



HOLY SITES IN ISRAEL

SHOSHANA JUDELMAN



PESACH



The Freedom of Pesach (Cleaning)

Am Yisrael left Mitzrayim in the blink of an eye. What took longer, though, was getting the “Mitzrayim” out of Am Yisrael. The slave mindset, instilled in them for 210 years, did not dissipate upon crossing the border. In reality we are all still working on it thousands of years later.

Each chag shines a specific energy into the world. The energy of Pesach is freedom and renewal. Every year, during this season, the koach of the first Geulah is drawn into the world, and we are given the opportunity to become “free” once again by “leaving Mitzrayim.”

The word “Mitzrayim” is related to the word “*meitzarim*,” limitations. Each year “leaving Mitzrayim” means breaking free from the slavery of old habits, outdated mindsets, and unhealthy self-perceptions.

It seems ironic that the chag which represents becoming free also includes the most intense work in the days and weeks leading up to it. How does this labor and the resulting exhaustion and chaos help us find freedom?

Rav Avraham Tzvi Kluger teaches us that the chaos of preparing for Pesach is not only part of “leaving Mitzrayim,” but actually

enables the whole process. One of the impurities of “Mitzrayim” is the idea that we can rule over the forces of nature to gain the outcomes we desire. The impurity of thinking we are in control.

But we have no control. Hashem runs the world and control is only in His Hands.

The sooner we realize that reality, the healthier, freer, and more connected we will be.

Rav Kluger points out that in the days leading up to Pesach, the reality of the situation: the topsy-turvy schedule, the mess of turning over our houses, and the sheer chaos of the preparation forces us to practically raise our hands in surrender. And that is exactly the point. Only through the act of recognizing and yielding to a Greater Power, to Hashem, can we find true serenity and actual freedom.

This is the truth of reality. We never have control. Over the course of the year we slip into the delusion that we can manage and contain the chaos. That we can manipulate and master the world around us. In the days leading up to Pesach, however, that façade is conclusively crushed.

These days compel us to open our eyes to the truth:

Having a schedule does not give us the power to control the outcome of the day, keeping our houses neat cannot impose order on the world, and there is no way to restrain the commotion of life.

Pesach reminds us that Hashem, in His

kindness, has not left us in charge. The restrictions the chag imposes on us rewire our brains to recognize true freedom—knowing that we are in Hashem’s Hands. In acknowledging Hashem’s control, we relieve ourselves of the burden of our own misconceptions and *meitzarim*.

All year long I see myself a certain way, I doubt and limit myself by my own mindset. Freedom from Mitzrayim comes from knowing that since only Hashem is in control, only He sets the limits on my capabilities. The dreams in my heart are there because He plants them there, and I am limited only by my willingness to reach for them.

May Hashem bless each one of us to know that our efforts leading up to this chag unlocked a doorway of renewal, to courageously walk through that doorway to the path of growth, to embrace the chaos as a way of letting go, and, above all, to feel Hashem giving us the koach to keep moving forward.

Chag Sameach! ■

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