

Shiur HaRav Soloveichik ZT”L on Hagadah and Concept of Avdus

There are two aspects to slavery: 1) the juridical/political and 2) the typological/personalistic. Under the juridical/political aspect, the concept of slavery is identical with a doctrine of totalitarian, or all inclusive, private property, where the body of the slave belongs to someone other than the slave himself. This doctrine, based on the concept of ownership, embraces the animate and inanimate, including mankind. The typological/personalistic aspect of slavery is characterized by a class of people who think, feel and act (or react) in a distinct manner, thus reflecting a peculiar personality. The personalistic aspect of slavery may be found even among free men. These two aspects of slavery do not always go hand in hand. When we say in the Hagadah (at the conclusion of Magid) that we praise Hashem for the redemption and freedom of our soul, Nodeh Lcha Al Ge’ulasayu V’aL Pdus Nafshaynu,, we thank Hashem for redemption from both aspects of slavery. We were set free physically and we were also liberated from the highly restrictive slave personality.

The Halacha calls the political/juridical aspect Kinyan Mamon. This refers to the rights of the master relative to his property as he manifests ownership of the slave just as he would ownership over other forms of property. The Halacha calls the personalistic aspect Kinyan Issur, which refers to the Halachic constraints that are placed on the slave because of his strange and peculiar personality. Our focus is this Shiur is to analyze the Halachos associated with the personalistic aspect. Kinayn Issur, regarding the slave. There are fundamentally 3 Halachos that reflect our view of the slave personality. 1) A slave is excluded from the obligation to perform time oriented Mitzvos (Mitzvas Assay Sh’Hazeman Grama). 2) A slave is excluded from matrimony (Ayn Lo Tfisas Kdushin). His act of betrothal does not establish a matrimonial community. 3) The slave is disqualified as a witness in civil and criminal cases.

The laws noted above are not just of technical significance. They are rooted in the slave mentality and personality, in his action and reaction. A slave (the Rav noted that we are talking about anyone who demonstrates the slave personality, which might include free men of distinction) is disqualified to testify in civil and criminal cases simply because we don’t trust him. Apparently, the commitment to truth, or as many ethicists and philosophers call it the “truth norm”, is unknown to the slave. Only the free man can experience the “truth norm”. The insensitivity of the slave to truth can be viewed at two levels. In the first, the slave is a person without options. He lacks freedom of choice between alternatives and is restricted to a single course of action. When the Torah refers to free people in general, and the Jew in particular, it talks of two alternative paths, Tov and Ra, Good and Evil, Bracha and Klala, blessing and curse. The free man has the ability to choose between them. The slave does not have that freedom of choice. The slave lacks the drive to initiate and has no faith in himself. His inability to make decisions and lack of freedom of choice manifests in an inability to intervene in certain situations to improve his lot. He lacks the tools that a free man would employ to help himself under similar circumstances. People who are not free (slaves or prisoners in concentration camps), whose opportunities are restricted, develop a more imaginative approach to the world. Their inability to intervene and improve their situation leads them to perceive the world as they would like it to be rather than how it really is. They view their world through a subjective

viewpoint in order to soothe their ego. (The Rav noted that people with various impediments often view the world from a slanted and imagined perspective, colored by their own personal situation and how they would like their world to be.) The slave sees events through a slanted point of view and lacks objectivity. Therefore, the Torah did not trust the slave to testify.

Another manifestation of the slave personality is his fear in voicing a contradictory opinion, not only regarding those that have control or jurisdiction over him, but even in situations where contradiction would not result in any harm to him. A sense of unjustified fear is the motivating force in all aspects of his life. The Rav compared this mindset to that of many inmates in concentration camps who were afraid to contradict anyone, even a child, no matter how outlandish a statement they might have uttered. The Torah describes (in the Tochecha, the warnings and punishments detailed in Parashat Bchukosai and Parashat Ki Tavo) most beautifully this neurotic, irrational phobia that the Jews will experience in their exile and as part of their punishment. In those nations you will not find peace and will experience fear day and night.

When one testifies and tells the truth, he must contradict and antagonize someone, even a person of a higher social station. A person who is afraid to antagonize another is disqualified from giving testimony. Simply put, the slave is essentially a frightened person. The slave's perception is tainted by his imagination and fantasy. The slave has no power of objective observation or courage to stand up for his beliefs and ideas. On the other hand, the free man is capable of telling the truth no matter the situation that he may find himself in.

The Rav suggested that Chazal introduced the concept of Heseba, leaning on the side, as the symbol of freedom in contradistinction to this slave mindset. The posture of reclining on the left side is one of complete relaxation that manifests total abatement from tension or anxiety. One who is anxious can't relax physically. Physical relaxation leads to emotional relaxation. Also, reclining is symbolic of the throwing off of the yoke that exists in one's mind that deprives him of freedom of movement. It is the reverse of the stiff and erect posture that demonstrates obedience. A soldier standing erect at attention symbolizes obedience. Reclining, on the other hand, is indicative of disobedience, of a courageous stand of rejecting the authority of man. I am stating emphatically that I am free to relax and act as I choose. On Pesach night, the Halacha requires that we have a relaxed posture that should be viewed as disrespectful of those that would dominate us. We are no longer slaves. It is indicative of the fearless man who is unhindered by any external forces. Chazal enjoined the student sitting before his teacher from reclining precisely because it is a disrespectful posture, and the student is obligated to respect his teacher. Apparently, Chazal chose such a posture as the symbol of freedom specifically because it shows disrespect from a subordinate towards his superior. It demonstrates how the poor Jew in Egypt behaved towards his former master on the night of the exodus.

The second Halacha is that a slave is relieved of commandments that are time oriented. The reason is that the slave lacks the time experience. Everything in the universe exists in time and space. All evolutionary processes in nature are the result of time passage. The organic world is intertwined with the passage of time. The characteristic or cycle of all organic tissue is birth,

life and death. The life of any organic tissue is the inexorable approach of death. Life and death are phenomenon experiences that can only be understood in the context of time.

Even though everything exists in time, not everything experiences time. Man is the only creation endowed by Hashem with the capability of experiencing time. Man is capable of not simply living in time but to appreciate the meaning of the passage of time as the awareness of a time-existential stream of selfhood. Unfortunately, not every human takes advantage of the ability to experience time and not simply to live in time. Many human beings simply flow with the inexorable tide of all powerful and irresistible time. Such people have denied themselves the excitement of the experience of time.

What are the components of the time experience? (Aging is not included, for even the animals age but do not understand the time experience.) There are 3 component parts or acts to the time experience. 1) Retrospection. There is no time without retrospection. By retrospection we mean re-experiencing of the past. Retrospection for a young man is difficult, but it is very easy for an old man. Time is memory. Without memory there is no time. 2) The time experience consists in exploration of things yet unborn, of events not yet in existence, the exploration of the future. The anticipatory existence of events still unrevealed. 3) Appreciation of and valuation of the present moment as the most precious possession one has. It is an axiological act. Time is the most precious possession. This concept is often overlooked by the young.

No one is capable of time awareness if retrospection is alien to him and if he is incapable of reliving past experiences. What is Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim? The whole Mitzvah does not express itself simply in relating a story of what happened. Rather, it is the reliving of the drama. We must re-experience and relive the exodus. That is history. Archeology describes events that disappeared long ago, and even though they may be reproduced by memory, they are not alive. There is no retrospection. History is not only the recorded story of events, but it is part of the time awareness of a people or group that I reenact and restage. No time awareness is imaginable if the person lacks the facility of historical experience.

The Rav observed that the tragedy of the American Jew is based on the fact that he forgot his past. We are not referring to forgetting the simple stories of peasant life in Europe. Rather, the American Jew lost the ability to relive time as part of his own I-awareness, he lost touch with Judaism's fundamental assertion that the past is relevant and is a part of me. Rabbi Akiva is not simply a figure who lived 1800 years ago. He and his teachings have been integrated into our personalities. The same applies to all the great scholars and leaders throughout the generations. Many American Jews forfeited their time awareness and facility for meaningful retrospection, they became Jews without a past. The Rav met many young people who did not know the name of their grandfather. They would say that he died a long time ago in the "old country" and they forgot his name. Sadly, their I-awareness begins with his death, not his life. Their time awareness coincides with their own birth. The existence of the human being does not commence with his birth. The human being is born into the world as part of the endless stream of time. But if the world is born with him, if he has no past on which to draw, then his world is incomplete. On the other hand, to live in time, to feel the rhythm of time, one must move from the memory

of the past to the unreality of the future. To flow from events that were, to events that will be real someday. From reminiscing to anticipating. From visions of memory to visions of imagination. To live in time means a commitment to a great past and an unknown future.

To facilitate time awareness, Judaism wants man to be free in order to appreciate the moral element of responsibility for emerging events and to anticipate his involvement and intervention in the historical process. Judaism teaches that man is created free so that he may make central decisions that mold and fashion not only his future, but the future of the world as well. Time awareness requires man to intervene when intervention is called for. That is why the Hagadah commences with Avadim Hayinu that retells our earliest history and concludes with the eschatological vision of Nishmas Kol Chai. One can't relive an event without connecting past and future. In order to connect retrospection and anticipation, one must cherish the present fleeting moment as if it represented eternity. Judaism teaches that each moment is valuable and precious. Each moment is the link between the history of the past and the anticipation of the future. With the fraction of a second, one may realize lifelong hopes and aspirations, or he may lose them.

That is why the Halacha is so time conscious. Sometimes we might think that the Halachic obsession with time borders on the absurd. But of course it does not. Take for example, doing work around the boundary of the start of Shabbos. One may do work a minute before sunset. If one does the same act 2 minutes later, he is bound to bring an Asham Talluy. Is one minute so important that it can now label the person a sinner? Can the fraction of a second be that important? We saw that the fraction of a second is most important to the safety of the Apollo space program. The simplest miscalculation could spell the difference between life and death, success and failure. Apparently, the Halacha is not alone in the valuation of the importance of adherence to time. The fulfillment of the mitzvah to recite Krias Shema in the morning requires that it must be completed by a certain time. One minute later, the act loses its value. There are many such cases.

The Rav mentioned the story of King Saul who failed to comply with the explicit order of Hashem regarding the complete destruction of Amalek. Saul sought to explain away his actions without taking responsibility. As a result, the monarchy was taken away from him. On the other hand, upon being told of his sin with Bas Sheva, David immediately accepted responsibility and pleaded for forgiveness and atonement. The prophet immediately informed him that Hashem erased his sin. Why was David's plea granted and Saul's rejected? Because Saul argued and tried to convince Samuel that he implemented his instructions. Only after Samuel addressed to Saul his final words of rebuke, that Hashem has torn away the monarchy from him, did Saul admit his failure. But his opportunity to act came and went. He was too late, and his destiny was sealed.

This is typical of Judaism. Time is critical, not simply hours, but even seconds. Time appreciation is a singular gift granted to free man. Man can utilize time to the utmost, but he can also waste it. To the free man, time is equated with creativity, growth, opportunity and accomplishment. Time is a gift to the free man; he wants time to slow down. He feels the

pressure of so much to do. For the slave, time is a curse. [The expressions “killing time”, and “too much time on his hands” come to mind.] His time is not his own, it belongs to his master. He is insensitive towards time; life is motionless to the slave personality. The Rav observed that after American Jews pass their fiftieth birthday and the children take over the business, they are frustrated that they have too much time on their hands. They feel unwanted by their families and unneeded by society. They are gripped with the fear of death. Their lives become motionless and meaningless, without focus, like the life of a slave. Torah scholars are inoculated from such psychological turmoil. The study of Torah is always important, whether one is young or old. The study of Torah extends the person’s view and reveals new dimensions of existence.

The free man’s life expresses itself in the motion of physical and intellectual accomplishment, Vzarach Hashemesh U’Ba Hashemesh, the constant striving and re-striving to accomplish. The same can’t be said of the slave. The slave mindset is “what he neglected to do today can be made up tomorrow”. The slave lacks the great excitement of opportunity knocking on the door and the challenges that summon man to action, of great expectations coupled with the fear of failure. The slave never attempts and never succeeds. Any Mitzva that is inseparably bound up with time is inapplicable to him. The free man lives a three-dimensional life, past present and future, while the slave lives in the flat uni-dimensional present. No wonder the first cup of the Seder is bound with recital of Kiddush. Kiddush encapsulates the concept of time. Time in the Kantian philosophy is empty, it is a frame of reference, a coordinate system. The same is true of time according to physics, it is quantified and measured by space, but it is not real time. Real time can’t be quantified. So how can one correlate the notion of measured time with Kdushas Hayom, the sanctity of the Sabbath or a festival associated with work prohibition? Kdushas Hayom represents a living entity that is sanctified and endowed with creativity that can’t be captured by a simple coordinate system-based measurement. The festivals are called Zemanim, times. Time is a blessed entity charged with meaning and sanctity. That’s why the first sign of the free man on the night of Pesach is to acknowledge the sanctity of this time, through Kiddush.

The Rav explained that even though a woman is not obligated to fulfill time bound Mitzvos, she differs from the slave in this regard. The Rav said in the name of his father, that a woman is relieved of the obligation but if she performs it she is rewarded. Therefore, the woman recites a blessing before fulfilling a time bound Mitzvah. Her act is as meaningful as that of a man. The woman lives in time and experiences time like a man, even though she was relieved of the obligation to do so. The slave is completely removed from the performance and the reward. Hence his act has no effect.

The Rambam inserted in his Hagadah that we begin Magid with the statements that our forefathers departed Egypt in a hurry. Why is this aspect of haste, Chipazon, so important that according to the Rambam it became the focal point of the evening? Because Chipazon means time consciousness. It is the excitement of hurrying, of trying to catch up, because I miss time and the opportunity it presents. I want to make sure that I am in a position to act when the opportunity next presents itself. Chipazon is the attempt to cover distance, to move forward quickly. This is the manifestation of the concept of living time. The Rambam includes the

statement at the start of Magid regarding the haste of our forefathers when they left Egypt three thousand years ago, for it was then that we regained the concept of time, and we truly became free.

The third typological principle is that a slave can't effectuate a marriage. Judaism considers marriage not only as a sociological institution but also as the formation of a metaphysical existential community. It is not only an economic/social partnership of disparate biological units based on mutual benefit, but also a personalistic union. Marriage connotes tearing down of barriers that separate individuals from each other. It requires a person to step out of the shadows of egocentricity and self concern and into the bright spaces of joint existential experience. Marriage is supposed to precipitate the transition from an individual to communal existence. From singular to together-existence. There are people who can't undergo such a shared existential metaphysical change. They always remain in existential retreat, isolated in metaphysical aloneness. They are incapable of sharing basic personalistic experiences and can never assume ultimate commitment towards another person besides themselves.

Among the Sheva Brachos we have 2 blessings that are of similar content regarding the creation of man. The first, Yotzer Ha'adam, is a short version. We also have Asher Yatzar, which also ends in Yotzer Ha'adam, but is a longer version. The first blessing does not mention Eve. The second blessing mentions the divine nature of man's character, his relatedness to Hashem. The second blessing also introduces Eve and describes human nature, that man was created in the image of God. Why the need for both blessings and the difference in their content? The first blessing deals with mundane, natural man, as a natural being. The Rav was not referring to the primitive brute, but rather to the sophisticated man, man-doctor, man-physicist etc., man who is capable of traveling to the moon. It refers to a man that can't transcend himself or see beyond himself. He can't transcend his natural boundaries and biological pressures. In his opinion there is nothing beyond nature, he is a prisoner of his own world outlook. Such a person can never form the ideal covenantal community. He can enter into a marriage contract for utilitarian pragmatic reasons, but he is unable to bring about an existential community. The text of the second blessing refers to a shared existential community as Binyan Aday Ad. Only the person who is created in God's image and can transcend himself to extend his concern for others, is capable of creating a covenantal community. The oppressed, tortured and insecure slave who lacks a sense of pride, is incapable of thinking in terms of compassion and love for others.

(The Rav was told by inmates in concentration camps that the concept of love towards siblings and family, and friendships towards others disappeared in the camps. They did not know what would happen in the next minute. They were absorbed with self preservation.) Fright extinguishes everything noble and altruistic in a person. Everyone is his enemy; he can't be concerned with the needs of others. The symbol of Geula in the Torah is Korban Pesach. Pesach is distinct from all other sacrifices. The concept of a community does not exist by other sacrifices. Yet Korban Pesach has been linked with the concept of group to such an extent that according to one Tana in the Gemara, the Korban Pesach may be offered only by a group; an individual may not offer it. Why is Pesach different from all other sacrifices in this regard? Because Pesach is the symbol of community, it is called Seh Lbays Avos, and freedom

expresses itself in the awareness of Bayis, community. This concept of Bayis, community, was revealed to the Jews with the dawning of their freedom on that first Pesach, thousands of years ago.

Now we have a definition of slave and free person as typological categories. The slave is a frightened personality, living in time without experiencing the movement of time, imprisoned to live by himself without the ability to share his experiences with anyone else. The free man is just the reverse.

Avadim Hayinu L'Paroh B'Mitzrayim. What is added by mentioning that we were slaves to Paroh in Egypt? There are 2 types of slaves. Sometimes the slave belongs to an individual. Other times the slave is property of the state. In the US before emancipation, the slave was the property of the individual master. In the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany, China, there is/was slavery but the slaves were/are owned by the state. The Hagadah tells us that we were slaves to Pharaoh but not slaves to slaves. Why were Chazal concerned whether we worked for the state or were owned by individuals? After all, both forms of servitude are degrading.

When one is a slave to an individual master, at the personal level, some relationship between master and slave may develop. The slave may develop a position of power or authority within the master's household. He may run the affairs of the house, like Joseph did in the house of Potifar. However, if the slave is the property of the cruel state, then no personal relationship is possible. The state and the oppressors of Egypt were as cruel to the Jews on the first day of their servitude as they were years later. Slaves of the state lose their identity and simply become numbers. No matter how long an inmate may be incarcerated, he remains as unknown to the warden as the day he arrived in the prison. The life of the serf owned by the government and the lives of the inmates in the concentration camps and the gulags of Russia shared a common theme of all-consuming torture. Egypt of antiquity and Russia were very similar. Both were corporate states, technologically advanced. In Egypt, the personality of the king was subsumed and standardized into a common name, Pharaoh. There was no individuality. We don't know which one was the leader. They were all cruel. The Soviet dictators were also indistinguishable from each other. They used the same terms and language when referring to their enemies and in their attempts to dominate those that oppose them. Both were societies based on slavery, (and the Rav said that based on his own experiences, the Soviet system was a slave society) where individuality is forcibly submerged. Instead of the heterogeneous, free society, you are faced with an impersonal and cruel society, like that of Pharaoh and Egypt.

Vayotziyanu Hashem Elokaynu Misham. In Tanach, we find the word Saper used together with the accusative or objective case, Es. But when it comes to Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim the objective case is replaced with the ablative, L'Saper B'Yetzias Mitzrayim (not Es Ytzias Mitzrayim). Grammatically the ablative case should not be used here. We find many cases where Saper is linked with the objective case. Why do we use the term L'Saper **B'**Yetzias Mitzrayim? Because Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim is much more than telling a story. It is an investigation, a study to comprehend and analyze the exodus. (The Rav said that if he would

quit his position as Rosh Yeshiva and concentrated on the Hagadah it would take him over a year to study it.)

Why does the Hagadah include the word Elokaynu, Vayotziyanu Hashem Elokaynu Misham? We must understand the semantics of the word Elokaynu and the phrase Hashem Elokaynu. We have the verse Shma Yisroel Hashem Elokaynu Hashem Echad. Hashem has been accepted as our King and whose law we are duty bound to abide by and implement. If the word Elokaynu would have been omitted, the use of the name Hashem (Tetragrammaton) would tell us that Hashem had mercy on us and took us out of Egypt, just as Hashem intervenes in nature and in various situations to rescue the oppressed from the oppressor. [Tape cut out momentarily at this point, just before the punch line... I am guessing that the Rav completed this thought in the following way...] The juxtaposition of the name Elokaynu tells us that there was an aspect of Din, judgment, associated with His actions, punishment for the Egyptians and the selection of the Jewish People as the Am Hashem for all eternity. This selection was based on our willingness to submit to God and surrender our newfound freedom to His will.

Is the committed Jew who observes 613 Mitzvos, a free person or not? Of course he is! Apparently, we understand freedom from a different perspective than most people do. When we say M'Avdus L'Chayrus, freedom manifests itself in our opinion in the service of Hashem and conforming to His wishes. Hashem created man as a free being and endowed man with the most cherished of all gifts: freedom. Yet God wants man to surrender his precious freedom and submit to His moral law. The first encounter between Hashem and man was regarding the instructions given to Adam how to live. Apparently, man who is not bound by any code and has not surrendered to Hashem and His moral code, has not achieved full humanity. Man's task is to surrender his freedom, his most precious gift. But by surrendering his freedom, man regains it, at an even higher level.

Fundamentally man is not a free being. At the physiological level, man differs from the animals in the forest in that he is a confronted and challenged being. He is a prisoner of natural laws and social institutions. Disaster can strike at any moment. He is subject to many restrictive measures, some due to his being a natural creature, while others are the result of his social integration. Man is a social animal and subject to praise and the opinion of other people. In fact, the greater the person's role, the more restricted his freedom. From this perspective, the President of the United States is the least free of men. All men, be they slaves or free men, are subject to restrictions, customs and mores of behavior that make the notion of free man nonsensical.

There is only one way for man to free himself from his many phobias: by surrendering to Hashem. In antiquity man was afraid of leprosy. Modern man is still traumatized, but he has a different fear, the fear of cancer. How many people are traumatized by the fear of developing this dreaded disease? The frightened man is not free. The only way to become free of this fright is through total surrender to God. One must have great fear of God as well. But a great fright frees man from little, smaller frights. Surrender to God does not mean surrender of freedom. It means that I must give up my freedom for a short time. For example, there are times that man's

natural urges push him to violate certain laws, for example dietary or sex/morality. In such cases, God wants man to surrender his free will for a few seconds, till the urge passes. All man has to do is surrender temporarily to God and in a short while he will find that he is freer than ever before. Had we exited Egypt without the willingness to surrender our just acquired precious freedom to Hashem and His laws, attained after so many years of servitude and oppression without accepting and recognizing the importance of Elokaynu, ultimately we would have been subjugated again by someone else, or by our fears and phobias.

B'Yad Chazakah U'Bzroah Netuyah. Jewish philosophy is based on the concept of Vhalachta Bdrochav. We must imitate the actions and ways of Hashem. If Hashem used Yad Chazakah and Zroah Ntuyah, we must emulate Him and use them as well. How are we supposed to act when we are called on to intervene in historical situations?

Yad Chazakah means effective action. Zroah Ntuyah means being vigilant and prepared. Judaism teaches that man is a responsible being. His overall responsibility transcends his immediate responsibility for his own actions, it is a part of his spiritual endowment. Man is charged with historical responsibility, Kol Yisrael Arayvim Zeh LaZeh. Man was called on to shape history towards worthwhile objectives. There are 2 groups of Mitzvos in Halacha, Tzibbur and Yachid, group and individual. Man's activism and initiative within the historical drama is the foundation of Judaism. The individual is called upon from time to time to participate in the emergence and development of Knesses Yisrael, the Tzibbur or group. In order to participate in the historical drama one must possess two capabilities: 1) always be ready for action; 2) when action is called for, to act effectively.

Zroah Ntuya symbolizes vigilance. There are 2 aspects of vigilance. 1) In order to be watchful, one must be totally committed and dedicated. Who is watchful? The mother is watchful when her child is ill. She is totally committed, watchful and keen. In Tanach we find that Mordechai was the prime model of vigilance. He was on guard as soon as Esther was taken to the palace because he was committed to her just like a father. A worried parent is a vigilant parent. (Children on the other hand are not always worried about their parents, hence they can't be described as vigilant.) The totally committed person stands guard unconditionally against danger. One can't alert someone to danger unless he is concerned. The Jewish community must be vigilant towards Eretz Yisrael, and the Orthodox community in particular must be concerned with the preservation of Torah. It requires full commitment. The person who is not vigilant will act too late. 2) Vigilance goes beyond concern. One must possess historical perspective and the ability to discriminate between events that are truly critical and require immediate intervention and those that can wait.

Mordechai had a keen sensitivity towards history. He had the foresight and prescience indispensable for crucial decision making. The Megila relates that Esther and Mordechai were exchanging messages regarding the predicament of the Jews. They disagreed to such an extent that Mordechai sent her a very stern warning. The crux of the disagreement was that Esther felt that she should wait to approach the king. After all, she had not been summoned to appear before the king for quite some time. If she acts prematurely, she would in all likelihood be

killed and then no one will be able to intercede on behalf of the people. Since the edict was issued before Pesach and the enactment of the edict was not due to happen for another year, there would be ample opportunity to act over the coming year. She was sure that over such a long period of time she will surely receive an invitation to appear before the king and at that time she would plead for the people. Mordechai disagreed and insisted that she act immediately. Mordechai was obviously right. He was sensitive to the needs of the situation. It is easy to rationalize secondary decisions of preference, for example why I prefer a particular type of car. But when one asks why I am willing to sacrifice my life for a situation or a community, I cannot offer a rational explanation. Suddenly a light goes on and I grope towards my destination, to my decision. I know that I will somehow get there, but I don't know how.

Shuvi Shuvi Hashulamis, the gentile people address themselves to Knesses Yisrael. Why do you show such dedication to Hashem and Torah? Come back to us and forget about all of that. Why remain a Jew? Give up your madness and your unlimited, bizarre commitment. She answers what can I tell you? I am involved in a dance between two camps, and I cannot free myself from the dance. One cannot be a non-Jew, there is no process that can change my status from that of a Jew. My identity as a Jew is a part of me that I can't explain or rationalize. It is a basic experience that can't be explained or changed. It is an eternal commitment that is part of my I-awareness and my existence. Can I explain my relationship to my parents and children? I cannot define my existence in terms of a lack of commitment to God, like you. I must define it in terms of what I am committed to, to God and His Torah. It is the central experience and such an experience can't be explained. Mordechai could not explain his pressure on Esther, he just knew that eventually he would be proven right. This dance is an eternal dance that the Jewish community is engaged in till the coming of Moshiach. When the Jew intervenes, he must do it with a full heart. The Jewish community never undertook half measures in the past.

Afilu Kulanu Chachamim, Kulanu Nvonim... Haray Zeh Mshubach. This is subject to two interpretations. One is subjunctive. The second uses the grammatical indicative. One explanation of the statement is that even if all of us were wise and if all of us were intelligent and if all of us were scholars we would still be obligated to tell the story of the exodus. But it is quite tempting to interpret the statement in the indicative: We are wise and we are scholars and we do know the Torah, we are still obligated to study the exodus. The verse does not refer to the hypothetical but rather the reality. However, if the subjunctive is correct, and we really are not capable, then why do we have to relate the story? On the other hand, if we are using the indicative form, doesn't it smack of haughtiness?

The Rav said that the indicative form is applicable here as well. The obligation on this night is to study the events that occurred in Egypt. We don't tell the complete tale. We read and explain the Parasha of Arami Oveyd Avi instead of the complete story as written in Sefer Shmos. If the goal was to simply tell the story on the night of Pesach, we would have studied Sefer Shmos instead. We only mention the highlights and we are interested in exploring the verses of Arami Oveyd Avi. Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim is inseparably linked with the Mitzvah of Talmud Torah on the night of Pesach. The Torah has prepared unique answers for the questions of the 4 sons, but there is a common denominator: teach them about Egypt and the exodus, but teach them the

laws, Talmud Torah. The 4 answers that the Torah prepared are indicative that we must teach each child according to his ability. Every Jew is endowed with the potential to comprehend Torah. Rabbi Simlai says that each fetus is taught Torah within the womb and the angel slaps him prior to birth and he forgets what he was taught. Why teach him if he will forget? Because Torah must be acquired through hard work. If so why teach him in the womb? In order that subsequent study of Torah during his lifetime should be a process of remembering something that he once knew. Plato said that all learning is remembering. Since he knew it once it is not alien and he can reproduce it again.

The potential of studying Torah, of remembering and recapturing what he once knew, is latent in every Jew. Every Jew can be a great scholar and attain Chachma, Binah and Daas. Even one who has failed to take advantage of the gift to study Torah. If a good teacher explains it, each Jew will be able to learn and follow. Torah is the possession of the entire Knesses Yisrael. The democratic philosophy of education is the Jewish philosophy. Historically, access to education was controlled by the aristocracy. On the other hand, Judaism always insisted on an exoteric approach to Torah education, that the opportunity to study and acquire knowledge be given to everyone because the Torah is not outside the Jew, but it resides in the Jew. Sometimes he is conscious of it, sometimes he is not. There is the knowledge of Torah and the sensitivity towards Torah, and both apply to the Jew at different levels and at different stages.

On Pesach night we reenact the events where each Jew beheld the divine revelation. The revelation was a public spectacle not only at the Reed Sea, but also on the night of the fifteenth of Nissan. On that night every Jew was wise, sensitive and intelligent. Every Jew felt the presence of God and was initiated into the inner circle. The Jews that left Egypt were met by Hashem. Each Jew must reenact that feeling of encountering the Shechina on the night Pesach.

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