

~~How Do We Achieve AT TRUTH~~

BO

Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

In the Torah portion, Bo, we learn about the last plagues that G-d sent to Egypt. G-d had wanted that Pharaoh would recognize that slavery was wrong. The Rabbis explain this when it said that G-d hardened His heart it means that He gave them the strength to withstand the suffering of the plagues. Pharaoh was to recognize himself that slavery was wrong. The plagues were just to direct his thinking toward it. The Jewish people were to leave Egypt. The Torah says that it was "a night of watching unto the Lord for bringing them out of the land of Egypt". This same night is a night of watching for the Lord for all the children of Israel throughout the generations. We can understand why this was called a night of watching for Israel and, of course, we observe and watch on that night, but why is this called a night of watching for G-d? After all, G-d is above time. That's what His name, Yud Kay Vahv Kay, symbolizes. In fact, since Einstein we know that time is not constant. We all have read science fiction stories about how someone took a long spaceship ride and came back to earth in what he thought was his aging process in two years, only to find that the generation that was alive now on earth were his great-great-grandchildren. G-d does not need a special night to watch. What is He watching? Perhaps we can understand this question if we analyze the last two plagues. All the plagues but the last one could be seen as natural occurrences. The river got filled with a red parasite which killed all the fish, etc. In fact, there are red tides in Florida to this day. Because the river was no longer habitable the frogs deserted it and entered the people's homes. Then vermin came, etc. The ninth plague, darkness, could be explained as a result of a volcanic eruption. The last plague, though, is a supernatural type of plague. We know of no disease which attacks only the firstborn. The Rabbis say that this ninth plague of darkness was a terrible plague, the worst. The Torah describes it this way: "No man saw his brother and no one rose from his place for three days and to all Israel there was light in their habitations." The Rabbis explain that the worst plague is when nobody can see his brother. Today we are all afflicted with the idea that the most important thing in life is personal growth and nobody, it seems, wants to bother with anybody else. You do not want to look at your brother and help him because it may stifle your growth. In America today so many people believe this. Rabbi Greenblatt was telling me how his daughter,

who lives in New York, got sick on a subway and fainted. Nobody helped her. She just lay there until she revived. Nobody wants to see his brother. The Torah here is teaching us that there can be no personal growth without seeing your brother. Any growth you really have is selfishness. In order to have growth you must look at your brother. G-d was watching to see whether Israel is still looking at their brother. If they are not then they are not really worthy of their freedom. In the last plague, the striking of the firstborn, we learn that the Jewish people were spared because they put the blood of the lamb on their doorpost. The lamb was a symbol of Egyptian idolatry. We had to reject it entirely before we were deserving of freedom. The Midrash says that not only was the blood of the lamb put on the door, but also the blood of circumcision. The Jewish people in Egypt had forsaken circumcision. When they were to leave the Jewish people not only had to show that they were against evil things, slavery and idolatry, but that they were for Jewish values. All too often today we find that our young people especially are against the evils they find in society but they really, in many instances, do not have Jewish solutions. Most of the positive movements in the West were founded by Jews; the labor unions, civil rights, even the Red Cross in America, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, etc. It is not, though, enough to be against things. We must also be for things with positive Jewish values. Pesach, then, is a night of watching for G-d, too. He is watching whether or not she helps each other and not only rejects false views but also works to implement positive Jewish views. If we do that then we will remain free forever internally if not externally. We Jews must not only point out faults but we must, like those who founded the labor unions and worked for civil rights, be positive and we must always be positive for particular Jewish values as well. The blood of the circumcision was mixed with the blood of the lamb. If we do then we will be assured that we will be free inwardly. G-d is watching to see how we are acting. The story about the man who was 80 years old. He lifted his eyes up to G-d and said, "G-d, I never asked You for anything all my life. I have struggled and tried to do my best. I have never asked You for anything. Now I am going to ask You for one little thing. Let me win the New York lottery." The next day he opened the paper and his name was not in there. He lifted his

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eyes to heaven and said, "G-d, why didn't I win? What's going on here? Let me win next week." The next week he opened the paper and, sure enough, he didn't win. He once again looked up and said, "G-d, what's wrong with You? Why didn't I win?" He heard a heavenly voice say, "Mr. Goldberg, give Me a break. Don't you think you should buy a ticket first?" We all must buy a ticket first. We must know what we are against, but we must be positive for something. Judaism can only survive if we are for Jewish values.

This Torah portion deals with the last few plagues of the Jewish people's exodus from Egypt. They were actually thrust out. The Egyptians kicked them out at the end. In this Torah portion we also learn the first commandments that were given to the Jewish people. We learn how the very first commandment was to set up a calendar. The second commandment was to take a lamb on the 10th of the month and to slaughter it on the 14th. The third commandment was that all the people were to gather together in family units and eat the lamb. Enough families should gather to make sure to have enough to eat the lamb. This seems very strange that these are the first commandments which were given to the Jewish people. These do not seem to be the type of commandments that you would give to slaves who were about to go free. There were no ringing declarations in them. There are no appeals to brotherhood, etc. These three commandments, though, illustrate what the Jewish conception of freedom is. What differentiates a slave from a free man in Jewish law? A slave has three disabilities in Jewish law. One, he cannot testify as a witness in any matter. Second, he is not bound by any commandments that have to do with time. Three, he cannot get married. A slave suffers from these three disabilities. Because slavery denies a person three important characteristics which make up freedom. To our modern way of thinking freedom means that you can do anything you want when you want to whomever you please. Pharaoh probably thought he was defending his freedom when he resisted Moses' efforts to free the slaves. Freedom in our modern conception means we are not bound to anything. To Judaism, on the other hand, freedom means that you have no master but you are bound by certain constraints otherwise you will not have freedom. To a slave time has no meaning. He can make no progress. He cannot get ahead. He has no sense of responsibility. All he wants to do is get through the day without injury. The concentration camp time was inverted. Days dragged but the years sped by because

every day was really the same. If we carefully analyze what we really are we will find that we are actually only an alarm clock, a time bomb. Each of us has hormones that go off at intervals that change us, that make us grow and eventually bring our death. The cells we have this year in our body are not the same cells we had last year, but scientists have found that even if we take cells and put them in optimum environments they will only reproduce a certain amount of times and then they will stop. We are like programmed entities who go through cycles. Time is very important. We must seize time or we will lose our freedom to act. A slave has no time. A free man knows how to use time, to seize it. A slave also is not bound by truth. He lives under fear and truth is second to survival. The Jewish people were commanded to take the lamb and kill it. Other religions misinterpret the meaning of the lamb. The lamb was worshipped by the Egyptians. It was a symbol of falsehood. In order to be free you have to recognize that you are bound by the truth, that you must live lives according to the truth. If you try to escape from the truth you become a slave of your own fantasies. Finally, freedom means that you are bound by relationships, that you can have relationships. You are bound by your family. A slave can have no family. Children, spouses are bought and sold. In order to be free we must be bound by time, by truth, and by family. This is also why the Sabbath and the Tephillin are signs which remind all Jews of the exodus. They are signs of freedom. The Sabbath has to do with time and the Tephillin, on the hand and head show that we are bound by truth and by relationships. In our day many people have become slaves because they do not realize that they have to be bound. The story about the man who came into the country club a little drunk yelling, "Happy New Year" at which point the people looked at him and said, "What are you talking about? It's the middle of May". "Oh my gosh" yelled the man, "my wife is going to kill me. I've never been this late before". Freedom requires a consciousness of time, relationships and truth

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There are two main signs besides the Seder for remembering the Exodus from Egypt. One of them is Shabbos and the other is the tephillin. Why should the tephillin be considered a sign of the Exodus? The Jewish people did not put tephillin on in Egypt and the tephillin had nothing at all to do with the Exodus. The answer to this question, I believe, is found in the basic Jewish premise that the world is not redeemed. There are never any perfect solutions. Any solution always brings in its wake other problems, but partial solutions are important. It is much better to have the problem of too much food rather than the problem of no food. It is much better to have the problems of freedom than the problems of slavery. Many times people will say that something has failed because it has not solved all the problems. They fail to realize that we can never solve all of any problem. All our solutions will end up spawning new problems. It is not true that the great society failed. Lyndon Johnson's programs solved many of the problems of America, but not all of them. It is true that Jewish education will not solve all the Jewish problems. It is true that the State of Israel will also not solve all the Jewish problems, but it is much better to have Jewish education than not and to have the State of Israel than not to have it. In this week's Torah portion, Bo, we learn how the Jewish people were to be free. Sure, their freedom would bring problems but freedom's problems are so much better than slavery. According to Halacha, there are three differences between a slave and a free man. In the olden days if a Jew owned a slave the slave had to agree to be circumcised or he would have to be sold or given back to his original master. Today, thank heaven, there is no such thing as slavery. A slave cannot be a witness. A slave could not get married. A slave did not observe the Commandments having to do with time. To be a slave means that you really have no time. Time is not yours. There is nothing you can accomplish, nothing you can do. The days drag on and the years fly by. To a slave there is no truth, because he must squelch his true feelings. He does not want to get beaten or killed. A slave has no family because children and his wife can be separated from him. A free man, though, is bound by time and by truth and by family. Freedom does not mean you can do whatever you want to do. You have to make good use of your time otherwise you are a

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slave. You have to be bound by truth, by trying to do the right thing otherwise you are a slave. And you have to be bound by family otherwise you are a slave. The Sabbath teaches a Jew about time. The Seder teaches the Jew about family, and the tephillin teaches a Jew that you must bind truth to your hand, your heart and your mind. There is a story about a teacher who asked the class, "A mother has five children but only four potatoes. How can she divide the potatoes equally among the children?" One of the boys said, "I know, she should mash them". Maybe some of the children will not like mashed potatoes but this partial solution is still a good solution. Freedom brings problems. Freedom binds us to the truth, to family, and to time.

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In the Torah portion, Bo, we learn about Layed Shimureem. We learn about the night of watching. This was the night in which the Jewish people put the blood of the lamb on the door and they made a Seder. They were to eat the lamb and to eat it with their loins girded and their shoes on and their staff in their hand. They were even to eat Matzah and Moror. They had a real Seder. It is strange, though, that they had a real Seder commemorating their freedom when they were not free yet. In the sentence before we learn about Layed Shimureem we learn that it was at the end of 430 years. According to the Rabbis, it was 430 years since the promise was made to Abraham that his children would inherit the Land of Israel, but first they would go down to Egypt. They had actually only spent 210 years in Egypt. It says that this was a "night of watching for G-d and Israel throughout all their generations". It does seem strange, though, that they were celebrating the Exodus before they were free. They did not leave Egypt until the next morning. What is this all about? In life there is an objective state and a subjective state. We all live in our minds as well as in the world. One of the big errors of modern man is to fail to realize that there are these two different realms of human living. Especially since the second World War, people are being taught to do what feels good. Their subjective state is all that counts. If something feels good to them then it must be good, and if something does not feel good to them then it must be bad. There are no objective criteria right and wrong just how to feel about something. The only problem with this type of morality is that many times it can feel good to kill and hurt somebody, but we cannot say that it is good. People say revenge is sweet, but that does not make it right or good. We in Judaism have always believed that there are objective criteria outside ourselves that make for right or wrong,

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and when there is a conflict between what we want to do and what we should do, then we have to do what we should do. It is not always easy, and many times we fail, but that's why we have the concept of Teshuva, or repentance, so we can try again. We do not say, though, that because I failed to do the right thing I am going to do the wrong thing and it is right. The whole purpose of Jewish education, the Rabbis have commented, is to make you want to do what you should do, to get you so involved in the issues at hand that you cannot but want to do the right thing. Jewish education is not just to teach you a few rituals. It is to connect you in life so that you will always want to do the right thing. The end result is not as important as learning how we got there and why and how we are doing things. It is not enough just to tell a person to make the Kiddush. After learning six blatt of Gemora on the Kiddush and Shabbos you understand it much deeper and you want to do it. When Jewish learning stops the Jewish religion stops. Many Jews do not want to learn because they do not want to do what they know they should do in many areas of life. I remember when several young South African boys came here a few years ago and they all told me how stupid football was, how slow it was compared to soccer, how it is so complicated with tight ends and flankers, etc. However, after a few years I notice that these same boys are following football more avidly than even American boys. They got into the game. They understand all its intricacies. They understand it thoroughly and they really want to go see it and play it. This is the same thing with many aspects of Judaism. You have to know about it, know its intricacies and then you will want to do it. This is what Layel Shimureem is reaching us. The Jewish people were not free yet, but they had prepared so much for

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it, they had learned so much about it that they could feel and taste it even before they had it. Freedom is sometimes elusive and sometimes people would rather not have it if it means sacrifice, but the Jewish people had prepared for it. That's why even to this day Pesach is a holiday we prepare for more than any other holiday, and they could taste it and would, therefore, appreciate it even more when they were given it. In life many times many people are failures because they do not attack their tasks with enthusiasm, with drive. They do not feel inside that the tasks they are doing are important or worthwhile or interesting and, therefore, they only go through the motions and they fail. There is a very strange Medrash which says that the blood the Jewish people put on the door the night before they were to leave Egypt contained not only the blood of the lamb but also the blood of circumcision. The lamb, of course, was a symbol of Egypt culture. The people worshipped the lamb especially at that time of the year. Even today the sign of the Zodiac for that time of the year is Aries, a fancy word of lamb. The Jewish people had to reject the pagan false concepts of Egypt. That's why the blood of the lamb had to be used. But, it is not enough just to be against things. Unfortunately, there are many Jews today who are only Jews because they are against things, not because they are for Judaism. They remain Jews only because of anti-Semitism. They remain Jews only because they are against the false ideas of the outside world, but they, themselves, do not really believe in Judaism. In fact, they probably have even negative views about it. That is not enough to be against something in order to accomplish important and worthwhile things. You must be for something. The Jews, before they could get freedom, had to be against slavery and the Egyptian culture, and they also had to be for Judaism. That's why this strange Medrash says that

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the blood of circumcision was placed along with the blood of the lamb on the door. The blood of the lamb stands for negative rejection. The blood of the circumcision stands for a positive commitment to Jewish values. In our day and age, unfortunately, there are not enough people who are for things. The Jewish people celebrated a Seder even before they left Egypt celebrating their freedom because internally they were already free. Internally it was already theirs. They had rejected Egyptian slavery and had believed in Jewish goals. They celebrated even before they were free physically because mentally and spiritually they were already free. This made possible their physical redemption. Today when we attack tasks we must be filled with enthusiasm and belief in our task otherwise we will not succeed. Anticipation and preparation are more important than the task, itself. That's why Jewish learning is so important and critical. The story about a man who was walking down a dark alley and was beset by a bandit who wanted his money. He fought with the bandit for over an hour. The bandit finally overcame him and said, "Give me your wallet." When he opened it there was only 50¢ in it. He said, "Why did you fight for over an hour for 50¢?" The man replied, "I didn't fight over the 50¢. I thought you wanted the \$100 in my shoe." It is not inner things that people can see that are the most important. That determines whether or not we will be a success.

# How Free Can We Be

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Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

Many times people come to me and say, "Rabbi, you have to help me. I feel trapped. Things are caving in all around me. I am not in control. I do not know what is happening. I feel powerless, and I want to gain some feeling of freedom and independence. I feel like I am a pawn, a robot. I am not the true me. I want to feel free." Usually, the people who come to me with this feeling are suffering from a midlife crisis. They wake up to the fact that they are 40 or 45 or 50, and they panic. They feel that they have not lived.

In their youth, they worked hard and got good grades mainly to please their parents. They spent long years in school preparing for a career, and then after they embarked upon a career, they got married. They, again, had to put in long hours in order to be a professional success and to support their families. Suddenly, they feel trapped. Is this what life is all about, hard work, constant effort? They feel they have never had freedom. They want it. Many times these people actually throw over their families and even their professions in order to try to be free and to find out who they really are. Unfortunately for them, most of the time they find out that who they really are is the person they were before they threw everything over. They then frantically try to regain what they had given up, and find, much to their chagrin, that in most instances it is very difficult and, many times, impossible. They realize now that their quest for a feeling of freedom was an illusion, and that they really felt the best when they had definite goals and people to work for who needed them.

Freedom is a difficult proposition. In fact, modern man has been going in two directions on the subject for at least the past 100 years. On

the one hand we have been proclaiming that we all must be free to do what we want, when we want, how we want, while, on the other hand, we have been championing philosophical materialism which states that man is only the product of cause and effect, and that we really have no freedom at all. Just as when we throw a ball into the air we can determine where and how it will land by filling in a scientific formula, so, too, when we deal with man all we need to know is the differing forces working on him in order to calculate how he will act. You apply certain forces and his actions are inevitable. Materialism, in a philosophical sense, does not mean that we are all interested in getting Cadillacs and swimming pools and big houses. It means that there are no forces working on us except the forces that can be seen and that these forces can be determined in the same way that we determine the forces that act upon the a-beam of a birdge we are building.

In the Torah portion, Bo, we learn how the Jewish people gained their freedom from Egypt. At the same time, we learn something very strange. We learn how the first Commandment which was given to the Jewish people was the commandment to construct a calendar, and not just any calendar, but a lunar calendar. We are told "Ha-Chodesh Haze Lochem" "this month is for you". Later on we learn "V'hoyo Lochem", "and it shall be to you". The Rabbis interpret this to mean that the Sanhedrin was to determine the dates for the festivals in Judaism and were to declare the new moons. In Biblical and early Talmudic times, the Sanhedrin fixed the new moons by actual observation and the dates of the new moons were sent out by messengers from Jerusalem to the surrounding countries. A lunar month is  $29\frac{1}{2}$  days. Since there is no such thing as a half a day in nature, some months had to be 29 days and some months had to be 30 days. The

Rabbis were able to manipulate the calendar so that Yom Kippur never fell on a Friday or a Sunday.

The reason that this Commandment of constructing a calendar was so important was because it explains what freedom is all about. Fixing the calendar is really a paradigm of man's freedom in the world. Ultimate time is fixed but there is still a role for man to play in it. In determining the individual months we can control when the holidays occur. There is a freedom within order. The Sanhedrin could change when the holidays occurred by many days by how they arranged the calendar. Their control of leap years, which occur seven out of every nineteen years when we add a whole month to make sure that the lunar calendar, which contains only 354 days, would jibe with the solar calendar of  $365\frac{1}{4}$  days, gave the Rabbis even greater leeway in determining when the holidays occurred.

This idea of freedom within order is very similar to the findings of modern science where scientific laws are conceived of as probabilities and not absolutes. The second law of thermodynamics is a probability. We do not know what an individual electron is going to do. Scientific laws are like weather forecasts which predict that the chances for rain are 60%, 80%, 90%. Most scientific laws are like this, too, except that the chances given can be 99.99%. There is then a certain amount of play in all scientific laws. There is now, once again, a place for G-d in science. G-d can intervene in the world without seeming to intervene. The basic scientific law holds, but on a subatomic level things are not predictable. This fits exactly the Jewish view of freedom. The first Commandment that G-d gave us was the Commandment of the calendar in order to emphasize this fact. It was to show us what freedom is

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and how we are to use it. This example of the calendar was meant to show us that not everything was determined. We could still determine when the holidays occur. However, not everything was possible either.

There were still only  $365\frac{1}{4}$  days in a solar calendar year and still only  $29\frac{1}{2}$  days in the lunar month. There is, though, still enough ambiguity in the system so that we can, within ~~the~~ limits, manipulate the calendar.

Freedom with order. This is the Jewish definition of freedom. We cannot free ourselves from <sup>the</sup> restraints of time. We are mortal. We age and we die. We are subject to all sorts of hormonal pressures. We need others. We have intense drives and ambitions and compelling needs.

However, they do not completely determine us. Within this framework we can make innumerable decisions which can add immeasurably to the quality of our life and our well-being. However, we cannot <sup>✓</sup>alter absolutely our human condition. We cannot act at 45 or 50 as if we <sup>were</sup> ~~are~~ 18 or 20. Our bodies cannot take it and our emotions cannot take it and we will end up, most of the time, much worse off than before. We have the ability to manipulate the calendar, but we cannot make Yom Kippur come out in the spring or Pesach come out in the summer. We human beings are 90% or maybe even 99% pre-programmed. However, that 10% or 1% area of our lives in which we can make choices and in which we can act is very important. Anyone who looks at a well-groomed man or woman knows this. Washing the face and combing the hair or putting on makeup or standing up straight is less than 1% of the total physical appearance, but it makes such a difference.

In the Hebrew language we have many words which, when pushed to their extremes, change from a positive to a negative concept. For example,

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the word "Kodesh", which means to consecrate or sanctify, can, when this concept is pushed too far, end up to mean a prostitute. In ancient days both men and women would act as prostitutes for different temples and all proceeds from their activities were given to the temples. When a person <sup>PUSHES</sup> pushes the concept of consecration, self-sacrifice, too far he ends up by destroying himself. These people became living human sacrifices to their gods. The same is true of the word "Tahor". This word means pure, but it can also mean to whitewash. These words in the Hebrew language illustrate an important concept, that words or ideas pushed too far destroy. They do not build.

Exaggerated ideas of man's freedom or man's dependence crush a person.

They do not enhance his life. Those people who come to me complaining that life is crushing them have not learned either how to make positive choices in the 1% or 10% areas of life where they can, or they have an exaggerated sense of what freedom is, and they want to be free entirely from their own biological, chemical, and acknowledged moral restraints.

When a person shucks off his family and his obligations at midlife, he is not exercising freedom. He is just preparing himself to enter a new slavery. What he or she would be <sup>best to</sup> more advised to do would be to stay within the framework that he or she is in and learn how to exercise the many options that are still there open for him or her. We can, within any framework, determine many things, but freedom does not mean that we can determine everything.

# Distinguishing Between Needs & Wants

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Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

Bo

One of the major problems that we face today is how to distinguish between what we want and what we need. Not everything that we want is something that we need. It is hard to distinguish between the two. When we were children our parents would do this for us. Many times when we were children we would go into a supermarket, grab a candy bar, and say, "I want this. I want this." Our mother would take it from us, put it back on the shelf, and say, "You don't need it," and that would end the matter. But now how do we determine what is it that we need, and what it is that we just want? Wants and needs are two separate things. It is difficult to determine whether something is actually a necessity or just a wish. Many marriages have foundered because the couple could not determine jointly what it was they needed and what it was they just wanted. One spouse would think something was a necessity, and the other would think it was only a want. In life it is difficult to tell what is really a need and what is only a wish.

In the Torah portion Bo we learn about the last plagues which were inflicted on Egypt before Pharaoh finally let the Jewish people go. After the seventh plague, the plague of hail, Pharaoh was told by Moshe that if he continued to refuse to let the Jewish people go, then G-d would send an eighth plague, <sup>the</sup> a plague of locusts, that would eat up everything that was left from the hail. Pharaoh did not want to let the Jewish people go, but his own servants came to him and said, "How long will these people be as a trap for us? Send them so that they can serve their G-d." Pharaoh then called back Moshe and he said, "Who will go to serve your G-d?" Moshe said, "We will go with our youth, our elders, our sons and our daughters, our sheep

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and our cattle." Pharaoh got mad and said, "Not so. Only the men will go." Pharaoh did not think it necessary that the whole family leave in order to serve G-d. He would agree to only send the men. Pharaoh was determined that only he could dictate what was necessary for the Jewish people to serve G-d.

The same thing happened again after the ninth plague, the plague of darkness. Pharaoh called Moshe and said, "Go. Worship G-d." He was ~~even~~ willing this time to even let them take their wives and children. He only said that the sheep and cattle had to stay behind. Moshe refused his offer saying that they needed the cattle in order to offer sacrifices to G-d. Pharaoh said, "This is entirely unnecessary. I will let all the people go but the cattle will stay behind." Once again Pharaoh felt only he could determine how the Jewish people could serve G-d. Then Pharaoh told Moshe, "Because you are so stubborn, you will never see my face again, because the day you see my face again you will die." Moshe agreed that he would never see Pharaoh's face again, but before he left he warned Pharaoh that another plague, the tenth plague, the killing of the firstborn, would be brought upon Egypt, and this time not only would Pharaoh allow the Jewish people to go worship G-d, he would expel them from Egypt.

Pharaoh tried to impose his own value system upon the Jewish people. He confused needs with wants. He felt that he knew best what these people needed. This is the same attitude that many times we find among people who employ others. They think they know what is best for them, even in their <sup>personal</sup> lives. They don't really need health insurance. They really don't need guaranteed income. After all,

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they will just spend it. What do they need more money for? People in power many times try to impose their own values on those who are dependant on them. This, in itself, is a form of slavery. Pharaoh would not give the Jewish people credit for being able to make the correct distinction between needs and wants.. Pharaoh felt that the Jewish people were genetically incapable of making such distinctions. They could never become mature human beings. Children do confuse needs and wants. They do confuse their priorities, but we believe that all sane adults do have the capacity to distinguish between needs and wants.

This perhaps explains, too, why the first commandment that was given to the Jewish people was to set up a calendar, a calendar which was dependent upon both the sun and moon, a calendar which was also originally dependant on the visual sighting of the moon by witnesses. Man had to be involved even in determining time. Even when it came to nature, man's input was necessary. We have something to say even in delineating our time. We get to set our priorities within time. The moon waxes and wanes. So do our fortunes. We have to remember this. Although our days are limited, we are not passive beings subject to fate. We can, in many ways, control our destinies. This teaches us that we are free, but we are not totally free, that life is not a complete mathematical model in which we can <sup>do</sup> anything we want. We are subject to time and the passing of time. On the other hand, even though the earth revolves around the sun for 365 days a year, these 365 days can be divided up many ways. We have the freedom to grow, the freedom to mold, to a large <sup>extent</sup> extend, our time, especially the use of our time.

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It is up to us to use this freedom by determining carefully what we really need in life. Just as certain things are constant needs (that is, of course, what the sun tell us; the sun rises and falls; we need to sleep and eat every day), there are certain things that are not constant every day occurrences. They happen at more random intervals, like the rise and fall of the moon. These needs, too, are not exactly precise, but we can spot them and incorporate them into our lives knowing that they are things we need and not just wants. Freedom demands that we make this choice and not have others make this choice for us.

Therefore, it is outrageous when people who are in positions of power treat those dependant on them with contempt and feel that they know what is best for them. That is the problem, too, with much of our welfare system where people in power feel that, because a person is poor, they can dictate to him what is necessary and what it not necessary. When a person loses a good paying job through no fault of his own, he has not lost his maturity. He has not lost his dignity. He has not lost his ability to discriminate between needs and wants. He does not become a child. He should not be forced to sacrifice real needs for temporary wants.

Much of Judaism is meant to teach us this. That is why in this sedra, too, we learn what the Jewish people had to do before they could gain freedom. They had to learn how to distinguish between wants and needs, how to make priorities. They had to learn that we all need <sup>integrity.</sup> ~~truth.~~  
We all need dignity. One of the first priorities of life is not to

be forced to sacrifice our integrity. That's why the Jewish people had to slaughter the lamb. The lamb was a symbol of falsehood. Jews who bowed down to the lamb were destroying themselves, being false to themselves and their beliefs. We could in no way believe that the spirit of Aries was incarnate in the lamb, that this lamb should be worshipped because spirits inhabited it, and that these spirits had great power. This is an abhorrant idea to Jews. We must live with dignity. Anything which compromises our dignity, our self-understanding, we must reject.

Secondly, family is important. That is why we had to gather as a family to make a seder on the eve of our Exodus. It is better to live on matzah and be surrounded by loved ones than to live with millions of dollars all alone, hated and ostracized, because of the terrible tricks you have played on your family and friends. Sacrificing everyone for wealth is not discriminating between needs and wants. Unfortunately, in this country many people sacrifice real needs for wants. Because they desire to be rich, they sacrifice their integrity, their family, their honesty. This is wrong. That is, too, probably why the lamb had to be eaten whole. Certain things you cannot compromise. When it comes to ~~truth~~, integrity, honesty, you cannot compromise.

Later in this Torah portion, too, we learn how we are not to choose puffery, fakery, over reality. This is another reason why before they left Egypt they had to eat matzah. Bread is just puffed up matzah, matzah filled with hot air, things which rise beyond what they really are. We must look at the reality of things, strip away the appearance. Today so many people judge things by appearance and not by reality.

Finally, too, we have to realize that certain things are worth struggling for. This was symbolized by the putting of blood on the door. The rabbis tell us the blood on the door contained not only the blood of the lamb but the blood of circumcision. In Judaism we believe that we have to struggle not only against falsehood, but we also must *struggle* be for truth. We are not only against things; we are also for things. We must be positive Jews who believe Judaism has much to give the world. We need to make this a better world. If not, we will lapse into depression or worse.

We must always differentiate in this world between wants and needs. We need our integrity. We need our self-respect. We need family. We need to know that we can make a difference in the world. Unless we feel we are important, unless we feel that G-d needs us, cares for us, and is concerned about us, we will find that it will be very difficult for us to make it in this world even if we have a lot of money. True, we need a certain amount of money in order to make our way in the world but beyond this amount, money is only a want not a need. We need to know that we are important, that we have a role to play in the world. We need to know that we have dignity and self-respect so we are not filled with self-hate.

That is why this Torah portion ends by telling us about putting on tephillin. The tephillin speaks about the marriage between man and G-d. It was not enough for the Jewish people to be free. They also needed to know that they were important. They needed to know that G-d counts on all of us so, therefore, we can be counted on. They

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had to know that they had dignity and self-respect, to know that they could make the proper decisions when it comes to what is a need and what is a want. Pharaoh thought that his slaves were slaves, that they could never rise so that they could determine what was a need and what was a want. He patronized us the same way that many people patronize other who they feel are beneath them. This is wrong. Every <sup>Same</sup> ~~same~~ adult has the capacity to distinguish between needs and wants. <sup>Everyone</sup> ~~They~~ should ~~all~~ be given a chance to demonstrate this. What we all need most in life is family, dignity, self-respect, and the knowledge that we are important and that our life counts. Let us all hope and pray that we will always recognize this so that we can live meaningful lives.

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In the Torah portion Bo we learn about the exodus from Egypt. We learn how, after the ten plagues, Pharaoh relented, and not only did he allow the Jewish people to go worship G-d for three days in the desert, he expelled them for good. He did not want to have them in his kingdom anymore. Later he was to change his mind, but in this Torah portion he thrust the Jewish people out of Egypt. We know that the Jewish people held a seder on the night of the 15th to celebrate their freedom. It is hard to understand why the Jewish people made a seder to celebrate their freedom on the night of the 15th because they actually did not leave Egypt until the morning of the 15th. We know every Jewish holiday starts from the night before. Shabbos starts on Friday night. Every holiday starts on the eve before. The eve of the 15th is when the Jewish people had their seder, when they celebrated their freedom, but they were not free yet. They did not leave until the next morning. G-d wanted them to leave in the daylight so that everybody could see that they did not sneak out of Egypt, but that they left with their heads up high and that they were, in fact, told by the Egyptians to leave, and they left with dignity and respect and did not leave running out under the cover of darkness. But if this is so, why was it that they celebrated their freedom before they actually had their freedom? What's more, we know that when G-d appeared to Abraham and told him that the Jewish people would be given the land of Israel, He also told Abraham that the Jewish people would be slaves for 430 in the land of Egypt. The rabbis explain that meant 430 years from the time when G-d appeared to Abraham at the treaty between the pieces. Thirty years later Isaac was born, and that the Jewish people, all told, spent 210 years in Egypt, and that that very night, the 15th of Nisan, was when the 430 years were up, that the Jewish people actually, to fulfill G-d's promise literally, should have left on the evening and not during the day, but G-d wanted the Jewish people to leave with pride and dignity

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so that the whole world could see that Pharaoh, himself, had succumbed to G-d and had given up and had told the people to leave, that they did not leave in the middle of the night because there was some confusion in Egypt, but they left because Pharaoh told them to leave.

In the Torah it is interesting to note that there is a special Posuk which speaks about this night of the 15th as "Layil Sheemurim - the night of watching". "It was a night of watching unto the Lord for bringing them out from the land of Egypt. This same night is the night of watching unto the Lord for all the Children of Israel throughout the generations." The rabbis ask, what does this mean? Some explain that this means that on this night we Jewish people are specially protected throughout all the generations. That is why it is a custom not to say the Shma or the whole Shma when we go to bed on that night because we are no longer afraid, as we are on other nights, of the terrible persecutions which used to fall upon us and which still do fall upon some Jews throughout the world.

What's more, that is one of the reasons why we open the door to Elijah. We are not afraid that we have to bolt our door tight on this night because we feel we have G-d's special protection. Other rabbis explain that this was the night that G-d was watching for, that G-d was eagerly anticipating this night, and, therefore, this was a night of watching for G-d. Other rabbis say, no, this was the night of anticipation of the Jewish people, that the Jewish people anticipated this night for a long time. Others say this was the night that we look for eagerly every year. That is why we prepare the house for Pesach. That's is why we get rid of all the chometz. It takes us several weeks to complete our cleaning, that we have to make preparations for the seder, so, therefore, we Jews are looking eagerly forward to Pesach, and that is why it is called the night of watching.

This still does not explain or answer the question why it was that the Jewish people <sup>we</sup> did not leave on the evening of the 15th, ~~but~~, yet, ~~they~~ celebrated a seder celebrating their freedom when they were not yet free. How come they had a seder celebrating their freedom when they were not yet free? Some rabbis explain that on this night, according to the Medrash, the soul of all the Jews of Egypt, all their souls, went to Jerusalem, and then they came back at the end of that evening and they physically left Egypt the next morning, but their souls had already gone to Jerusalem that night. What does that mean? That means that much of what happens to us in life depends upon our own positive attitude. If we feel that we are free, if we feel that we are as good as everyone else, if we know that we can achieve freedom, then we already are free. There was a very famous essay <sup>by Achad Ha'am</sup> which ~~talked~~ about slavery in the midst of freedom and freedom in the midst of slavery, ~~and he~~ <sup>Wrote</sup> ~~talked~~ about the condition of the Jewish people in eastern and western Europe 100 years ago. The condition of the Jewish people in eastern Europe was very severe. They were persecuted. They were hounded. They could only live in certain areas. They could not occupy certain positions. They could not enter certain professions. They could not engage in certain types of trade. They were harassed. They had special taxes put upon them. We know that their physical condition was not good. They were, in a certain sense, enslaved, but spiritually they were free because they never felt inferior to their gentile neighbors. They knew that they were as good as the Russian czar's people, if not better. They were never culturally enslaved, and so, therefore, they could hold their heads up high. <sup>to themselves that</sup> They said this was just a momentary passing era, but that soon they would be free and soon they would be in Jerusalem. The Jews in western Europe were physically free. They had no restrictions. Culturally they were enslaved. They were afraid people would find out

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they were Jewish. Some even changed their appearance, and some changed their religion. That is what ~~Henry Heilich did~~ <sup>Heine D. Ales</sup> and ~~Die... father~~ did <sup>so</sup> ~~in order~~ that they could get ahead. The Jews, although they were physically free, were spiritually enslaved. ~~Of course, this spiritual enslavement lead eventually to physical enslavement again, that~~ The Jewish people in eastern Europe were, in a certain sense, freer than the Jews were in western Europe. ~~Hitler's onslaught, the Holocaust, proved this analysis correct, that the Jews in western Europe ended up in slavery,~~ <sup>western European Jews</sup> ~~too, and one of the reasons was that they were not culturally-free.~~ They felt inferior.

When we look at the achievements of many people we can see that they were able to achieve things because problems did not overcome them. They were not daunted by difficulties. They always felt they could achieve, and, therefore, they adopted a positive attitude, and, therefore, they did achieve their goals. On the other hand, there are certain people who are blessed with education and wealth who end up miserable failures. Many times it is because they never had self-confidence. They never felt they could overcome. They never felt they could solve their problems, so, therefore, <sup>the vision of the Jews</sup> ~~they had~~ a self-fulfilling prophecy. Because they felt they could not overcome their problems, they did not overcome their problems and could not overcome their problems, while those who felt they could overcome their problems eventually succeeded. In 1948, in spite of all the problems in Eretz Yisroel, the Jews in Israel felt they could overcome their problems even though they were immediately attacked by 7 Arab nations, even though they had terrible problems assimilating and absorbing three times the number of Jews in the society as were originally there. Even though they had terrible problems with famine and food and even water, yet, they had confidence they could overcome their problems.

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Today, unfortunately, we see in the last few years that there are a lot of Jews in Israel and in America who feel that the problems cannot be solved, even though we are in a much stronger position now. They feel that we cannot solve the problems, that we are helpless in front of these problems. Unfortunately, the people who persist in thinking this way will be defeated. The problems will defeat us. We will not defeat the problems. Of course, that is why many people are leaving Israel and why many people do not go to Israel, because they feel the problems are too immense and cannot be solved. That is a negative attitude. When we approach problems we have to feel that we can solve them. The Jews felt they had freedom even before they had freedom, and, therefore, they got their freedom. If they would have thought that freedom was impossible they would never have been able to achieve it. Even with G-d's help you cannot achieve it unless you feel you can achieve it. This is true, too, in the United States where the blacks under Martin Luther King felt they could achieve freedom and they did achieve freedom. There were many who decades before thought it was impossible and they did not even try, but Martin Luther King infused them with the spirit that they could achieve, and they did achieve. This applies to personal life as well. There are many students who doom themselves to failure because they feel it is too hard and they cannot do it. Therefore, it becomes impossible. This does not mean we should adopt a Polyannaish attitude that we can overcome all problems without study, without effort, without looking at reality, without studying the facts. We have to be careful with Arafat in his statements now. We feel that we can overcome. We can achieve. We can eventually achieve peace with Arabs. We have to make sure that we know what we are doing when we see what Arafat is doing in the world. He speaks one way to the United States but speaks another way in Arabic to the Arabs. He tells the Arabs that if they would give him the Palestinian state on the west

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Bank in Gaza this would just be the first step in the destruction of Israel. He also claims that no agreement can be made unless the rights of every Palestinian who wants to go back to Israel proper will be guaranteed that they can all return. If they all return there would be as many Arabs as Jews in Israel and Israel would be destroyed. Yes, we can overcome our problems but we cannot adopt a Polyannaish attitude. It is like a student cannot say he cannot achieve and cannot do because he does not want to study. You have to apply yourself and make the effort. Once you make the effort you can overcome.

That, of course, is why when the Jewish people celebrated the seder they dipped the blood on the door. The blood stood for the lamb and, the rabbis say, also as a symbol of circumcision. The lamb was a symbol of evil in Egypt, a symbol of idolatry. At this time of year in the zodiac we have the sign of the ram, Aries, the lamb. The ancients believed, especially in Egypt, that at this time of year an evil spirit was incarnate in the lamb, and if you touched a lamb you would cause great calamity to come on Egypt, that this evil spirit had to be appeased with terrible rites. We Jews had to kill the lamb to show that it was rank superstition. We also had to be willing to make positive efforts, which is what circumcision stands for, to work ourselves to achieve the goals, to be positive. We have been assured by G-d, as we on that night of watching, that we will get freedom as long as we feel we can achieve it. G-d will help us achieve it. So it is with all worthwhile goals. If we want to achieve peace, good things in life for all humanity and for ourselves, we can with G-d's help as long as we feel that we can.

I am reminded of the story they tell about a boy in class who said a very naughty word. The teacher asked him how he could say such a naughty word and wanted to know where he heard such a thing. The boy said he heard

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it from his father. The teacher said, "I don't care. You still shouldn't say it because you don't know what it means." The boy replied, "Yes, I do know what it means. It means that car will not start." That, of course, is not an appropriate to solve the problem of the car not starting. We have to feel that we can overcome our problems, and we have to feel that because we can overcome our problems we can take appropriate action. We do not have to degenerate into curses and into dejection of pessimism. All our problems we can overcome with G-d's help if we want to overcome them. Let us hope that we all will so that the Mashiach will come.

In the Torah portion Bo we learn about the last three plagues. We learn how after the plague of locusts Pharaoh relents and he agrees to let the Jewish males go to worship G-d, but he would not let the children and women go. Moshe rejects this offer and says, "No, we will all go out." After the plague of darkness Pharaoh relents again, and this time he says, "Oh, all right, the men, women, and children can go but the cattle have to stay here." Moshe rejects that offer and says, "We have to take the cattle with us because we do not know exactly how and what we have to do when we worship G-d." Pharaoh gets very mad at Moshe and Pharaoh says to him, "Go away from me. Be careful not to continue to see my face because the day you will see my face you will die." Moshe said, "And so it shall be as you have spoken. I will not continue more to see your face." Before he leaves he tells him about the plague of the killing of the firstborn which is going to occur imminently. The rabbis explain that when Pharaoh says that "the day you will see my face you will die" does not mean that "you will be handed over to my executioners" or "you will be hounded or persecuted until you die", but it means that Pharaoh was going to turn Moshe over to Dason and Aviron, Moshe's critics among the Jewish people.

Also in this Torah portion we learn how when the Jewish people were to put the blood on the door so that they would not be afflicted with the plague of the killing of the firstborn, it says that, "It shall be this blood for you as a sign on the houses when you are there, and G-d says, 'And I will see the blood and I will pass over you'." The rabbis explain that the blood here was not just the blood of the paschal sacrifice but was also the blood of circumcision, that it was not enough for the Jewish people to be just negative Jews, Jews who were against idolatry, Jews who were against the evils of Egypt, but they also had

to be for something. They had to be for Jewish values. It is not enough just to be against things. We have many Jews even in this country who are opposed to anti-Semitism and fight it to the last drop of their blood, but they, to a certain extent, are anti-Semites themselves. They talk bad about our people. They mock all our customs. They look for bad things to say about the Jewish people. In fact, even some eminent historians among the Jewish people nowadays are actually anti-Jewish, and we find that ~~even among certain of our~~ <sup>especially true about many of the Jews</sup> critics of Israel's actions, etc., ~~that~~ they claim that they are loyal good Jews who would fight, I am sure, all those who would try to destroy us physically but who always try to find fault and measure us by standards which are impossible to apply in the real world.

Finally, we have the question, why does this Torah portion start with the words, "And G-d said to Moshe, 'Bo, come to Pharaoh'." This Torah portion should have started out with, "Lichel Paro, go to Pharaoh." Why does it say "come to Pharaoh"? In my mind it seems that these 3 questions about why does the Torah portion begin by saying "come to Pharaoh" instead of "go to Pharaoh" and the question of why it is that the rabbis in the Yerushalmi and in the Targum would say that Pharaoh was going to turn Moshe over to Dason and Aviron and this is what is meant that if Moshe would see Pharaoh's face again he would be killed, that he would be turned over to his own enemies in the Jewish people, and finally why does it say that we had to have two drops <sup>from</sup> of two sources of the blood that were put on the door, that that blood had to contain not only the blood of the paschal lamb, which was a symbol, of course, of the Egyptian evil and idolatry, but also the blood of circumcision.

The answer to all these questions, I believe, can be found in the fact

that Moshe was very discouraged at one time because he saw that he was not making progress. He saw that the Jewish people had even turned against him. In fact, at the end of the first Torah portion in the Book of Shmos we learn how Moshe was ready to give up, how the people had said that "you have made us stink in the eyes of Pharaoh", how the people had said that it was ~~not~~ use going on, that things were getting worse, not better. Moshe had become very discouraged, and it was only after G-d had intervened that he was able to resume his mission. The hardest thing to contend with when you are trying to do something positive is the criticism from the people that you are trying to help. That, of course, is why Pharaoh said what Pharaoh said. Pharaoh said, "Moshe, I will make it impossible for you to continue your mission. I will make you want to give up. I will make you, to a certain extent, die in the sense that you will not want to continue at all. You will be *given over* <sup>to</sup> ~~in~~ the clutches of Dason and Aviron, your antagonists." These are the same people who even after Moshe took the Jewish people out of Egypt said, "Let's appoint another head and let's go back to Egypt." These were the people who were always carping at Moshe, always snapping at his heels, yet, Moshe had to not only believe that slavery was bad, but he also had to believe that there was a bris, a covenant, between G-d and the Jewish people and that it was important that the Jewish people live to fulfill the covenant even though there were certain Jews who were constantly criticizing, even though there were Jews who were telling him to desist, even though there were Jews who were trying to say that the ~~the~~ <sup>the whole</sup> enterprise was worthless and stupid but that they should just give up and submit to slavery and maybe things would get better by themselves. Moshe had to contend with this. It is just as today many times when people are involved in a marriage that the worst antagonist

as far as the marriage is concerned is the spouse, is that many times we destroy the very institution that we need in order to fulfill ourselves, like carping on small, little details when what we want to do is win our point in our argument but by winning our point in the argument we actually destroy the institution of marriage. Many times, too, like Dason and Aviron, by trying to jockey for position and trying to get power among the Jewish people we destroy the whole will of the Jewish people even to be free. We destroy the whole covenant between G-d and man by showing that the Jewish people can never live up to the covenant, that it is ridiculous to live up to the covenant. We see that happening many times. It is true that sometimes different momentary pain is so great that many times one spouse will lash out at another, and one spouse will say, "Why should I get married? What do I need this for?" They do not realize, of course, that the alternative is much worse. When a marriage does split up the woman is usually left with very little money. Seventy-five percent of the money goes to the man. The man is left without the ability to see his children, in most instances, and both of them are going to be in a very bad state. They have to keep in mind that the purpose of the marriage in the first place was to raise a Jewish family, to allay their own loneliness, to realize that they have much in common otherwise they would not have gotten married in the first place, and to try to smooth over all those differences that they do have so they can make the marriage work. There must be a commitment to the idea of marriage, itself, if the marriage is to survive.

The same thing is true here. Moshe had to maintain a commitment to the idea that the covenant between G-d and Israel was important and

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even though individual Israelites did not feel up to it and individual Israelite Jews were trying to undermine the covenant, but still it was worthwhile. Pharaoh was telling Moshe, "Listen, Moshe, you may think that you are going to succeed but you are not. You are going to be destroyed by your own people. I am going to turn you over to your own people." It is true that sometimes when a person is suffering from the flu it seems terrible, the pain seems excruciating and you feel you are going to die, but you are not going to die. You are going to get over it. It's a minor thing. On the other hand, sometimes you have cancer and the cancer does not have any symptoms. I had a friend who had a form a leukemia and he almost no symptoms whatsoever until the very end. Perhaps if he would have gone to the doctor sooner, maybe he would still be alive, but many times we overact to minor, little occurrences, little irritations, and the Jewish people at the time of Moshe had to rise to look to the covenant. It is just like today there are many people who criticize Israel for no real reason. There are people who write books like From Beirut to Jerusalem, which in effect will destroy Israel, that people look at Israel and they forget that Israel was created for a purpose. What was that purpose? That purpose was to save Jews, that there is a big difference between people who are helpless and have no place to go and people who are helpless and have a place to go. It is true Israel is not perfect, and it is true maybe some things could have been done better, and it is true that the Palestinians are suffering, but the Palestinians have a place to go. They can go to Jordan or Lebanon or Egypt or Saudia Arabia or Iraq. They have places to go. Countries will take them in, but if there was no Israel there would be no place for the Jews to go. Today we see how true this is. We see what is happening in the Soviet Union where

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there have been pogroms and where there have been openly anti-Semitic incidents. Dan Rather and the "New York Times" who have not been so favorable to Israel have reported on many anti-Semitic incidents in Russia. The Russian Jews know that they have no place in Russia, and they have to have a place to go. Our country is not going to take them in. We do not have Israel so that American Jews can puff out their chests and take congressmen there and show how much more superior Israel is to all the rest of the world. We do not have Israel just so we can sing Hatikvah and revel in the heroic exploits of the Israeli army. We have Israel so that we can save lives. We have to always remember what the purpose and the goal is, just like in a marriage you have to remember what the purpose and goal is. The purpose and goal is to have an institution in which you are able to raise good Jewish children, where you are able to allay some of your own loneliness, where you are able to fulfill certain personal and sexual drives. It is not going to be perfection, and Israel is not going to be perfection either, but Israel is a complete necessity, a 100% necessity, in this modern world. We have to remember that we need Israel. It is not like some rabbi said when the Intifada started here in America, "Oh, if Israel has to do those things, who needs Israel?" We do not need Israel just for American Jews to be swollen with pride. We need Israel so that lives can be saved. One million, two million Russian Jewish lives are in danger now, and that is why we need Israel. We should always remember that.

That, of course, is why at the beginning of this Torah portion G-d said to Moshe, "Come to Pharaoh", not "Go to Pharaoh" because He said, "Come with Me to Pharaoh," because when things get bad and when things get dark and when there are even critics within our own ranks who will tell

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us to desist from great enterprises, to desist from trying to keep the covenant and trying to make it strong, to desist from having us keep Israel strong and Israel alive, to desist from keeping our marriages alive and strong and tell us to give up, that G-d says, "Come with Me. I will help you. Moshe, don't worry. The pharaohs of the world are not going to be able to turn you over to your own internal critics because you have Me. You have Me to help you." That, of course, is a very important lesson, that we Jews should never feel that we are abandoned. G-d is with us, and G-d will help us to maintain the covenant that we have between Him and us, and that G-d has told us that we should continue in these efforts even though there will be Jews within our own ranks who will criticize and make us feel that it is no use to continue. It is very important that we find the inner strength to overcome problems. Even in marital problems with the other spouse carping so much and complaining so much and threatening the marriage, the spouse will eventually thank us for saving the marriage. Those Jews, too, who are the most vocal critics will realize, too, how important it was to stand up to various pressures so that Israel can stay alive. After all, the Arab goal is not to help the Palestinians. The Arab goal is to remove the shame they feel at being defeated by a craven, cowardly people, and that is the way they describe us Jews. How could these powerful warriors be defeated by such a downtrodden people? It is a shame. That is the way Saudia Arabia always refers to Israel, as "our shame". Israel was not created so we can sing the Hatikvah and revel vicariously in its exploits. Israel was created to save Jews, and now is the time that we have to amass our resources and do everything we can to save the Jews of Russia. May we be worthy of this charge, and may the Jews of Russia certainly and surely and swiftly be saved.

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I am reminded of the story they tell about a man who was walking on the street when he was accosted by a robber who said, "Give me your money." He said no, and the robber did not have any weapons but started to fight with him. The man wrestled him for a whole hour, and finally the robber got ahold of his wallet and he took out 50¢. The robber said, "You fought for a whole hour for 50 cents? I don't understand it." The man said, "Oh, is that all you wanted? If I had known you wanted 50 cents I would have given it to you. I thought you wanted the \$100 in my shoe." My friends, singing the Hatikvah and taking congressmen to Israel is the 50 cents. The real reason we need Israel is to save Jewish lives. May we always save Jewish lives. Amen.

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In the Torah portion Bo we have recounted the last three plagues. In the Torah portion Bo opens with the words, "And G-d spoke to Moshe, 'Come to Pharaoh because I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants in order that I might put these My signs in his midst'." It's very interesting that the Torah portion we read last week and the Torah portion we read this week and the Torah portion we are going to read next week seem to fit current events. Last week, too, we learned about how the stubbornness of Pharaoh caused the plagues to come upon him. Of course, last week we learned how Saddam Hussein would not accept any peace offers at all, and in this Torah portion we learn how Egypt, itself, was completely wrecked because of all these plagues and how eventually the firstborn of Egypt were all destroyed. Up to now there were no deaths but now there were many deaths in Egypt. In fact, some people explain that the firstborn included more than the firstborn. It also included the very best of Egypt. In next week's Torah portion, Beshalach, we are going to learn about the destruction of the Egyptian army and how Israel was free then for many, many years from any threat and because of Pharaoh's hard heartedness G-d's greatness was perceived throughout the whole world and was deemed also by the whole world very important that Israel be left alone. Let us hope and pray that as these Torah portions unfold that in our current events the same message will come home, that the armies of Saddam Hussein will be completely defeated and that Israel will be left alone and the whole world will recognize G-d's hand in all these things.

In this week's Torah portion we learn about the last plague. We learn that this last plague was different from all the other plagues. Now it is true that the first nine plagues could be explained naturally. After all, the plague of blood could be explained similar to what we have here in Texas and Florida. There was a red tide and because of the red tide the frogs could not live in the river so they had to come up on dry land, and because they were on the dry land they brought with them all sorts of vermin and the animals did not have anything to eat so they

came into the city, and because the wild animals came into the city there was a cattle plague, and then because of the unsanitary conditions people developed boils, and then, of course, because you have certain types of climatic conditions you had unusual hail storms and these conditions also brought locusts. There could have been a volcanic eruption which brought the darkness. These are the natural plagues. They could be explained naturally, but the last plague could not be because we know no disease that attacks just the firstborn. So there is a difference between the first nine plagues and the last plague.

There is, however, another difference that is emphasized in this Torah portion between the first nine plagues and the last plague. That difference is that in the first nine plagues Israel is completely unaffected. Israel did not have to make any provisions. Israel was not attacked during these plagues. The plagues had no effect on Israel at all, but when it came to the last plague the Jewish people are told that they have to make certain provisions and if they do not make these provisions they, themselves, are liable to be harmed, too. It says, therefore, they had to gather together in their homes and put the blood of the lamb on the door and the rabbis say that also included the blood of circumcision. They had to sit inside their homes, inside their sealed rooms, and make certain types of preparations otherwise the destroyer would hit them, too. That is, of course, the name for Passover. The destroyer passed over their houses and did not harm them. It says, "And you will not permit this destroyer to come into your houses to plague you but you have to do these certain things." Why is it that Israel now had to take precautions? After all, they did not have to take any precautions in their previous plagues. Why did they have to take precautions in this plague? It is also interesting to note how similarly the precautions that they had to take in those days are similar to precautions that the Jews in Israel have to take today against Saddam Hussein's reputed gas missile attack. There they, too, have to

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sit in their homes among their families and have to tape up an inside room to make sure the gas does not come there and put on gas masks, etc. Here they, too, had to be in an inside room and take some precaution so the destroyer would not come and destroy them. Why weren't they exempt from this plague, too? Also, when Moshe tells Pharaoh about this plague he tells that it will come at approximately midnight. Why did he have to tell Pharaoh the time of the plague? In all the other plagues he did not tell him any time. He just said it would come and in a few days it would come. Why did he have to tell him exactly the time it would come at this time?

Well, my friends, there is a big difference between the first nine plagues and the last plague. The first nine plagues were not lethal. They were not meant to kill anybody. Undoubtedly people might have died during the first nine plagues people who could not take that brackish water that had the taste of blood, those that were frightened of frogs, but basically the first nine plagues were not meant to kill anybody. If a few people got killed it was actually more or less accidental. It was incidental, but the whole purpose of the last plague was to kill people. Therefore, there was a big difference between the last plague and the first plagues. My friends, anytime that there is blood unleashed in the world then we Jews are always blamed. Look what happened in Germany. Germany before the first world war was the height of culture. In fact, the German Jews thought so much of German culture that there was actually a battle of languages in the land of Israel. There was a great movement to make German the official language of Israel and not Hebrew. There was an attempt to make the Technian teach only in German and all the public school teach only in German. It was defeated but narrowly. All the German Jews thought Germany had discovered the fount of culture and Jews held such high positions in Germany. They were so respected in the arts and sciences and government and law and medicine, any field you could think of was filled with Jews. In fact,

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the Jews in Germany were similar to the Jews in America today, but then what happened? The Germans lost the first world war and the Germans could not understand how they lost that war. No allied soldier ever stood on German soil. Germany had conquered Russia and Russia had ceded them most of the Ukraine and Germany controlled large parts of France, etc. Why did Germany lose the war? The reason they lost was that the generals decided to give up because they saw that American soldiers were pouring in and although it was possible they might have won there was so much suffering and so forth and they were like chess people. They thought it was not worth it so they gave up. They thought they would have an easy peace but a harsh peace was impressed upon them. Germans could not understand how they shed all that blood, how they lost all that blood. Someone had to be responsible for it, so Hitler came on the scene. Hitler came using French theories, not even German theories. It was the French who had developed the anti-Semitic theories. In fact, to this very day there is an anti-Semitic party in France that routinely gets 10% of the vote. Jews are blamed because any time there is blood Jews are blamed. Jews have to be very careful when there is blood because we are blamed for all these problems. The same thing is happening in Russia today. The blood of communism. So many people are killed because of communism in Russia, and who is getting blamed for that? The Jews. That is why Jews are leaving Russia in such great numbers, not just because they are such ardent Zionists. I wish they would leave because they are ardent Zionists, but they are leaving because they know they are in danger. Someone is going to have to pay for all that blood that was shed under communism. They are so afraid that they are willing to go even into Israel even when there are rocket attacks going on there. They are still pouring into Israel because we know what happens. When there is blood in the world it is we Jewish people who pay for it. Therefore, we know that we have to protect ourselves. We have to gather together within our families, and we have to put the blood of circumcision and the blood of the lamb on the door. What does the lamb mean? The lamb stands

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for the false notions of the world because during the time of Passover the sign of the zodiac was Aries, and the sign of Aries was the lamb. They believed that the spirits were incarnate in the lamb and then they would have control over these spirits and could then wreak havoc on the world, that somehow if they got hold of this type of power they could impress their will upon the world, and we shatter these type of dreams. We say that without a moral base, without correct views on how to deal with man compassionately and sympathetically you are going to be shattered. You are going to be defeated. People do not like to hear that. Hitler said we were a sentimental people. Saddam Hussein, himself, thinks that with his power he can impose his will upon everyone. The same thing goes on today. Saddam Hussein has so many problems now with America and the allies attacking him, yet, he still has enough energy to send his missiles against Tel Aviv because it was a Jew who was to blame for all the problems of the Arabs. When blood is shed in the Arab world, who is to be blamed? It is the Jew. When Saddam attacks Kuwait it is not Saddam and it is not Kuwait, it is the Jew. Anytime there is blood in the world we are the ones who pay the price.

What is our defense against these things? How will this skip over us, pass over us, that is, if we do not believe in the lies of the people who say that it is our fault? It is just like today you have many Jewish columnists even who say that if Israel would only give up this or that everything would be all right, but it would not be all right because we are the scapegoat of the world, and when the world does not want to take upon itself the responsibility for its actions they blame the Jews. The Germans did not want to take upon themselves responsibility for their actions so they blamed the Jews. When the Russians do not want to take responsibility for their actions they blame the Jews. We see that even in certain groups in America here today. It is all the Jews' fault. If anybody listens to the talk shows you can hear that theme echoed over and over again. It is only

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the Jew. If we would get rid of the Jew we would live in peace and harmony with the Arabs, etc.

Today we are honoring a man on his birthday who saw this firsthand, who in 1939 when he had his bar mitzvah could not conceive of what was going to happen, but the Germans swept into Poland in September 1939, put him in a ghetto until 1944, and then from 1944 until the end of the war he was in Auschwitz, but, yet, when he came out of Auschwitz after seeing all that horror, after losing his father and mother and two brothers and almost all his family, having been treated worse than any dog, having seen his comrades die, having been forced to do all sorts of terrible work with no food and with hardly any shelter, yet he came out and started a home again. He made sure that the world would understand that the Jewish spirit could not be beaten, that the Jewish spirit would come back. Where do we get the strength to overcome the attacks of our enemies? It is when we establish families, when we once again return to our roots, when we once again return to our traditions. That, of course, is what the blood of circumcision means, that the Jew is able to overcome these problems because he knows that his mission is to improve himself and to improve the world even though the world many times does not appreciate this and tries to get away from this message by attacking the messenger, the Jew, yet ultimately this message will prevail. This message will bring the ultimate Geula. Why did Moshe tell Pharaoh that redemption was going to come at midnight? Because that is the darkest time in the middle of the night when you do not know whether it will get light again, yet, out of that darkness comes great light, that when things look hopeless dramatically everything turns around. After the Holocaust there was a rejuvenation of the Jewish spirit. We saw the rebirth of Israel. That is why all the Jews here are so concerned about Israel because that is the symbol of our hope. That is the symbol that we can get out of the darkness, that we will never go back to that darkness. Jewish traditions have been rejuvenated. There has been a Baal Teshuva movement throughout the world. Orthodoxy which was said to be dead is coming back to life. There are

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80 kosher restaurants in Paris alone. Who would have thought that such a thing could have happened? Jewish life and culture is having an effervesence which is has not seen for many, many years. There are more students studying in yeshiva now than there were before the war. Things are improving. The light is coming. Out of this great darkness comes a great light, and that, of course, is what Moshe was telling Pharaoh. You mean to subdue the Jew, to persecute him, to hound him, but out of your darkness will come a greater light. We hope and pray, too, that the same thing will happen in the current situation, that out of the stubbornness of Saddam Hussein will come a great period of peace and prosperity between Israel and her neighbors where there will be none to make her afraid, where the Arabs will realize that military might will not defeat Israel, and the nations of the world will recognize, too, that they have a responsibility not to arm the nations of that region so they cannot harm each other or harm Israel, and because Israel is at peace the prophets promised that the whole world will be at peace. Let us hope that this will happen soon so that the Geula will come.

I am reminded of the story they tell about a general on the eve of battle who found a bottle. He rubbed the bottle and out came a genie. The genie said he would give him anything he wanted but he would give his opponent double the same. The general asked for 500 tanks. He immediately got 500 tanks and his opponent got 1000 tanks. The general thought and then asked for 1000 airplanes. He immediately got 1000 airplanes and his opponent got 2000 airplanes. He stroked his face and thought and the genie told him he only had one more wish left. The general asked to be scared half to death. We hope and pray that Saddam Hussein will quickly disappear. There is a report that his family has gone to Mauretania. Let him go there, too. We would not like to see families divided. Let him give up. Let him surrender. Let the world know peace, and let the Torah portions in Shmos be fulfilled, that after Bo comes Beshalach and in Beshalach we have the great redemption of the Jewish people. May it happen the way it was written in the Torah soon. Amen.

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In the Torah portion Bo we learn about the last three plagues. We learn about the plague of locusts, the plague of darkness, and the slaying of the firstborn. The slaying of the firstborn is a unique plague. The other nine plagues can be explained naturally. You could say that there was a red tide in the river and because of the red tide the frogs could not live in the river so the frogs came out of the river, which caused the plague of lice. The wild animals could not get water so they came into the cities, etc. But the last plague, of course, cannot be explained naturally because we know of no disease which just strikes the firstborn. But, besides that, there is a significant difference between the first nine plagues and the last plague. In the first nine plagues the Jewish people did not have to take any precautions at all. They were not going to be affected by these first nine plagues, but in the tenth plague, the slaying of the firstborn, we learn that the Jewish people had to stay inside their own houses and they had to put the blood of the lamb, and the rabbis say mixed with the blood of the circumcision, upon their doors, and unless they did that they, themselves, would be affected by this last plague, and they, themselves, would have their firstborn slain. So we see that there was a significant difference. Why should it be that this last plague would also apply to the Jewish people unless they took the precautions of staying in their houses and put the blood on their door, when all the other plagues did not apply to the Jewish people and they did not have to take any precautions at all?

Besides that, before we learn about the last plague G-d tells Moshe, "Speak, please, in the ears of the people and they shall ask each man from his neighbor and each woman from her neighbor vessels of silver and vessels of gold, and G-d will give the favor of the people in the eyes of the Egyptians, and also the man, Moshe, was very great in the land of Egypt and in the eyes of the servants of Pharaoh in the eyes of the nation." In other words, before the Jewish people were to leave they were to ask their neighbors for vessels of silver and vessels of gold.

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Some people have interpreted the word "Vayishalu" to be "to borrow", and, of course, they were not going to borrow them because they were not going to return them but it is clear that the word "Shaal" in Hebrew means "to ask". They were to ask these things from their neighbors.

Now, first of all, why did G-d have to say, "Speak, please, in the ears of the people"; and why was it important that the Jewish people should ask silver and gold from their neighbors? The rabbis say that originally the Jewish people did not want to ask anything from the Egyptians, and they did not want to take so-called blood money. After all, the Egyptians had persecuted them and enslaved them. They had killed their children, and they did not want anything from them. Therefore, G-d had to say, "Speak, please, in the ears of the people". We also learn that Moshe Rabbeinu did not want the Jewish people to have any of this gold and silver because he thought it would corrupt them, and sure enough it did. When they were in the desert and they built the golden calf Moshe told G-d, "See, it is Your fault. I did not want to take this gold. If they would not have had the gold they would not have been able to build the golden calf."

What actually is going on here? Why did G-d insist that they do ask their neighbors, and why did their neighbors, in effect, hand over their silver and gold willingly? Why did they want to do that? In fact, we learn a little later on in the same Torah portion, "And G-d gave the favor of the nation in the eyes of the Egyptians, and they gave them what they asked, and they saved the Egyptians." "Vayunasko" can mean "they have spoiled" but it can also mean "they saved" the Egyptians. What does it mean that they saved the Egyptians? You know, there is a big problem that we all face. We face this problem in families and in institutions, between nations, within nations, and that is, how do you reconcile with your enemies? After all, you have to eventually make up with your enemies. You are not going to kill off every single one. You have to make up with your enemies. How is

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it possible to reconcile with your enemies? Here G-d is telling Moshe that there is going to be a time after slavery, that the Jewish people are going to have to live with the Egyptians in the world, and that they are going to have to make up with them, and that it is important that some mechanism be found so that they can live in peace with each other, so there will not be constant warfare between them, and also so that they can bless each other, help each other make this a better world.

We know that there are several techniques for reconciling people. One of them is, of course, to find a common enemy and, therefore, you can make up because you are fighting your common enemy. We know that during the Second World War the United States and the Soviet Union got together to fight their common enemy, Hitler. We also know, too, that throughout world history the Jewish people have served as a scapegoat so that two parties that have been fighting can blame the Jews for their problems. For example, in eastern Europe the nobility were persecuting the serfs and we Jewish people tried to help the serfs. In the beginning the serfs accepted our help but pretty soon they found that we were very useful and the nobles found we were very useful to make peace between the serfs and the nobles. After all, the serfs wanted to be on good terms with the nobles, not on good terms with the Jews, so the serfs told the nobles it was the Jews who tricked you into saying that you should enslave us, and the nobles said that was right, that it was the Jews who tricked us. We would not have enslaved you if it would not have been for the Jews, so, therefore, let's blame the Jews. This technique was used throughout the Middle Ages and there are some people who propose it here even in the United States to blame that if one group is harming another group it is the Jews' fault, and it was the Jews who tricked one group to enslave the other, and it was the Jews who prevented the oppressors from reconciling with the oppressed. Of course, even this technique can be used by counselors. I know sometimes when people come to me with shaky marriages sometimes you can get them together and

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solve their problems by getting them both so mad at you that they, therefore, get together to solve their problems and vent their anger against you for interfering in trying to solve their problems, but that is not a very satisfactory in reconciling differences.

Here the Torah is telling us how to reconcile differences. First of all, there have to be gestures from either side, that there has to be a willingness to talk with the other side and to accept things from the other side even though they are insufficient, even though they in no way can make up for the cruelties and indignities and the massacres and the killings that have preceded them, but that these things have to be taken care of and, therefore, G-d tells Moshe, "Tell the Jewish people to ask the Egyptians for these things and the Egyptians, if they will provide these things, which shows that they want to make up, if the Egyptians sees that there is a need and they want to come forward and help even though this offering that the Egyptians offer can in no way make up for the lives that were lost. This is not blood money. This is merely a means to establish communication so that the peoples can live together in harmony." This, of course, is what happened after the Holocaust, too, when Germany saw that the survivors needed help when the State of Israel was first born it was overwhelmed by immigrants who needed help, and Germany offered reparations, and we could deny these reparations and say it was blood money, but it was not blood money. It was merely to offer a way of communication so that the parties could eventually reconcile.

That's why immediately following we learn about the commandment to protect ourselves against the final plague, the killing of the firstborn. Our blood was to be put outside our door. We were to stay inside our houses. We believe that G-d will take care of those who harm other people, and G-d did take care of the Egyptians. G-d, too, even in our own day, when we see how the Arabs have mistreated our people for over 40 years, the Arabs have themselves suffered horrendously. Look at all

the lives that were lost in the Gulf War. Look at all the lives that Iraq and Iran lost, over a million lives in their war. Look at Syria where over 50,000 people were killed when Assad worked against the Moslem Brotherhood. Look how many Palestinians were lost in Black September when King Hussein turned against them, over 10,000, but that is not our business. Our business is to stay within the sight of our own homes. The blood should be outside the door. There is a G-d in the world and He will take care of these type of things. Our business is to reconcile with our enemies if we can. We should never conceive of the money as blood money, but we should conceive of the money as an effort to make some sort of communication. It does not mean that everything is forgiven. All it means is that we should learn to live together.

That's why the rabbis say that G-d said to Moshe that the Jewish people had to accept the money because He had made a promise to Abraham that the Jewish people would be enslaved but they would leave with great wealth. Therefore, they had to take the money, but Moshe said, "Who said it has to be physical wealth? Maybe it was meant to be spiritual wealth." G-d said, "True, they came out with spiritual wealth, too, because then they knew from now on they had to be a compassionate people. They could not do to others what had been done to them." It also means, too, physical wealth because what we are referring to here is the ability to reconcile. One of the promises I made to Abraham was that he would be the father of many nations and that with Abraham's teachings there would be peace in the world, that Abraham could not stand it when any human being was harmed. He even stepped up for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. Therefore, it is important that you take this money so that I can keep My promise to Abraham." So we see that the important thing is that if we want to make reconciliation between individuals, within families, within institutions, within a country, between countries we have to open up communication even though those words or those gestures which are offered are not really sufficient. They really cannot make up for the great losses which have been sustained, yet,

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they are a beginning. They are a beginning of talking together, of moving together, of working together so truly there can be peace in the world, and when there is peace in the world then truly the promise that was made to Abraham will be fulfilled, and then truly the Mashiach will come. May He come quickly in our day. Amen.

I am reminded of the story they tell about an embezzler who came before a judge, and the judge looked at the charge sheet and he noticed that the embezzler took not only money but also jewelry and watches and silverware. He looked at the embezzler and said, "How come you took these things, too?" The embezzler said, "Well, your Honor, I have always been taught that money alone cannot bring happiness." In this case here, too, the money that was given by the Egyptians was not meant to bring happiness, was not meant to be blood money to cause everything to be forgotten and forgiven. In fact, this money was actually a hindrance to the Jewish people. What were they going to do with it in the desert anyway, and it led to them worshipping the golden calf. It was meant to open communication between the people so they could sit down and talk to each other so that they could eventually live in peace. Let us hope that all the nations will live in peace soon in our day. Amen.

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In the Torah portion Bo we learn about the Jewish people's freedom from Egypt. We learn about the last three plagues, about the plague of locusts, darkness, and the slaying of the firstborn. In this Torah portion, too, we learn about the different ceremonies that we still have today that commemorate our exodus from Egypt. According to Jewish law, there are three disabilities that a slave has. First of all, a slave cannot be a witness because a slave cannot tell the truth. His master would not let him tell the truth. He would beat him. He would kill him. The second thing, a slave is not bound by any of the commandments that have to do with time because a slave has no time. The time belongs to the master. A slave has to do what the master wants him to do when the master wants him to do it. He has no time for himself to follow his own pursuits. He has no time for his hobbies or for his education or to act in a loving fashion doing deeds of kindness for other people. A slave also cannot have a family. His family would be sold out from under him, his wife or his children, so he cannot have a family.

We see that there are three ways that we commemorate our freedom. First of all, we have a seder once a year. At the seder we gather together as families to show that we are free because we can gather together as families. The second commemoration we have every week when we celebrate the Shabbos. That tells us that we control our time. Other people do not control our time; we control our time. We can dedicate one day a week to spiritual pursuits. The third commemoration of our exodus from Egypt is the donning of tephillin every day except Shabbos. This teaches us that we are bound by the truth, that we put the tephillin on our head and then we put the tephillin on our arm to show us that the way our arm works, the way that we use force in the world must be in constant with our head, with truth, and that force must also be used with the heart. What's more, it is on the weaker hand. A Jew cannot have the killer instinct. It is not our job to oppress people, to hurt people. Our job is

to work with people, to make this a better world.

So we see that we have three distinct commemorations of the exodus from Egypt which themselves correspond to the three great liberties that we now have, that we now can control our time, that we now can have a family, and that we can now tell the truth. Unfortunately, in our country today many people misrepresent what freedom is. They say that freedom is the ability to do anything that I want anytime I want to do it. That is not the way we define freedom. We define freedom as a person who is bound, who is bound by the truth, who is bound by family, and who has the ability to control his time. If a person says I am free and, therefore, I can go take drugs, what that person does is he says he is free only once because once he gets involved with drugs he can never get out of drugs. Drugs control him; he no longer controls drugs. The same thing is true, too, if a person cannot control his time then time controls him, then his job controls him, then other factors outside him control him. The same thing goes, too, that if a person is not bound by family a person will become depressed and feel alienated. A person will not feel that he has any part in the society in which he lives, and many people say this is the reason for most of the criminality in our society today because people do not feel that they belong. People do not feel that they have a stake in society. In the olden days people would not do such a thing because it would shame their family. It would be something that they would not be able to do because they would not be a mensch, but now they do not care. They feel that society has abandoned them so, therefore, society is fair game for them to go ahead and attack and misuse and to engage in all sorts of criminal behavior. They do not feel part of it. They feel outside of it, and, therefore, they can knock it down and harm it and hurt it.

So we see from all these things that freedom means that you are bound. Freedom means that there are limits and modern man does not like to say that there are

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any limits. It is the limits which really give us freedom. We can understand that by the modern urge to diet all the time. We know that if a person eats without any limitation, if a person eats so that he becomes gross and extremely fat that person will not be able to do a lot of things. His freedom will actually be limited. He will not be able to bend down and do certain athletic activities and he will not be able to participate in many of the other aspects of life, to go on trips, to get in and out of a car, to do all sorts of other things, and, what's more, his health will be very seriously affected. Because this person did not learn how to limit himself. This person, therefore, lives a greatly restricted life. People do not realize that it is limits which allow you to lead a free life and a full life, that moderation in all things allows you to actually live a good and a full life which gives you extreme freedom while, on the other hand, if you allow yourself to go to extremes and satisfy certain urges you lose your freedom. Therefore, we have to be very careful that when we say that we want freedom that we do not mean that we just have the freedom to choose once and never again because then we are bound by that choice, by that choice of drugs of alcohol or obesity or the choice of economic or slavist dependence on different other types of factors, like those people in countries who choose a dictator to solve their problems. They chose once but then they will never be able to choose again. This happened in many countries throughout the world. They did have free elections, but only once, and they chose their dictator and then they were through. The German people actually chose Hitler to be their leader. They chose once and then they suffered. At the beginning it seemed good but then they suffered through the Second World War and through defeat, etc., from which they still have not completely recovered. Look at the skinhead movement still in Germany and the neo-Nazi movement that is still there.

In life we must realize that in order to be free, we have to set limits. This is a very great paradox. That, of course, is, too, what these celebrations stand

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for. We know that the Jewish people had to take the lamb and slaughter it when they gathered together in their seder. Also the last plague, the killing of the firstborn, was the only plague in which G-d told you what time it was going to happen. "Around midnight," G-d told Moshe to tell Pharaoh. They gathered together in their families and their families, too, could not exist unless they were also based upon truth. Therefore, the reason the Jewish people slaughtered the lamb was to demonstrate to the world that they believed in truth, that they could not go along with these terrible theories of the people of the ancient world who believed that spirits would incarnate in animals at different times of the year or incarnate into wooden objects or idols and they could then have great power over these objects. The same is true today we believe about genies. Genies get trapped in certain bottles and if you release them you can manipulate them and use them and do all sorts of things that you could not do otherwise. So we see that even the Pesach seder had within in it the elements of truth, the elements of time, and the elements of family. Also Shabbos teaches us such a wonderful lesson, that there is a G-d in the world. It teaches us about the truth of creation as well as talking about our freedom. It talks about controlling time and it also teaches us about family because it is on Shabbos that we gather together as families. Our tephillin, too, teaches us these things, too. The tephillin is really the symbol of the marriage of G-d to Israel. The way we relate to G-d is through a family. He, Himself, has this relationship with us of like a married couple. G-d is, so to speak, our husband, and the Jewish people are, so to speak, His wife. It is this same type of relationship with shared mutual responsibilities, of deep devotion to one another, of wanting to make sure that we can work together to make this a better world, just like a family works together to make it better for all the members of the family and to make the surroundings in which they live a better place. The tephillin, too, teaches us something special because on the head there are two Shins. The Shin on one side is made of three branches and the Shin on the other side is made

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of four branches, which, of course, teaches us that we live in actually in seven dimensions. We live up, down, east, west, south, north, but we also have a spiritual dimension and the spiritual dimension demands that we are truthful, that we have integrity. Also the three and the four stand for the mothers and fathers of Israel. There were four mothers in Israel and three fathers. We do not say that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob stood for three different principles, although they did, and the mothers stood for four different principles, although they did, but we talk about fathers and mothers, again, to teach us that we relate to each other as a family, as a family of shared responsibility, that this is where we learn how to be moral and decent people. This is where we learn about the limits of our own actions if we are to keep the family together. We also learn, too, with the tephillin about time because the tephillin have to be put on during the day time. The tephillin, too, signify truth, with our head and our hand having to work together.

It is important that we realize that in order to have freedom we have to be bound, bound by a family, bound by our use of time, and bound by the truth. When G-d told Moshe Rabbeinu that the Jewish people should put the blood on the doorpost G-d told Moshe they should put it on the doorpost and then on the lintel. When Moshe Rabbeinu told the people what to do he said put it on the lintel first and then put it on the doorpost. The rabbis ask, why did Moshe change it? The answer is that there are two Perahs of religion. One Perah is between man and man, making sure we have good relationships, like we should have in a family, and the relationship between man and G-d which demands truth and which demands also that we devote time to it as we are supposed to devote time to our family. Moshe knew that the key to all these relationships between man and man and man and G-d is the family because in the family when the father hands over his paycheck, when the father defers his own pleasures, when the father is there helping his children and nurturing his children the children learn then the importance of morality and decency. When they see their mother who dedicates herself to her children, who tries to raise

them the best way that she can they see the moral strength that they need in order to be upstanding people in the world, in order that they can have a relationship with G-d and a relationship with man.

I am reminded of the story they tell about Mozart. Someone came to Mozart and asked him, "Mozart, I am 20 years old now and I want to be a composer and I just want to know how I should go about it. What should I compose first?" Mozart said, "Well, I think you should start simply. First start with songs and then go to more difficult things." The man looked at Mozart and said, "But you, Mozart, when you were only a child were composing symphonies." Mozart said, "Yes, that's true but I did not go to anybody to ask them how to be a composer." When a person is already in their 20's and they want to know how to be moral and decent people, then you have to tell them what to do, but if a person is raised in a home in which he has all these values already then a person instinctively knows what it is that they are supposed to do. They know that in Judaism it is not just important to have ideas about religion, but you actually have to do the rituals. The rituals are not rituals for rituals sake. The rituals are to impress the principles of Judaism not just in our mind but also throughout our emotions and throughout our whole being. Unfortunately, many people believe that the only thing that you have to do is read somebody's mind. We know that is not true. How many times have you gone to a doctor who is smoking a cigar with a big pot belly who tells you to diet and stop smoking. Why doesn't he stop smoking and diet? Because he knows the truth but he has not assimilated it into his whole being. Therefore, it is important that we want to remind ourselves about freedom we just do not talk about freedom. In order to assimilate freedom into our minds and hearts we have to enact it every day by putting on tephillin, by celebrating Shabbos, by celebrating Pesach. When we do these things then freedom becomes ingrained in us. Then we will not have to ask how it is that we should appreciate freedom, what it is that freedom

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demands of us. We know in our being, not just in our mind what freedom demands. Freedom demands that we be limited. Freedom demands that we be bound by a family, bound by the truth, and bound by the correct use of time. May we all accept these limitations so we will truly have freedom so the Mashiach will come quickly in our day. Amen.

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In the Torah portion Bo we learn about the first commandments that were given to the Jewish people. One was to set up a calendar and the other was to take the paschal lamb and to slaughter it. The lamb was a symbol of evil, of Egyptian idolatry. The Egyptians believed in reincarnation, that the spirit of Aries at this time of the year would inhabit a lamb and if you controlled a lamb you could do great things for yourself and for Egypt. On the other hand, if you harmed a lamb you would harm yourself and Egypt greatly. It is similar to the genie legends where a genie inhabited a bottle and you could control the genie because it was incarnated in that bottle. The Jewish people were told to sacrifice the lamb to demonstrate that they did not believe in this whole concept of spirits and incarnation. When G-d told Moshe that they were to slaughter the lamb, he was also told that they were to take the blood and put it on the door and that they were to gather in family units inside the house, that the blood should be outside their home not directed to the inside of their home. When G-d commanded Moshe about this commandment it says, "And they shall take the blood and they give it on the two doorposts and on the lentil." Later on when Moshe Rabbeinu told this commandment to the Jewish people he reversed it. Instead of telling them to take the blood and to put it on the two doorposts and then to put it on the lentil Moshe says, "And you shall take the bunch of hissop and you should dip it in the blood which is in a basin and you should touch the lentil and the two mezuzahs, and the two doorposts, with the blood which is in the basin, and you shall know G-d, each man, from the entrance of his house until morning."

In other words, Moshe reaffirmed the commandment that they were to gather together in family units but he did not have them touch the doorpost and then the lentil. He had them touch the lentil first and then the doorposts. Why is it that Moshe changed G-d's command? Why didn't he tell the Jewish people to do exactly as G-d had told him that it was to be done?

We all know that there are two basic pillars to religion. We know that Abraham's great discovery was not that there was one G-d. After all, there was the yeshiva of Shaim and Aber, which had already existed before, but Abraham's great religious discovery was that you cannot approach G-d unless you are first moral. The first pillar of Judaism is that you have to be moral, and after you are moral then you can approach G-d. There have always been two Jewish heresies. One is that morality is not important, is irrelevant. All you have to do is want to approach G-d.

The other heresy has always been that it is not important to approach G-d; all you have to do is act morally. The problem with just acting morally and not wanting to reach G-d is that morality, itself, becomes very painful if you are doing it only for the other person and you are not getting anything out of it, and also your life is a vacuum. You cannot fill it with anything. On the other hand, those people that are just interested in approaching G-d, they many times become smug and self-complacent and they use the religion as a source of security but it does not allow them to attach themselves to their neighbors or to be finer moral people.

This is why the rabbis say that two mezuzahs, these two doorposts, really stand for Moshe and Aaron. Aaron stands for morality. Aaron was a lover of people and he used to pursue peace. To him ethics were very, very important. Of course, Moshe Rabbeinu was, too, an ethical person but Moshe is usually associated with Torah in the mind of the Jewish people. Moshe, of course, received the Torah and he gave the Torah to the Jewish people. Therefore, there are two pillars to Judaism: there is ethics and there is the Torah. Of course, included in the Torah is ethics but many times people separate them and only interpret Torah as being commandments between man and G-d and ethics are, of course, commandments between man and man. We need to have both of them and unless we have both of them we cannot have a religious personality.

I am reminded of the famous story they tell about the two great Talmudic scholars, one from Frankfort and one from Nicholarberg who were brothers and they had just heard about Chassidic movement. One of the greatest disciples of the great Baal Shem Tov was the Maggid HaMezrich and the Maggid HaMezrich was renowned throughout Europe as a great spiritual leader and that there were great spiritual things happening in his court. Therefore, these two brothers decided to go to the Maggid HaMezrich and to spend Shabbos with him and see what it was that was happening with him. They spent Shabbos and it came Motzi Shabbos and they were ready to leave and they go up to take their leave of the Maggid HaMezrich and he said, "Well, what do you think about our method, our way of approaching G-d?" They looked at him and said it was very interesting, but you could tell that they were not very impressed. The truth of the matter was they were not very impressed, so the Maggid looked at them and said, "Well, before you go, do me one favor. Go with the Beis Medrash and look up Shosha and have him teach you one thing." They did not understand the rabbi's request but since they were his guests and since they had come to find out what was the secret of his Chassidism so they decided to go see Shosha. They entered the Beis Medrash and they were standing in back of the pot bellied stove and there was Shosha. He was a plain man dressed in plain clothes. At that time he had no reputation whatsoever, and they went up to him, these great two Talmudic scholars, and they said, "The Maggid says that we should learn something from you." Shosha looked at them and said, "What can you learn from me? You are great Talmudists. I am just a plain person." But they persisted and they said the Maggid said they should learn something from him. So he demurred again but finally after importuning him he agreed to teach them something. He took down a Gemora Brochas and he opened to up to a section which read that if you have 9 men and you have a boy under bar mitzvah you can give him a sefer Torah and count him for a minyan. Then the Gemora asked the question, what happens if you have an ark full of Torahs? Can you count them

as part of a minyan? After all, if one sefer Torah in the hand of a boy is considered a part of the minyan, so all these sefer Torahs in the ark should be considered also. The Gemora answers the question, "Is the Torah a man?" Then Shosha looked at the two rabbis and said, "To my mind, what could actually the Torah's question be? After all, what could the Gemora's question be? We know there is no man. If it would have said a boy and a Torah, but here we are just talking about Torahs. What could the Gemora have even thought about?" They said, "Well, what they were thinking about is that sometimes you can have a man filled with Torah but he is no Mentsch." When they heard that they knew that there was something to the Maggid HaMezrich's philosophy and spiritual teachings because it is possible to have Torah without being a Mentsch. Therefore, we need both Torah and to be a Mentsch. I remember at the yeshiva there were students some of them really brilliant and they were able to figure out the Talmud very easily and quickly but they were no Mentsch. Sometimes it is difficult to be a Mentsch and it is not so easy to be a Mentsch just by learning things out of a book. So where is it that we learn how to be a Mentsch? The rabbis tell us that where it is that we learn to be a Mentsch is in the family. That's why before G-d would even give the Torah to the Jewish people we had to prove we had families. That is why we always read Bamidbar the first Torah portion of the book of Numbers before Shavuos because the Jewish people had to prove that they could have families before they could even be given the Torah. It is important that we have families. It is within families that we learn how to be a Mentsch. You learn how to apply the Torah in the proper way. Therefore, these are the two pillars. The two pillars are ethics and Torah, and what is the bridge that connects them? It is the family. Moshe Rabbeinu knew that. G-d said, "I need the two pillars of Judaism, the ethics and the Torah, and the lentil on top you touch last," and that was the family. Moshe Rabbeinu knew that that was not the way it worked with the Jewish people or with any people. You first have to have the family and then when you have

a functional family you can teach ethics and Torah and then the family will be the mold of the Jewish people and will cause the Jewish people to perpetuate itself, but if you have a dysfunctional family even if you have some people that are ethical and some people who may have Torah, it will not work. They will not be trying together. You will not be interactive people who are sympathetic and empathetic and who love Torah and also have the quality of ethics which is needed for all of us if we are to really fulfill our potential.

That is the lesson that we are being taught here. It is very important that families be developed and that is what the Jewish people did in Egypt. They were grouped together in family units. It is also the extended family. Many times it happens that there are tragedies or people do not get along and; therefore, children need other models if they are in a dysfunctional family or their parents do not get along. At least they should have parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, role models, teachers, but you have to have a family setting, and even in the best of families many times there are problems and it is only because you have an extended family that you can solve these problems. One of the big problems of America today is that we have done away with extended families and that means that the nuclear family is left by itself and as most things nuclear, they end up in explosions. So Moshe was telling us that in order for us to create the next generation of Jews we must have families. That is why we are so very happy to celebrate and oif ruf and weddings and that is why the wedding is the most important simcha in Jewish life because not only does it stand for the physical perpetuation of the Jewish people but also the spiritual perpetuation of the Jewish people. That is why it is so important that we nurture families and make sure that they are given the proper spiritual and material sustenance so that they can raise good children who will produce good Jews who will continue our heritage and make us all proud.

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I am reminded of the story they tell about a girl who just got engaged. Her mother came over and said, "You know, darling, now you are going to have to do this and this and this." All of a sudden her husband said, "Dear, please leave her alone. She is now under new management." It is now the responsibility of the young couple once they get married to fashion their own home, to fashion a family which has within it ethics and Torah, and if they can create an atmosphere that reflects not only Torah and not only ethics but a combination of both of them, then rest assured that they will produce a next generation of Jews of whom we can all be proud and we can rest assured they will bring the Mashiach quickly in our day.  
Amen.

BO 2002  
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In the Torah portion, Bo, we learn about the last three plagues. We learn about the locusts, darkness, and the slaying of the firstborn. How did the Egyptians explain these miracles? Why didn't the Egyptians immediately believe in the G-d of Israel? We know from the ancient Egyptian authors that they all knew about the exodus and talked about it. Even the Greek historian, Herodotus, quotes them. Many archeologists today try to say that the exodus never occurred because they can find no record of it on the hieroglyphics. This is absurd. If the ancient Egyptian authors speak about it, why shouldn't we believe them? It is known that the Egyptians never recorded their defeats, and besides, the way they refer to the event is totally different from the way we refer to it. It is like today when people try to say King Solomon and King David never existed, and even if they find an inscription that says David on it, they say it does not refer to King David but to somebody's beloved because David means beloved. They completely discount the Biblical record. Many of them are politically motivated. There is no doubt that there was a temple on the temple mount during the time of the kings of Israel. They are recorded in the Syrian and Babylonian accounts. Some archeologists say they cannot find any potshards, but they also cannot find any potshards of the Byzantium

period, which lasted for over 300 years, and is part of recorded history from 312 to 638.

This modern attack on Jewish history is similar to the higher Biblical criticism, which some people refer to as the higher anti-Semitism. The Bible, they claim, was written by many different authors. There has been a computer study of the Book of Genesis, and it proved it was written by one author. There has also been a study of the Book of Isaiah, which proved there were two authors, and there is a Talmudic tradition, which says there were two authors. The difference between the Biblical critics and the rabbis is the Biblical critics have perfect faith that if there is a seeming contradiction in the text, it is flawed, and there is some sort of mistake here, while the rabbis have perfect faith that this was done on purpose so they could reconcile these things. It does seem very patronizing of the Biblical critics that they would believe that the people who wrote these texts are so stupid that after they wrote one sentence, they would completely contradict it in the next sentence. It stands to logic that there must be something deeper here.

What was the spin that the Egyptian authors put on the exodus? They said that the Egyptian gods were mad at them because they allowed that filthy,

dirty people, the Jews, to live in Egypt. They should have expelled them, but G-d said that unless they expelled the Jews, even though the Jews were good workers, they would continue to send plagues on Egypt, so the Egyptians listened to their gods, and they threw out the Jews. That is their interpretation of the story. That's why the Egyptians did not have to believe in the G-d of Israel because they attributed the plagues to their gods because they allowed the Jewish people to stay in Egypt.

We see today how Arafat spins all the stories and makes white black and black white, and the Europeans fall in line and believe him, even though it is so transparently false. The reason they want to believe them is because they consider Israel a colony, not just the West Bank but also all of Israel, and just as South Africa disappeared and Algeria disappeared, Israel should disappear. They are predisposed to believe him. The greatest sin of the twentieth century is colonialism, and Israel is a colonial state. Many Jews, too, fall for Arafat's lying because they want to ingratiate themselves with their western colleagues, or they feel that Jews should not assert themselves, but should stay meek.

What was it, though, in the Egyptian culture which caused the Egyptians to

not be able to see G-d's hand in the plagues? This can perhaps be best exemplified by the plague of darkness. It says about this plague of darkness that "no man saw his brother and nobody got up from his place and to all of Israel there were light in their habitations." The Egyptians could not see the plight of their brothers, and, therefore, they could not rise. They were stuck in a dog-eat-dog philosophy. They all believed that their gods had to be propitiated, that their gods were not the gods of justice, love, and mercy.

The Jews, on the other hand, had light in their habitations, even though they were slaves. They helped each other. They were there for each other. Why, though, did the Jewish people have to stay in their houses during the last plague? The rabbis even teach us that during the plague of darkness, the Jewish people even went into the homes of the Egyptians to see where their valuables were, even though they did not touch a thing, so that when they left Egypt and asked their masters to give them their wages, the Egyptians could not say they did not have any valuables. But here, during the plague of the killing of the firstborn, they were confined to their homes. If they would go out, they would be killed, too. The answer is that the other plagues were not meant to kill anybody. This plague was meant to kill people.

We learn also in this Torah portion it says, "And you should teach your children so that you will know." Jews who are not immersed in their traditions, Jews who do not study with their children, and we know when you study with your children you have to live up to what you are teaching them, they will fall for the spin control of our enemies. They will be susceptible to the blood on the streets. They will even justify the shedding of Jewish blood, as do some Jewish people today. The way to make sure that we understand our stories the way they should be understood and not as Arafat and others or the ancient Egyptians spun them to reflect their hatred of us. We need to be immersed in our traditions, teaching our children so we will be strong in our own appreciation of G-d's role for us in history.

I am reminded of the story about a drunk who always pretended he wasn't drunk. One day he was sitting by the sewer putting in pennies and looking up at the city town clock. A policeman came by and said, "You're drunk. Let me take you home." The man replied, "I'm not drunk." The policeman then asked, "What are you doing putting pennies in the sewer and looking up at the clock?" The man said, "Looking up at the clock? I thought I was weighing myself." Let us always look at reality the way it is and not from a drunken or hateful perspective so that we will always understand our role in history so

**the Mashiach will come quickly in our day. Amen.**