



Galut Mitzrayim: Exile As Part of the Master Plan #2

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Hershel Reichman

There are three aspects to the soul, *nefesh*, *ruach*, and *neshama*. *Nefesh* is the biological level, *ruach* is the emotional level, and *neshama* is the logical level. When Hashem placed man in this world, He intended him to follow in His ways in these three dimensions of the soul. The early generations, which had the potential for spiritual greatness, instead chose spiritual downfall. The generation of the flood sinned with immorality and theft. Immorality relates to *ruach* and the emotions. The Torah emphasizes that generation's sin of stealing, corresponding to *nefesh*. The generation of the tower of Bavel used their incredible intellectual strengths to build an edifice that scaled the heavens. But their *neshama* was corrupted by arrogance and egoism, which eventually led to their downfall.

The Shem Mishmuel explains that the souls of the previous sinful generations were reincarnated into the souls of the Jewish people in Egypt. The suffering of the nation achieved historical atonement for the sins of centuries earlier. The three decrees in Egypt related to the three levels of the soul. Paro declared that

all male babies should be thrown in the sea. This punishment atoned for *nefesh*. The midwives were commanded to kill the infants at birth. This related to the level of *ruach*. The *galut hadaat*, caused by the overwhelming physical and emotional exhaustion of the slavery, shut out anything spiritual. It impacted their *neshama*.

The Zohar says that the waters of the flood could have been *mei daat*, waters of Torah wisdom. Instead they turned into destruction because of the evil choices the people made. Hashem reincarnated their souls into the Jewish people as a test. If they would rise above temptation and maintain their moral identity, goodness, and spirituality, they would rectify their previous mistakes.

The Jewish people are a microcosm of humanity. Our mission is not to remain apart forever, but to develop ourselves during the isolated period of exile so that eventually we will be able to reach out to the nations of the world. The exile of Mitzrayim proved a successful experiment. Hashem redeemed not

just the Jews, but all of humanity.

In a paradoxical way, exile gives momentum for a spiritual ascent by creating energy in a moral descent. The verse in Yeshaya states, "*Shalom, shalom, la'rachok v'lakarov amar Hashem*. Peace, peace, says Hashem for those who are distant and those who are close." Rav Nachman Breslover explains that sometimes we need distance in order to draw closer. The three gifts that we received as a direct result of the Egyptian exile were the Torah, the *mishkan*, and *olam habah*. The pasuk in Bereishit says, "*Va'yehi erev va'yehi boker*. And it was night and it was day." Night and the darkness of exile must come before day and the light of redemption. To live in Eretz Yisrael one must meet high standards. The land cannot tolerate evil and will destroy those who don't live up to its spiritual level. So in order to prepare themselves, the nation had to go through the troubles of exile. *Galut* comes from the root word *l'galot*, to reveal. The pain and suffering of exile are meant to bring out the hidden strengths within us.

Parsha Journeys – Tazria and Metzora

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Hanoach Teller

Tzoraat was not a natural phenomenon. It happened only when the *mishkan* stood and the Jewish nation was acting in perfect accord with the Torah's commandments. At such a time, when a Jew made moral mistakes, Hashem would first inflict his possessions and house with ugly patches of discoloration, and then sometimes his body. The primary cause of *tzoraat* was the sin of slander. The Midrash says it was also a punishment for the sins of bloodshed, immorality, false oaths, pride, robbery, and selfishness. The first symptom of *tzoraat* was a white patch on the skin the size of a large bean. There were two different shades of white and each had a secondary color so that there were four different shades. Once the kohen pronounced the *metzora* impure, he was quarantined for seven days

outside the camp as punishment for driving a divisive wedge between people.

Chazal teach that four people are considered as if they are dead: a *metzora*, a childless person, a poor person, and a blind person. Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz explains that the most essential part of life is giving and these four are handicapped in their ability to give. The blind man can't see in order to give, a poor person has no money to give, a *metzora* is isolated and has no one to give to, and the childless person has no children to give to.

Rav Hirsh writes that *tzoraat* is not leprosy. The symptoms and laws governing *tzoraat* as outlined in the Torah do not conform to the norms of the physical disease. If the *tzoraat* covers the victim's entire body he is pure.

However, if it covers his heel, he's impure. If the house is afflicted, all the contents of the house must be removed. But only when the kohen pronounces the house impure, does everything within it become impure. The Talmud teaches that if *tzoraat* appears on a newlywed or during the festival season, the *kohen* waits to examine the affliction so as not to interfere with the celebration. Normally, to prevent the spread of physical disease, the infected person would be quarantined immediately, especially during a celebration when people mingle a lot. So we see that *tzoraat* was not a bodily disease. Rather, it was a physical manifestation of a spiritual malaise meant to teach the sinner to mend his ways.



Sensitivity and Faith

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

The Netivot Shalom notes the close affinity between the night of Pesach and Yom Kippur. The most estranged Jews will go to shul on Yom Kipur. They will also sit at the seder on Pesach. On both nights there is a custom to wear a *kittel*. Likewise, both the Yom Kippur prayers and the seder culminate with the words, "Next Year in Jerusalem." Yom Kippur and Pesach are about closeness and return. But while on Yom Kippur we repent out of awe, Pesach embodies a higher level, a level of love.

The Meshech Chochma notes that on Yom Kippur we gain forgiveness for sins between man and man, and sins between man and Hashem. We say in the Yom Kippur prayer, "*U'machlan l'shivtei yeshurun.*" We ask forgiveness, from Hashem, the forgiver of the sins of the tribes, for the baseless hatred that led to the sale of Yosef.

Pesach too is a time to work on these failings. After the brothers sold Yosef, they slaughtered a goat and dipped Yosef's coat in its blood. To atone for this we take *karpas* and dip it in salt water, in the symbolic tears of Jewish

suffering. It's a dipping of sensitivity, a subtle hint to work on loving every Jew. We dip the bitter maror into sweet *charoset*. This symbolizes that we have the ability to transform the bitterness by turning *sinat chinam* into *ahavat chinam*. The gathered bunch of humble hyssops which the Jewish people dipped in blood and sprinkled on their doorposts, symbolizes the self-effacement and *achdut* we are meant to achieve at the seder night.

The first day of Pesach always occurs on the same day of the week as Tisha B'av. We eat an egg, a mourner's food, to remind us that if we internalize the messages of Pesach, Tisha B'av will no longer be relevant. The purpose of the Egyptian exile was to remove the impurities of the Jewish people. It was meant to teach the Jewish nation compassion, moral awareness, and empathy so that they would emerge an elevated, sensitive, giving people. The white *kittel* symbolizes humbleness and purity of spirit.

Both on Yom Kippur and Pesach we should reach that level of *bitul hayesh*. While *chametz* symbolizes insensitivity, selfishness, and an inflated ego, *matzah* is called the humble

bread. If a person is full of self, it's hard to make room for Hashem and to feel indebted and grateful. The goal of the seder night is to refine our character traits, to develop our sensitivity to others, and to express thanks to Hashem for all of His kindness. The climax of the seder is Hallel. We tell the story of Egypt in an indirect way through the perspective of the farmer as he brings his thanksgiving offering to Hashem. In this way, we arouse our own feelings of *hakarat hatov* and gratitude to our Father in heaven who saved us throughout the generations and will ultimately redeem us.

The idea of the four sons as mentioned in the Hagadah teaches us about *chinuch*. For a parent to teach effectively, he has to be attuned to the unique personality of each of his children. On another level, there are multiple facets within even one person's personality and each trait must be addressed individually. The seder night is meant to engage us on all levels, including the wise, rebellious, and pure parts of ourselves. The seder consists of questions and answers because we have to make the experience come alive.