



Pesach Perspectives RABBI DOVID GILMAN

בכל דור ודור חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאלו הוא יצא ממצרים

"In every generation a person is obligated to regard himself as if he had come out of Egypt..." (Passover Haggadah)

We start the main section of the Haggadah, "Maggid," by inviting those who don't have a Seder to join ours. The first paragraph concludes with a prayer that although we are now in exile, next year we will celebrate in rebuilt Jerusalem; that although we are currently in a state of slavery, next year we will be free men.

This statement seems to contradict the rest of the Haggadah, where we are described as being freed from Egypt, as the Haggadah says, "We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt" — in the past tense. Furthermore, we live in a country where we are free; we have freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom to think and be whomever or whatever we want. We might be dependent on, or subservient to, other nations, but we are certainly no longer slaves! What kind of slavery is the Haggadah referring to?

Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik answered that there are two types of servitude: physical and psychological. Every individual is a product of his family, his society, and his own inclinations. Eventually, we craft our own beliefs, emotions, and goals in life. Are they truly ours, though? Being in Exile among the other nations, many of our ideas have been thrust upon us by our environment and by societal pressures. This form of slavery can be so subtle that we don't even realize how we may be parroting ideas and notions that aren't our own, ideas that are fed to our senses by the

media. Whether we choose to go with the flow or against it, we are rarely the originators of our viewpoints.

A truly free person is one who builds his own self, one who is active, not passive, in molding his thought processes and viewpoints. As Rabbi Soloveitchik said, "Until a man constructs his own self, he can be controlled so profoundly and thoroughly that he cannot even see his own shackles." Only when we find ourselves can we be truly free to make our own decisions, which go beyond Western society. Pharaoh was a prime example of someone who lost his own ability to make decisions and choices for himself; he became just a product of Egyptian society, a society which couldn't survive without slavery.

No one *wants* to be enslaved — not by bad habits, not by negative thought patterns nor turbulent emotions, and certainly not by ideas planted there by a society whose values seem to decline day by day. And yet each of us has our own personal Egypt. Before the Seder this year, let's take a few moments to

ponder which areas of our lives have been subtly molded by others — and think of ways that we can begin to take charge of such thoughts, emotions, or actions. With G-d's help, the Seder can provide us with the inspiration we need to break free of our bondage and reestablish our own free will.

Rabbi Gilman can be reached at parsha@partnersintorah.org

WORD of the WEEK אפיקומן

The last piece of matzah eaten at the Seder is commonly referred to as the אפיקומן — *afikoman*. However, the Mishnah (Pesachim 10:8) and Talmud (Pesachim 119b) use the word *afikoman* to mean "dessert." The word is originally Greek and according to some means "after the fatty foods" (Tiferet Yisrael) or dessert (Yerushalmi). Others understand it as a combination of two Aramaic words, אפיקון מנייכו — "take out the utensils"; that is, "the meal is finished" (Rav Ovadiah Mibartenuro). The Talmud suggests that the word is an acronym for the phrase אפיקו מן — "bring out the manna" or "bring out the sweets." Because the Mishnah forbids eating anything after the last piece of matzah by saying "do not end with *afikoman*," it became the norm to refer to the last piece of matzah itself as "the *afikoman*" (Shiltei Giborim on Rif).

Table Talk FOR DISCUSSION AROUND THE PESACH TABLE

The first time matzah is mentioned at the Passover Seder, it is introduced as the "bread of affliction." The Haggadah states, "This is the bread of affliction that our forefathers ate in Egypt. Let all who are hungry come and eat. Let all who are needy partake of the Passover offering. This year we are here, next year let us be in the Land of Israel. This year we are enslaved, next year may we be free men."

נ) In the Torah (Exodus 12:39), it says that the Jews ate matzah "because they were rushed out of Egypt and could not wait [for the dough to rise]." Based on this verse alone, we would believe that they ate matzah only after they were redeemed from Egypt. The Haggadah, however, states that they ate it *in Egypt*. What message can there be in the matzah serving both as a sign of our affliction and our freedom?

ב) By the time we are gathered around the table for a Passover Seder, the guest list has long been established. Why, then, might we issue the invitation that "all who need, let them come and eat"? Could anybody possibly be around to accept such an invitation? If not, why offer it?

HEY, I NEVER KNEW THAT

Matzah is the food of a humble slave, who does not have time to let the bread rise, and who eats foods that will leave him feeling full for hours afterwards (Orchos Chaim on Haggadah). For this reason, matzah is called "the bread of affliction" (Deuteronomy 16:3). The fact that the Jewish people ate slave food at the moment of their redemption indicates that the Jews were powerless to save themselves. They were slaves up to the last moment, and only through G-d's miraculous intervention did they go free. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch explains, "In the great hour of liberation it would be impressed deeply on their minds that they had contributed nothing to their liberation, that in the very hour of liberation they were still slaves eating the bread of affliction until the word of G-d created anew the freedom which had been wrested from man... Thus did unleavened bread become an everlasting memorial throughout the generations to the redemption from Egypt brought about by G-d alone" (*Horeb* 26:199). Matzah teaches us that the Jews did not leave Egypt through a successful slave revolt. It symbolizes the fact that the Jews were not liberated through outstanding human leadership, bravery, or military cunning. Understanding the meaning of matzah teaches us humility and inspires us to have gratitude to G-d.

A QUESTION FOR THE RABBIS

More than any other time of the year, one should invite guests to join in the festival meals, as Maimonides writes (*Mishneh Torah*, "Laws of Festivals" 6:18), "When one eats and drinks on the festival, one is obligated to feed the stranger, the orphan, and the widow together with others who are poor and unfortunate. However, one who closes the doors of his courtyard and eats and drinks with his wife and children and does not give food and drink to the poor and the depressed, he does not celebrate the happiness of a mitzvah, but rather the happiness of his stomach. About these people the verse (Hosea 9:4) states, "All who partake will be defiled, for their bread is only for themselves." In addition, before the holiday, every Jew in the community is obligated to contribute to a special fund that helps needy people purchase items for the festival. The fund, called *Maos Chittin*, is necessary above and beyond the regular charitable funds, because Pesach is such a costly festival (*Code of Jewish Law*, Ruach Chaim, 429:1, Ramah)



PARTNERS IN TORAH

A DIVISION OF TORAH UMESORAH

Rabbi Eli Gewirtz, National Director
Mrs. Shoshana Schwartz, Editor
Rabbi Mordechai Becher, Contributor
Rabbi Yoav Druyan, Contributor

For information call 800-STUDY-4-2 or email INFO@PARTNERSINTORAH.ORG

Distributed in UK by **Phone and Learn (PAL)**, a division of Partners in Torah
WWW.PHONEANDLEARN.ORG – 0800 055 3276

LOOK *who made* PARTNER!

MAX NEWMAN, New York, NY (Partner # 47,550)

ERIKA BLUMEN, Plano, TX (45,781)

BRAHM SOLOMON, Ottawa, ON (44,131)

AVITAL MUROFF, Harrisburg, PA (45,777)

JONATHAN FRANKEL, Jacksonville, FL (46,892)

**SIGN UP TODAY: www.partnersintorah.org/signup OR CALL: 1-800-STUDY-4-2
MAKING PARTNER HAS NEVER BEEN THIS EASY!**

STUDY ANY JEWISH TOPIC OVER THE PHONE OR IN PERSON WITH A KNOWLEDGEABLE, CAREFULLY SELECTED PERSONAL TORAH TRAINER.

TO POST COMMENTS ON THIS PARSHA SHEET, VISIT US AT: partnersintorah.org/parsha-partner/pesach5772#comments