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PESACH



Pre-Pesach: On the Cusp

The dynamic and fiery first chaplain and Chief Rabbi of the fledgling Israel Defense Forces, Rav Shlomo Goren, almost single-handedly built up the religious infrastructure of *Tzahal*, establishing the army's kashrus, *shmiras Shabbos* and other basic halachic standards. At age 12, he had become the youngest talmid of Yeshivas Chevron, was immediately identified as a Torah prodigy, and received semicha at 17. From the time he volunteered with the Haganah in 1936, this leader of great passion and creativity, participated and shaped many seminal moments in modern Jewish history, including no less than the Liberation of Jerusalem. Rav Goren's autobiography, *With Might and Strength*, describes the desperate intensity gripping Eretz Yisrael Erev Pesach of 1948.

Yerushalayim had been under Arab siege for months; supplies were short, rations were at starvation levels and Yom Tov was rapidly approaching. Though the British military governor did not have ownership of the matzah, he did have authority over its distribution, and decided to allocate the scant supply of matzah to the city's most 'religious' civilians; there was nowhere near the amount necessary to provide for all. After verifying that families

who registered to receive matzah had enough to fulfill their primary obligation, Rav Goren commandeered military trucks in the middle of the night, broke into the warehouse, and requisitioned the remaining boxes:

"On the cusp of Redemption, how could it be that our holy *chayalim*, warriors in the first Jewish army in two thousand years, go without matzah?"

As Yeshivah students spread throughout the frontlines to spend *Leil haSeder* together with the soldiers under fire, Rav Goren shared a timeless message with those assembled at Schneller Army Base.

"After millenia of physical and spiritual slavery, we have merited to celebrate the *Chag haCheirut*, the Festival of Freedom. And just as when we left Mitzrayim we saw miracles, so too we will merit to see great *nisim* in the Holy Land. With great bravery and self sacrifice we shall raise high the flag of freedom. Let us envision the Complete Redemption and celebrate *Chag Pesach* as free men."

.....
Ribbon Kol haOlamim is a deeply moving *tefillah* often appearing between *Shalom Aleichem* and *Eishes Chayil*. This traditional *Leil Shabbos* prayer expresses an array of uplifting *bakashos*, capturing the faith, hope and yearning that a *Yid* uncovers in the sacred moments preceding Kiddush. In one line, we ask in a unique way for Hashem's compassion: לגלותי, לַגְלוֹתַי, שְׂתַרְחַמְנֵי עוֹד בְּגִלוֹתַי, "May You further show me mercy and deliver

me *in* my exile, to redeem me.” It seems that rather than asking to be saved *from* our *galus*, we ask to be delivered *within* it. The great Reb Shalom Rockeach, the first Belzer Rebbe known as the *Sar Shalom zy’a* explained that there are three expressions of *galus*, each one more harsh than the preceding. One is a physical exile among non-Jews, another is a form of exile among fellow Jews and the third is an experience of being in an internal *galus*, exiled within oneself.

When we beseech the *Ribono Shel Olam* יְהוָה שְׂרַחֵמְנִי עוֹד בְּגִלוּת we are referring to exile consciousness which is self-induced; we are asking to be saved from ourselves. In other words, it is easier to take a Jew out of *galus*, than to take *galus* out of a Jew...

...הוֹצִיאֲנִי אֶתְכֶם מִתַּחַת סִבְלַת מִצְרַיִם.

I will bring you out from under the *sivlos*, ‘labors’, of Egypt...” (*Shemos*, 6:6)

Chidushei haRim interprets (*Vaeira*, 5636) the word *sivlos* as *savlanus*, patience. Hashem took us out from being *savel Mitzrayim* — ‘having patience’ for Mitzrayim. That is, He saved us from the sad state of ‘tolerating’ our exile, accepting our slavery, making peace with where we were. The greatest impediment to freedom is complacent acceptance of stuckness. Without a will to be liberated, we are at the mercy of the gravitational pull to remain mired in where we currently are, where we don’t *really* want to be.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel explored the insecurity of being free, and the fear of the unknown versus the safety and stability and even suffering of staying stuck. The greatness of our salvation is that it did not just take *us out of Egypt*; it took Egypt, the *meitzarim*, the slave mentality and inner

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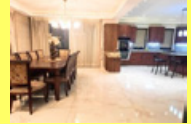
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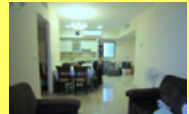
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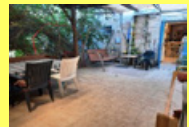


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stuckness, *out of us*.

In *The Shawshank Redemption*, Morgan Freeman's character "Red" has a monologue reflecting on the nature of long term imprisonment and the effect it has on a prisoner. "These walls are funny. First you hate 'em, then you get used to 'em. Enough time passes, it gets so you *depend* on 'em. That's 'institutionalized'... they send you here for life and that's exactly what they take — the part that counts, anyway."

After millennia of physical and spiritual slavery, it seems that once again, we have settled for the status quo, accepting exile as an expected, tolerable, perhaps even respectable, condition. *Chas v'Shalom!* That is the bitter stuckness of *conceptzia*, a fossilized, detrimental state of self-imposed exile, detrimental *galusdik* group-think that has weakened and paralyzed Knesses Yisrael. We are a people of great faith and vision who yearn for victory and redemption! For far too long we have been entrapped in a defeatist mentality, blinded from seeing our collective spiritual and national potential and our own essential greatness.

And yet, we are living in extraordinary times, a תקופה גדולה of great historical importance. An unwanted war has led to an awakening of authentic Jewish heroism, *gevurah* and sacrifice, an expression of deep and renewed faith, identity and holiness, of expanded consciousness and holy pride. There is an opportunity right now to break out of our passive acceptance of *golus*, and say, *'Ad masai!* How long do we need to push off becoming who we really are as a people? How long will we cower in the 'safety' of our self-induced exile?"

הַשְׁתָּא עֲבָדֵי, לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה בְּנֵי חוֹרֵין.

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Now we are here, this coming year we will (all) be in the Land of Israel; this year we are slaves, this coming year we will be free people!

Wherever we will be celebrating Seder this year, may each of us raise high the flag of freedom and envision the גאולה השלימה, והאמיתית, the complete and true, internal and external, final redemption. May the great, redemptive days of Nissan free us from all of our self-limiting *conceptziot*, so that we may celebrate *Chag Pesach* as a free, independent holy nation in our Land! לְשָׁנָה הַבָּאָה בְּנֵי חוֹרֵין ■

The family of
RABBI SHOLOM GOLD TZ"l
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