

THE PASSOVER STORY – A CREATIVE RENDITION

by Dr Simcha Rafael

1) THE PLACE OF SLAVERY

(Uncover the matzah and begin the reply - *Avadim Ha-Yinu*)

Narrator: Once upon a time, over three thousand years ago, the Israelite people lived in the land of Egypt, on the banks of the Nile River. An Israelite named Joseph (*Yosef ben Yakov v'Rachel*) had given valuable investment advice to Pharaoh, ruler of Egypt, who made a fortune in Pyramid-building.com stock options. In this way, Joseph and other Israelites gained favor in the eyes of Pharaoh... But after Joseph died, a new king arose over Egypt who did not remember Joseph's deeds. And he said to the people:

Pharaoh: These Israelites have become too many and too strong for us. We must take precautions to see that they do not increase further; or we shall find that, if war breaks out, they will join the enemy against us, and they will become masters of the country.

Narrator: For hundreds of years the Children of Israel toiled in the burning Egyptian heat, suffering without any decent sunscreen. Yet the greater the hardships imposed on them by the Egyptians, the more the Israelites multiplied and the stronger they grew. Finally one day, the King of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, saying:

Pharaoh: When you are attending a Hebrew woman in childbirth, watch as the child is delivered and if it is a boy, kill him; if it is a girl, let her live...

Narrator: There was a great lamentation among the Israelites. But in spite of their oppression, they did not despair, inspired by the courageous midwives, whose names were Shifra and Puah.

REFLECTION ON THE PLACE OF SLAVERY

What are the ways in which you are in slavery in your life?

What are the implications of this slavery in your life?

How do you maintain that slavery?

Insert *The Ballad of the Four Children*, by Ben Aronin

2) PLACE OF SUMMONING

(Raise the cup of wine and say - *V'hi she-amdah*)

Narrator: A descendent of Levi, a man whose name was Amnon, married a woman, Yocheved, who conceived and bore a son. When she saw what a fine child he was, she hid him for three months, but realized that she could conceal him no longer. So Yocheved got a basket of reeds, made it watertight with tar and clay, laid the baby in it, and put it among the reeds of the backwaters of the Nile.

Narrator: The child's sister, whose name was Miriam, watched from a distance to see what would happen to him. As the basket floated away, Miriam said a silent prayer, and remembered the dream she had that her new baby brother would one day save the Israelites. As Pharaoh's daughter came to bathe in the river, she noticed the basket among the reeds, and sent her slave girl for it. She opened the basket and saw the child.

Pharaoh's Daughter: Why it is a little Hebrew boy! How cute!

Narrator: Pharaoh's daughter agreed to raise the baby-child, but it was actually the child's mother who nursed him. When the child was old enough Pharaoh's daughter agreed to adopt the child and called him Moses.

Pharaoh's Daughter: ... because I drew him out of the water....

Narrator: One day when Moses was grown up, he went out to his own people and saw them at their heavy labor. He saw an Egyptian strike one of his fellow Hebrews. Seeing no one was around, Moses struck the Egyptian, giving him a real good klop on the head, killing him. Moses quickly buried the body of the Egyptian. But soon word got out what Moses had done. Moses heard Pharaoh was trying to capture him to have him put to death; so Moses fled to the land of Midian. There he met and married Ziporrah, the daughter of Yitro, the priest of the Midianites.

Narrator: In Midian, Moses began working in his father-in-law's business, tending the flock of Yitro. One day, as he came to Horeb, the mountain of God, an angel of the Eternal One appeared to him as a blazing fire in a bush. The bush was all aflame, but it was not consumed.

Moses: What is going on here? I must check out this incredible sight. Why doesn't the bush burn up.

God: Moses! Moses!

Moses: Here I am!

God: Hang back Moses! Do not come any closer! Remove those ol' dusty Birkenstocks from your feet, for the place on which you stand is holy ground.... I am the God of your ancestors, the God of Avraham, Yitzhak and Yaakov... God of Sarah, Rivkah, Leah and Rachel...

Narrator: And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

God: Now listen up Moses! I have seen the suffering of My people in Egypt. It's been bad, real bad! I have come to rescue them from the oppressive power of the Egyptians. And you Moses, shall be the one to go to Pharaoh - you shall free the Hebrews from the Egyptians!

Moses: Me God? Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and f-f-f-free the Hebrew slaves? S-s-s-send my brother Aaron, I can hardly even speak!

God: I will be with you Moses, and I will give you a sign that it was I who sent you, and when you have freed the people from Egypt, you shall worship at this mountain.

Moses: When I come to the Hebrews and say to them, "The God of your ancestors sent me to you" and they ask me, "what is this God's name" what shall I say?

God: *EHEYEH ASHER EHEYEH... I WILL BE THAT I WILL BE.*

This is what you shall say to them: *EHEYEH* sent me to you. Thus you shall speak to the people saying [*Yod*Hey*Vav*Hey*], the God of your ancestors, the God of Avraham, Yitzhak and Yaakov, God of Sarah, Rivkah, Leah and Rachel has sent me to you. This shall be my name for eternity...

Sing: **LET MY PEOPLE GO** Traditional Spiritual

When Israel was in Egypt's land,
Let my people go;
Oppressed so hard they could not stand,
Let my people go!

Chorus: Go down, Moses,
Way down in Egypt's land
Tell ol' Pharaoh,
Let my people go!

Thus says the Lord, bold Moses said,
If not I'll strike your first-born dead;
Let my people go!
Let my people go! *Chorus*

No more shall they in bondage toil,
Let then come out with Egypt's spoil,
Let my people go!
Let my people go! *Chorus*

We need not always weep and mourn,
And wear these slav'ry chains forlorn,
Let my people go!
Let my people go! *Chorus*

The devil thought he had us fast,
But we thought we'd break his chains at last,
Let my people go!
Let my people go! *Chorus*

REFLECTION ON THE PLACE OF SUMMONING

What are the ways in which you are being summoned by God this year?

What are the ways in which you are avoiding responding to God's calling?

What are the challenges and tasks awaiting you as you respond to God's calling for your life this year?

3) *THE PHARAOH PLACE*

Narrator: With the guidance and support of the Eternal One, Moses and his brother Aaron went to the Pharaoh to fulfill their mission to redeem the Hebrew slaves. Appearing before Pharaoh they said:

Aaron: Thus says Adonai, the God of Israel: Let my people go that they may celebrate a festival for me in the wilderness.

Pharaoh: Who is this Adonai that I should heed your request and let Israel go? Forget it boys! No chance!

Aaron: The God of the Hebrews manifested before us.... and we have been called to freedom. Let us go, we pray, to serve our God in the wilderness.

Pharaoh: Look, I have a slave business to run here, and I can't be bothered with your ridiculous requests. Why do you distract the people from their work? Get off it, will you! Let the people continue their work.

Narrator: That same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters to increase the burden on the Hebrew slaves by refusing to give them straw to make bricks, insisting that they gather their own straw, and still continue producing the same amount of bricks. And the oppression of the people grew worse. And the Eternal One heard their cries, and once again sent Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh.

Aaron: Thus says Adonai, the God of Israel: Let my people go that they may celebrate a festival for me in the wilderness. And if you don't let them go, you stubborn ol' goat, you're in for heavy trouble, the plagues, man, the plagues!!

Narrator: And Pharaoh remained stubborn in his refusal to let the people go free. And so God sent the plagues upon Egypt, beginning with the turning of the water into blood.

Recite *The Ten Plagues*

Sing *Dayenu*

REFLECTION ON THE PHARAOH PLACE

What or who are your Pharaohs?

In what ways do you find yourself oppressed this year?

How do oppress others?

Bad Things Will Come to Egypt: The Plagues (Sung to the tune of: "She'll be Coming Round the Mountain")

Bad things will come to Egypt, don't you know (2x)
Bad things will come to Egypt (2x)
Bad things will come to Egypt till we go.

First, God will change the water into blood (ick, ick) (2x)
There'll be nothing left to drink;
With no baths you all will stink
When God changes all the water into blood (ick, ick)

Slimy Frogs will be all over everything (croak, croak) (2x)
They will jump all over you-ou.
They will jump into your shoe-oe.
Slimy Frogs will be all over everything (croak, croak).

Lice will make your big heads itch and itch and itch (scratch, scratch) (2x)
The heads of poor and rich,
Even animals will itch
When lice make your big heads itch and itch and itch (scratch, scratch)

Wild animals will scare you all to death (roar, roar) (2x)
You'll be scared of their roars
As they bite and scratch your doors.
Wild animals will scare you all to death (roar, roar).

Your cattle will get sick and die like flies (no moos) (2x)
No milk will fill your cup;
No meat on which to sup
When your cattle get sick and die like flies (no moos).

Your skin will get big sores all over it (ow, ow) (2x)
You will cry 'cause they hurt;
No medicine will ever cure you.
And you'll even get the sores down where you sit. (ow, ow)

Icy hail will fall down on you from the sky (knock, knock) (knock on table) (2x)
You may try to hide your head;
You may crawl beneath your bed,
But all the outside plants will surely die (knock, knock)

Locust bugs will swarm all round your land (buzz, buzz) (2x)
They will eat all plants of gre-en
No broccoli will be se-en
When the locust bugs swarm all round your land (buzz, buzz).

The day will turn as black as night can be (2x)
You won't see any faces
And the old familiar places
When the day turns as black as night can be

God will give you this last chance to let us go (2x)
As midnight passes by-y,
All your firstborn sons will die-ie;
And your people will cry out if we can't go.

Bad things will come to Egypt, don't you know (2x)

Bad things will come to Egypt (2x)

Bad things will come to Egypt till we go.

[from *We Tell It To Our Children* - Mary Ann Barrows Wark]

4) PLACE OF CHOICE

Narrator: Moses then summoned all the Elders of Israel and said to them:

Moses: Go at once and get sheep for your families and a slaughter a Paschal Lamb. Then smear lamb blood on the two doorposts. The Eternal One will Pass-Over the house and when the blood on the doorpost is seen, the destroyer will save you and your family. You shall keep this as a rule for you and your children for all time, a remembrance of the promise of divine revelation.

Narrator: The Israelites did all the Eternal One had commanded Moses and Aaron. By midnight the firstborn among the Egyptians had been struck dead. Before the night was over Pharaoh arose, and seeing the anguish of the Egyptians, called Moses and Aaron and said:

Pharaoh: Up with you! Be off and leave my people, you and your Israelites! Go and worship your God, as you ask. Go and ask your God's blessing upon me as well...

Narrator: And so, in haste, the Israelites prepared for departure from Egyptian soil. The dough they had brought from Egypt they baked into unleavened cakes, because there was no time for leavening. The Israelites had settled in Egypt for 430 years. At the end of this time, on this very day, all the tribes came out of Egypt. This was a night of vigil as the Eternal One waited to bring them out of bondage. It is the night of divine revelation; and it is to be remembered in all generations.

Read *Rabban Gamliel Hayah Omer*

REFLECTION ON THE PLACE OF CHOICE

What are the choices you face in order to experience liberation?

How are you responding to those choices?

What do you have to sacrifice in order to be liberated?

5) PLACE OF LIBERATION

Narrator: In every generation a person must view herself or himself as though she or he had come forth from Egypt, as it is written: "And you shall tell your child on that day saying: 'on account of this thing which the Eternal One did for me when I came out of Egypt.'" But it was not only our ancestors whom the Holy Blessed One redeemed, but equally redeemed us along with them, as it is written: "And the Eternal One brought us forth from there in order to bring us to and give us the land which had been sworn to our ancestors."

Narrator: And so that night of Pass-Over, which is also this night, was a night of divine revelation for the Israelites. The Eternal One, who manifested for our ancestors, and continues to be present for us, delivered the Children of Israel from the Egyptians. And the Israelites sang:

Together: I will sing to the Eternal One for the glorious triumph. Adonai is my strength and might, my salvation. May the Holy Blessed One who watches over my ancestors and all generations liberate each of us, in our own way, in each generation, in all generations. May divine revelation manifest in our times, as in times of old, and may all women and men, all nations and cultures, be freed from the tyranny of oppression and slavery.

Narrator: And the women, who had packed their timbrels and drums for the journey, prepared to sing a song of liberation:

BY THE SHORES © Geela Rayzel Raphael

By the shores, by the shores, of the Red, Red Sea,
By the shores of the Red, Red Sea;
The light of day lit up the night;
The children, they were free.

Chorus: And Miriam took her timbrel out and all the women danced. (2X)
Va- te-kach Miriam ha-nivea et ha tof b'ya'ada,
V'taytzeh-na kol ha-nashim ah-cha-re-ha.

They danced, they danced; Oh, how they danced. They danced the night away;
Clapped their hands and stamped their feet; With voices loud they praised.
They danced with joy; they danced with grace; They danced on nimble feet;
Kicked up their heels, threw back their heads; Hypnotic with the beat. *Chorus*

They danced so hard, they danced so fast; They danced with movement strong
Laughed and cried, brought out alive, They danced until the dawn.
Some carrying child, some baking bread; Weeping as they prayed
But when they heard the music start; They put their pain away. *Chorus*

Enticed to sing, drawn to move; Mesmerized by such emotion
The men saw us reach out our hands; Stretching across the ocean.
As they watched, and they clapped, they began to sway; Drawn to ride the wave
and all our brothers began to dance; They dance with us today!
They danced, we dance; Shechinah dance
They danced the night away;
And all the people began to sing; We're singing 'til this day!! *Chorus*

REFLECTION ON THE PLACE OF LIBERATION

What is your vision of liberation in your own life?
What are the steps you need to take to experience liberation?

Read *Betzeit Yisrael mi'Mitzrayim*

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