving any of this bounty.

When they were still in Egypt and had not yet received the Torah, the Jewish people had no positive or negative commandments to observe. Nonetheless, G-d acted generously toward the Jewish people, keeping His bounty and kindness from being received by the external forces. This is what the verse alludes to when it says, “It is a night of guarding.” G-d safeguarded His bounty, preventing the external impure forces from receiving any of it even though the Jewish people had not yet observed any mitzvos.

The Midrash alludes to this with the statement “I (G-d) observed the mitzvah of respecting the elderly first” (see Yerushalmi Rosh Hashanah 1:3). Avraham Avinu prevented the external forces from receiving G-d's bounty. Avraham was the first person to be referred to as “elderly” in the Torah (Bereishis 24:1). But before Avraham came along, and similarly, until the Giving of the Torah, G-d, out of His love for the soul of the Jewish people, safeguarded His kindness so that only they would receive it.

## **ACTION LEADS TO EMOTION**

### **Rabbi Moshe Schochet**

*“And you shall not break a bone of the Pesach offering.” (12:46)*

The Sefer HaChinuch asks why the Torah prohibits breaking any of the bones. Once we are permitted to eat the korban pesach, why does the Torah preclude us from eating the korban in any way that we choose?

The Sefer HaChinuch explains that at the Pesach Seder we are to conduct ourselves as kings. Royalty would never attempt to eat a piece of meat until the point where the bones would break. Since we are to eat the korban Pesach as if we were kings, there is a prohibition to break any of the bones.

The Sefer HaChinuch then continues by addressing his son: “My son, you may ask - ‘Why do we need to involve ourselves in so many details? Wouldn't it be sufficient to do a few of these ‘king-like’ activities?’”

The Sefer HaChinuch responds to his son by introducing the very famous words, Ki acharei hapeulos nimshachim ha'levavos - "After one's actions the heart is drawn." In order for one to fully be in the moment and appreciate the circumstances, one needs to do as many actions as possible to reach that feeling and connection.

The Torah is teaching us that our actions determine how we feel. We are expected to do the mitzvos and develop a relationship with Hashem even when we aren't feeling it at that particular moment. Our actions will cause us to feel the emotion, as opposed to the other way around. As in any meaningful relationship, we must constantly pour ourselves into the relationship with actions, despite the common roller coaster and sometimes lack of emotion in our lives. At times, we need to "fake it 'til we make it" so that we can ensure a stable and positive connection with Hashem. With this message in mind, we are more likely to have a stronger relationship with Hashem.

### **FOR ALL TO KNOW**

#### **Lubavitcher Rebbe**

*"You must tell your child on that day." (13:8)*

Interestingly, the commandment to retell the story of the Exodus - which is the source for the annual Passover Seder - is given in the context of describing "the child who does not know how to ask," the most immature of all the four types of children to whom we must tailor our description of the Exodus. This teaches us that our duty to retell the Exodus applies mainly to this uninitiated child. We must find the words to inspire even this type of child with gratitude to G-d for liberating us from Egypt and from all past, present, future, personal, and collective Egypts.

This is so because the Exodus from Egypt was absolute: not one Jew remained in Egypt. Since the Exodus was so all-encompassing, the transmission of its message must also encompass each and every individual that can possibly understand it, even if this takes extraordinary effort.

By ensuring that even "the child who does not know how to ask" understands the meaning of the Exodus, we ensure that the other children will understand it, too, much as lifting up the bottom of any structure automatically raises the rest of the structure, as well. (Sefer HaMa'amarim 5734-5735, pp. 347-353) - Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Wisnefsky

### **DRAWING FESTIVE RADIANCE**

#### **Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev**

*"You shall observe this decree at the designated time from year to year." (13:10)*

The three festivals of Pesach, Shavuos, and Sukkos serve as the medium through which G-d's light illuminates the entire year in the three dimensions of space, time, and soul (Sefer Yetzirah 3:5).

Pesach accomplishes this in the dimension of time, since the distinction between leaven and matzah depends on the brief time it takes to walk the unit of distance known as a mil [18 minutes]. Shavuos accomplishes this in the dimension of soul, since Shavuos commemorates our receiving of the Torah. Sukkos accomplishes this transmission in the dimension of space through the mitzvah of dwelling in the sukkah. In turn, these festivals influence the entire year.

This is what is meant by the verse's phrasing "from year to year" (literally, "from days to days") - it connotes the influence from the days of the festivals themselves on the days of the rest of the year. It is possible to draw the Divine radiance that shines during these festivals into the ordinary weekdays of the year. How? By strengthening our belief in miracles, we extend the influence of Pesach; by accepting the Torah, we draw the luminosity of Shavuos; and when we repent and our sins are pardoned, we spread the light of Sukkos (which is the culmination of the Days of Awe, when we receive atonement for our sins).

### **HASHEM IS IN CONTROL**

#### **Rav Yissachar Dov Loriner**

*"It was with a mighty hand that Hashem brought us out from Egypt, the house of bondage." (13:14)*

The Ramban at the end of Parshas Bo declares that a major purpose of Yetzias Mitzrayim is to teach Bnei Yisrael that Hashem created the world and that He has complete knowledge and control over all its affairs. When Hashem completely turns around the workings of nature, He demonstrates that He is the sole Creator and Controller of the entire world. This great phenomenon occurred during the events leading up to and including Yetzias Mitzrayim.

If we learn this lesson, we will come to the realization that there is no nature at all, only Hashem controlling all the actions and forces in the world. It is to Him that we must constantly turn for all our needs.

## **HAFTORAH**

### **SAVED FROM AFAR**

#### **Rabbi Alexander Zusia Friedman**

*"But do not be afraid... I will save you from afar..." (Yirmiyahu 46:27)*

According to the Sages, redemption will be hastened and will arrive before its appointed time if the Jews would repent of their sins. But they assure Jews that even if they don't repent of their sins in the end redemption will come, although it will not materialize before its appointed time.

Through His prophet, G-d tells the Jewish people that they need not be afraid because He will save them in due time even "from afar," even if they have drifted far away from Judaism and repentance.