
Sichos in English Classics 46

The Significance of Celebration 70



**Shabbos Parshas Shmos
21st Day of Teves, 5752 (1992)**



Sichos In English
788 Eastern Parkway
Brooklyn, New York 11213
www.sie.org

IN PLACE OF AN INTRODUCTION

At the Shloshim of R' Yonah Avtzon A"H, Director of Sichos in English, a resolution was taken to reprint the original weekly Sichos in English publications.

To fulfill this, a weekly booklet including a translation of a *farbrengen* as it was first published will be distributed. Our intention is to reprint the entire set in the near future.

Following the Sichos we will include an addendum with pictures, notes, and insights into the process of its publication.

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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CELEBRATION 70



Shabbos Parshas Shmos
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FROM THE EXODUS TO REDEMPTION

1. On the verse, “These are the names of the children of Israel who came to Egypt,” the *Midrash* comments that the names of the twelve tribes are mentioned in connection with the redemption of the Jewish people. This is seemingly difficult, for the verse mentions the descent into Egypt and similarly, the narrative which follows mentions the beginning of the Jews’ servitude, seemingly the direct opposite of the redemption.¹

A second opinion in the *Midrash* states that the names of the twelve tribes are mentioned to emphasize that they descended into Egypt with the names Reuven, Shimon... and ascended after the redemption with these very same names. Thus the emphasis is on the merit of the Jewish people, that throughout the Egyptian exile, they did not change their names.

The implication of both of these passages is, however, that the purpose of the narrative is to emphasize that one must appreciate the descent into Egypt as a phase in the redemption of the Jewish people, and indeed as connected with their ultimate redemption.² In that context, the obligation to recall — and relive — the exodus

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1. This question is further reinforced by the continuation of the *Midrash* which emphasizes a connection, not only to the Redemption from Egypt, but also to the Future Redemption. It states that the name Yosef alludes to the time when G-d “will redeem Israel from the wicked kingdom as it is written, “G-d will again (*yosif*) extend His hand a second time to take possession of the remnant of His people...”
 2. For our Sages have emphasized that all the exiles are associated with the Egyptian exile.

from Egypt every day serves as a catalyst to bring about the ultimate Redemption.

18 GOING ON 70

The relevance of this concept is reinforced by the following passage (from the conclusion of the first tractate of *Berachos*, quoted also in the *Pesach Haggadah*):

Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah said: I am like a person seventy years old and yet I did not merit (to understand the source for the obligation) to recall the exodus from Egypt at night until Ben Zoma explained: “It is written, ‘so that you recall the day you left Egypt all the days of your life.’ ‘The days of your life,’ this refers to the actual days. ‘All the days of your life,’ includes the nights as well.” Our Sages say: “‘The days of your life,’ this refers to the present era. ‘All the days of your life,’ includes the Era of the Redemption.”

Rashi emphasizes that Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah was not in fact seventy years old at the time. When he was eighteen, the Sages removed Rabban Gamliel from the position of *Nasi* and appointed Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah in his place. That night his beard sprouted grey hairs so that he appeared to be seventy years old. On the following day, Ben Zoma gave the above explanation. From this narrative, it appears that these concepts, Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah’s appointment to the position of *Nasi* and his becoming “like a person seventy years old” relate to the concept of recalling the exodus from Egypt every day.

To explain: The exodus from Egypt “is a great fundamental principle... of our Torah and faith” and it represents the opening of the potential for all redemption. At that time, the Jews became designated as G-d’s “servants and not the servants of servants.” The freedom granted at that time, continues at all times.

In a spiritual sense, the exodus from Egypt represents the liberation of the G-dly soul from the boundaries and limitations (*meitzarim* in Hebrew) of the body and the animal soul, and in general, of the entire material environment in which we live. This grants the potential for them to become united with G-d through the Torah and its *mitzvos*. Since these are fundamental concepts

within the Torah and *Yiddishkeit*, we are obligated to recall the exodus every day.

3 MODES OF EXODUS

In terms of our spiritual service, there are three different counterparts in regard to this obligation:

a) The obligation to recall the exodus during the day — i.e., each day of a person's life, he must go beyond his boundaries and limitations as mentioned above.

b) The obligation to recall the exodus at night — i.e., to carry out this service during the night of exile.

c) The obligation to recall the exodus in the Era of the Redemption³ — although the Future Redemption will surpass the exodus from Egypt. It will be a redemption that will not be followed by exile, for “I will cause the spirit of impurity to pass away from the earth,” in contrast to the redemption from Egypt when the potential for evil remained in the world.⁴ Nevertheless, we will recall the exodus from Egypt even in that era.

To explain: The exodus from Egypt opened the potential for all future redemptions. Furthermore, had the Jewish people merited they would have proceeded directly from the exodus from Egypt to the Ultimate Redemption.⁵ Thus the two, the exodus from Egypt and the Ultimate Redemption are in essence a single entity. Indeed, in *Chassidic* thought, it is explained that the entire period of time from the exodus until the Future Redemption is described as “the days of your exodus from Egypt.” For the exodus will not be complete until the Ultimate Redemption is realized. Although many thousands of years have passed from the exodus, this is the result of

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3. According to many opinions, Rabbi Elazar Ben Azariah and Ben Zoma also accept the concept stated by the Sages, the difference between them is merely the exegesis of the verse. Even according to the opinions that they differ as to the obligation to recall the exodus in the Era of the Redemption, the concepts stated are relevant in regard to our spiritual service.
 4. And similarly, the potential for evil remained within the Jewish people. Hence, it was necessary for them to flee from Egypt as explained in *Tanya*.
 5. This is alluded to in the song sang after the crossing of the Red Sea, which concludes, “G-d will reign forever and ever” which is an allusion to the ultimate manifestation of His sovereignty in the Era of the Redemption.

external factors. Consequently, “all the days of your life” must be pointed to a single goal,” “to bring the Era of the Redemption.”⁶

Based on the above, we can understand why the exodus will be recalled in the Era of the Redemption. For as explained above, the exodus marked the beginning of the process which leads to the Ultimate Redemption. Also, the service associated with the exodus possesses an advantage, for it reflects the power of the Jewish people to serve G-d even when the forces of evil continue to exist. Nevertheless, in the Era of the Redemption, the recollection of the exodus will be merely a secondary factor, because the Ultimate Redemption will be much fuller and more complete than the redemption from Egypt.

Therefore, the Sages add to Ben Zoma’s statements by saying that the exodus from Egypt will be relevant to the spiritual service of the Jews, not only in the time of exile, but even in the ultimate perfection of the Era of the Redemption.

“LEHAVI” — TO BRING

The expression *lehavi yemos haMashiach*, translated as “to include the Era of the Redemption,” literally means “to bring the Era of the Redemption.” This implies that the Sages were not merely making a statement that will be relevant in the Era of the Redemption, but rather stated a concept relevant to the Jews at all times: A Jew must realize that “all the days of his” must be dedicated to a single goal, “to bring the Era of the Redemption.”

This implies two points: Firstly, one must anticipate the Redemption and experience a foretaste of it in his contemporary experience, i.e., bring the Era of the Redemption into “all the days of his life.” Secondly, that doing so will act as a catalyst and hasten the actual coming of the Redemption.

TRUE LEADERSHIP - 70 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

Based on the above, we can explain the connection between the above concept and Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah and his appointment to the position of *Nasi*. The goal of a *Nasi* is to establish a

6. See the *Sichos Shabbos Parshas Toldos*, 5752.

connection between the entire Jewish people and the Ultimate Redemption, to give the Jews a foretaste of Redemption while they are in exile. Therefore, on the day Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah was appointed *Nasi*, he dedicated himself to studying the concept of redemption.

On the basis of the above, we can also understand the miraculous phenomenon that occurred in regard to Rabbi Elazar's physical person, that in one night, he grew a grey beard resembling that of a seventy year old sage. Seventy is the normal span of a person's life as it is written, "The days of our lives are seventy years." For seventy is associated with the refinement of our entire emotional make-up (our seven emotional characteristics as they include all ten powers of the soul).⁷ All of these qualities should be permeated by the *ayin* (the numerical equivalent of seventy, which also means "eye") of holiness, i.e., that it will be possible to see G-dliness. (This represents a foreglimpse of the Era of the Redemption, for it is in that era that we will merit the fulfillment of the prophecy, "All flesh will see that it is the mouth of G-d that has spoken.")

Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah accomplished this service in his youth. At the age of eighteen, he had already refined his emotional characteristics and his involvement with the world at large. He had experienced the exodus from Egypt at night, i.e., even before the Redemption, he had internalized its service. As such, he was prepared to serve as the *Nasi*.⁸

AN OPEN HOUSE

The unique nature of Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah's contribution can be appreciated by the continuation of the narrative of the events which transpired on the day on which he was appointed *Nasi*. The Talmud relates that previously Rabban Gamliel had enforced

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7. In a larger sense, this refers to the refinement of the world at large and its seventy nations.
 8. His unique potential is alluded to in his name Elazar ben Azariah. Both the names Elazar (אלעזר) and Azariah (עזריה) can be broken up into expressions א-ל עזר and עזר י-ה which mean that "G-d helps," i.e., he was granted a special dispensation of Divine assistance to bring the Jews to the Redemption.

restrictions on the students entering the House of Study. “Any student whose inner being was not equivalent to his external mode of conduct was prevented from entering.” When Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah was appointed *Nasi*, the watchman at the entrance to the House of Study was removed and many more students entered.

To explain this narrative: Rabban Gamliel reflected a mode of conduct appropriate to the Era of the Redemption,⁹ the age when “I will cause the spirit of impurity to pass away from this world.” Therefore, he placed restrictions on the students who could enter the House of Study, allowing only those who could reflect that level to enter.

In contrast, Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah was associated with the potential to “recall the exodus from Egypt at night,” to allow the Jews in the night of exile to experience redemption. Therefore, he allowed many more students to enter the House of Study. Although their immediate level of refinement was not comparable to that of the Era of the Redemption, he was confident that ultimately this experience would allow these students to rise to this level.

(The success of his approach is reflected in the fact that, as the narrative continues, for the entire period that Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah served as *Nasi*, Rabban Gamliel attended the House of Study. This indicates that Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah’s approach gained the support and assistance of Rabban Gamliel.)

UNIVERSAL MESSAGE

The *Sefer Yetzirah* emphasizes that “the beginning is rooted in the end, and the end in the beginning.” Thus there is a connection between the obligation to recall the exodus from Egypt at night (and in the Era of the Redemption) and the beginning of the tractate of *Berachos*, “From which time¹⁰ should the *Shema* be recited?” For the recitation of the *Shema* and the acceptance of the yoke of Heaven

9. We see a parallel to this in the relevance of the teachings of the School of Shammai. Although their *halachic* decisions are not accepted at present, they will be accepted in the Era of the Redemption.

10. *Me’aymasai*, the Hebrew for “from what time,” can also be interpreted to mean “With awe,” alluding to the concept that the recitation of the *Shema* and the totality of our service of G-d must be carried out *me’ayma*, with true awe of G-d.

associated with it is analogous with the exodus from Egypt. And both of these services can — and must — be carried out “at night,” in the darkness of exile.

Similarly, there is a connection between these concepts and the conclusion of the entire Talmud:

Whoever studies Torah laws every day is assured of life in the World to Come as it is written, “*Halichos* (the ways of) the world are his.” Do not read *halichos*, but *halachos* (Torah laws).

For the latter teaching indicates how through Torah study, one can anticipate the level of the World to Come at present.

Similarly, the above concepts relate to the conclusion of the entire *Mishnah*: “The Holy One, blessed be He, did not find a vessel capable of holding blessing for the Jewish people except peace as it is written, ‘G-d endowed His people with strength; G-d will bless His people with peace.’” For the ultimate conception of peace will be in the Era of the Redemption. Then we will merit the manifestation in a full sense of the verse, “G-d will redeem my soul in peace.”

The above ideas relate to the concepts explained at the outset, that the descent to Egypt was intended to lead to the exodus. For the ultimate purpose of the exile in Egypt, and indeed the purpose of “all the days of one’s life,” is to “bring the Era of the Redemption.”¹¹

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LEARN YOUR RAMBAM!

2. There is a connection between the above concepts and the *Rambam’s yahrzeit*, the 20th of Teves, which fell on the previous Friday this year. (Thus it has an open connection to the spiritual service of the present day. Our Sages taught, “Whoever prepares on Friday, will eat on Shabbos.” This includes not only the preparation of physical food, but also for the spiritual service, for the Shabbos day.)

The name *Rambam* is an acronym for the Hebrew words meaning, “I will multiply My wonders in the land of Egypt,” an

11. Herein, there is also a connection to the concept of seventy years described above, for there were “seventy souls” who descended into Egypt with Yaakov.

allusion to the wonders associated with redemption. Similarly, the *Rambam's* spiritual service involved giving Jews, in Egypt, in the night of exile, a foretaste of the Redemption.

Firstly, he lived in the land of Egypt and it was there that he composed his *magnum opus*, the *Mishneh Torah*. As he explained in the Introduction to that work, the *Mishneh Torah* was composed because of the difficulties of exile, because the Jews were unable to derive *halachic* rulings from the Talmud and needed an auxiliary source. Nevertheless, the text that the *Rambam* composed gave the Jews a foretaste of the Era of the Redemption. This is reflected in the fact that it includes laws which will only be relevant in the Era of the Redemption when the *Beis HaMikdash* will be rebuilt and in the conclusion of the text which focuses directly on the Era of the Redemption.¹²

Thus since on the *yahrzeit* of a *tzaddik*, “the totality of his deeds, teaching, and service is revealed and... ‘brings about salvation in the depths of the earth,’” it follows that the *Rambam's yahrzeit*, grants us further potential to anticipate the Redemption.

The above is particularly relevant in the present age when, to borrow an expression from the Previous Rebbe, the Jewish people have completed the service required of them and have even “polished the buttons.” Everything is ready for the Redemption and all that is lacking is that G-d open the eyes of the Jews and allow them to realize that they are sitting at the feast of the Redemption.

There is no need for any further delay, and without any interruption, we will soon proceed from the present era to the Era of the Redemption. The very next moment can be the last moment of the exile and the first moment of the Redemption. As a catalyst for this, we must reflect an attitude of Redemption in our lives, showing how within the exile, we can experience Redemption.

This should include a reinforcement of our study of the *Rambam's* works according to the three pronged plan of study: Three chapters or one chapter a day in the *Mishnah Torah*, or the parallel portions of *Sefer HaMitzvos*. Not only should one study these works himself, he should also influence others to do so.

12. There is also a connection to the concept of seventy mentioned above for the *Rambam* lived to the age of seventy.

(Similarly, an emphasis should be placed on the study of the final chapters of the *Mishneh Torah* which deal with the Era of the Redemption.)

May these efforts lead to the era when — as the *Rambam* states in the conclusion of that text — “The earth will be filled with the knowledge of G-d as the waters cover the ocean bed.”



לעילוי נשמת

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בן הרה"ח הרה"ת ר' מאיר ע"ה

אבצן

מנהל ועד שיחות באנגלית

למעלה מארבעים שנה

שבהמשך פעולותיו בהפצת המעיינות

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