

When You Feel Powerless

Exodus, Chapter 12

1. The L-rd spoke to Moses and to Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying,
 2. This month shall be to you the head of the months; to you it shall be the first of the months of the year.
 3. Speak to the entire community of Israel, saying, "On the tenth of this month, let each one take a lamb for each parental home, a lamb for each household.
 4. But if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his neighbor who is nearest to his house shall take [one] according to the number of people, each one according to one's ability to eat, shall you be counted for the lamb.
 5. You shall have a perfect male lamb in its [first] year; you may take it either from the sheep or from the goats.
 6. And you shall keep it for inspection until the fourteenth day of this month, and the entire congregation of the community of Israel shall slaughter it in the afternoon...
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21. Moses summoned all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Draw forth or buy for yourselves sheep for your families and slaughter the Passover sacrifice.
 28. So the children of Israel went and did; as the L-rd commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did...
 34. The people picked up their dough when it was not yet leavened, their leftovers bound in their garments on their shoulders.
 35. And the children of Israel did according to Moses' order, and they borrowed from the Egyptians silver objects, golden objects, and garments.
 36. The L-rd gave the people favor in the eyes of the Egyptians, and they lent them, and they emptied out Egypt.
 37. The children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot, the men, besides the young children.
 38. And also, a great mixed multitude went up with them, and flocks and cattle, very much livestock. 39. They baked the dough that they had taken out of Egypt as unleavened cakes, for it had not leavened, for they were driven out of Egypt, and they could not tarry, and also, they had not made provisions for themselves.

And you shall keep it for inspection (12:6)

Rashi

This is an expression of inspection, that the animal requires an inspection for a blemish four days before its slaughter. Now why was the designated animal to be taken four days before its slaughter, something not required in the Passover sacrifice of later generations? Rabbi Mathia the son of Charash used to say: Behold G-d says: "And I passed by you and saw you, and behold your time was the time of love" (Ezek. 16:8). The time for the fulfillment of the oath that I swore to Abraham that I would redeem his children has arrived. But the Children of Israel had no commandments in their hands with which to occupy



פרק ז

א. ויאמר ה' אל משה ואֶל אהרן בארץ מצרים לאמר:
 ב. החדש הזה לכם ראש חדשים ראשון הוא לכם לחדשי השנה: ג. הברו אל כל עדת ישראל לאמור בפעור החדש הזה ויקחו להם איש שה לבית אבתו שה לבית:
 ד. ואם ימעט הבית מהית משה ולקח הוא וישכנו הקרב אל ביתו במכסת נפשת איש לפי אכלו תכסו על הששה: ה. שה תמים זכר בן שנה יהיה לכם מן הנבשים ומן העזים תקחו: ו. והיה לכם למשמרת עד ארבעה עשר יום לחדש הזה וישחטו אתו כל קהל עדת ישראל בין הערבים:
 כא. ויקרא משה לכל זקני ישראל ויאמר אליהם משכו וקחו לכם צאן למשפחתכם ושחטו הפסח:
 כח. וילכו ויעשו בני ישראל כאשר צוה ה' את משה ואהרן בן עשו: לד. וישא העם את בצקו טרם יחמץ משארתם צררת בשמלתם על שקמם: לה. ובני ישראל עשו כדבר משה וישאלו ממצרים כלי כסף וכלי זהב ושמלות: לו. וה' נתן את חן העם בעיני מצרים וינצלו את מצרים: לז. ויסעו בני ישראל מרעמסס סכתה פשש מאות אלף וגלי הגברים לכד מטה: לח. וגם ערב רב עלה אתם וצאן ובקר מקנה כבד מאד: לט. ויאפו את הבצק אשר הוציאו ממצרים עגת מצות כי לא חמץ כי גרשו ממצרים ולא יכלו להתמהמה וגם צדה לא עשו להם:

themselves in order that they be redeemed, as it is said: "but you were naked and bare" (Ezek. 16:7). So He gave them two mitzvot, the blood of the Passover and the blood of the circumcision. They circumcised themselves on that night, as it is said: "downtrodden with your blood," with the two [types of] blood... Moreover, the Israelites were passionately fond of idolatry. Moses said to them, "Withdraw and take for yourselves" (Exod. 12:21). He meant: withdraw from idolatry and take for yourselves sheep for the mitzvah.

Midrash Rabbah

When G-d told Moses to slay the paschal lamb, Moses said: "Master of the Universe! How can I possibly do this thing? Don't You know the lamb is the Egyptian god? 'Lo, if we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, will they not stone us?'"

Said G-d: "By your life, Israel will not depart from here before they slaughter the Egyptian gods before their very eyes, that I may teach them that their gods are really nothing at all." This is what He actually did; for on that night He slew the Egyptian firstborn, and on that night the Israelites slaughtered their paschal lamb and ate it.

The people picked up their dough when it was not yet leavened, their leftovers bound in their garments on their shoulders on their shoulders (12:34)

Rashi

Although they took many animals with them, they carried the remaining matzot and bitter herbs on their shoulders because they loved the mitzvot.

And also, they had not made provisions for themselves (12:39)

Rashi

For the trip. This verse tells of Israel's praise, that they did not say, "How will we go out into the desert without provisions?" Instead they believed and left. This is what is stated explicitly in the Prophets: "I remember to you the loving kindness of your youth, the love of your nuptials, your following Me in the desert, in a land not sown" (Jer. 2:2).

The Rebbe

In the Passover Haggadah we say: "If G-d had not taken our forefathers out of Egypt, we, our children, and our children's children, would still be enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt..." The Children of Israel had become so entrenched in the paganism and depravity of Egypt, that the Exodus came at the very last possible moment, as they approached the very brink of total indistinguishability from the Egyptians. Had they remained slaves in Egypt a moment longer, there would have been no "Children of Israel" to redeem.

SUMMARY

- At the time of the Exodus, the Jewish people experienced an incredible spiritual transformation: from a nation steeped in idol worship to a nation full of unquestioning faith in their Creator.
- The catalyst for their awakening were the two mitzvot, the Pascal sacrifice and circumcision, both which demanded self-sacrifice and faith in their Creator.
- No matter how low we may fall, our soul is like a massive underground spring concealed by layers of rocks and debris but waiting to gush forth powerfully. As soon as we are ready to take that step in the right direction, the layers of impurity will fall away.

