

Letting Go! A personal Yetziat Mitzrayim



Aliza Marton

I heard a great Dvar Torah by Rabbi Yitzchok Breitowitz. He explained that each person must regard themselves as though they were personally liberated from Mitzrayim. As though “I” personally experienced being a “slave” in Mitzrayim. The Brisker Rav says this is the hardest mitzvah. How can I regard myself as a slave? Most of us were never in Mitzrayim and I certainly was never a slave. That was so long ago. What does it have to do with me?

Mitzrayim comes from the root “Meytzar,” meaning constrictions and boundaries. Every person has their own Mitzrayim from within. The Mitzrayim of Gaava—arrogance. The Mitzrayim of laziness. The Mitzrayim of anger. The Mitzrayim of depression. The Mitzrayim of self-loathing and lack of self-esteem. And When HaShem redeemed us from Mitzrayim, he put in a Koach—a special strength—that says: I can be liberated from my own inner Mitzrayim. I can be free from my own inner slavery.

There are three requirements for the Seder night. Recognizing Pesach, Matzo, and Marror.

For Marror, we eat something bitter to remember the slavery. The first step to being able to leave Mitzrayim is to honestly recognize that we are in slavery. That is Marror. Taste the bitter slavery—acknowledge it. Until we recognize that

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something is wrong, we cannot be free. But that’s not enough. Acknowledging it isn’t enough. Some people are in psychotherapy for years, they know every problem they have and don’t do anything about it.

And that’s where Matzo comes in. The Maharal points out that one of the differences between Matzo and Chametz is that chametz represents inertia. Chametz is what happens by itself. Matzo requires taking an action and baking it. So, if Marror represents recognizing the problem, then Matzo says to take some action to address it. We all have moments of inspiration. Unless we do something, even just taking a small action, it’s meaningless. Inspiration comes and goes. In order for it to stick, we must concretize it and take action.

Pesach has many symbolic meanings. The Korban Pesach (lamb) always had to be shared with other people. You weren’t allowed to do it alone. If I want to leave my Mitzrayim and I want to develop my relationship with HaShem, I need to be connected to other people. I

need to have friends. In Koheles, it says two are better than one. Why? Because if one falls, who will pick him up? If there are two, the other will pick him up. In her moments of weakness, I will pick her up and in my moments of weakness, she will pick me up.

Acknowledge the slavery (Marror), take decisive action (Matzo), and be a part of a community (Pesach).

First we have to face the Marror and take action with the Matzo in order to make changes. If we just eat the Marror right away, we can get depressed. We lose hope, we get overwhelmed, and become immobilized. We need to absorb the lesson of the Matzo and only then can we face the Marror. Finally, we combine the problem and the solution, as in the Ko-rech sandwich.

Every year around Pesach time, I begin to feel like I need to let go. Let go of the beliefs that terrify me, paralyze me, and hold me prisoner. Every time we get hurt and hold on to that pain, we suffer a little more. It weighs us down in so many ways. I see it as luggage we hold on to forever. For me, at different times in my life, different experiences would weigh me down.

When I was younger, I had some bad experiences that left me with PTSD. 24/7 I would picture myself being attacked. How would I get out of it? How would I escape?

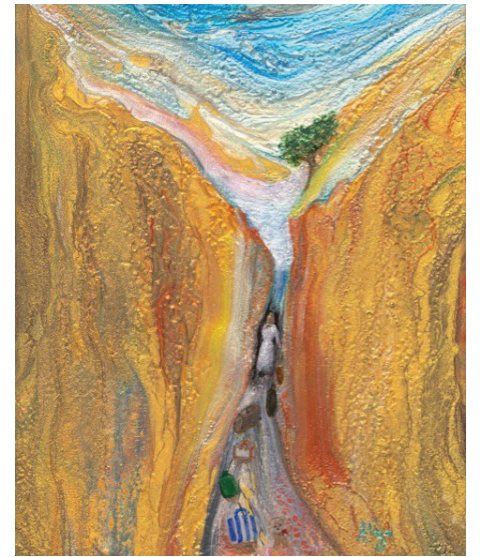
Twenty-six years ago, I went to Israel to stay with my brother and his family in a little yishuv in Gaza. As we drove, different family members pointed out the burned-out car on the side of the road that was ambushed by Arabs who threw Molotov cocktails at the poor family on their drive home. They told me of those that were murdered in the yishuv. And of the time some Arabs sent a donkey with explosives but accidentally blew up a Mercedes instead.

Arriving from the States, still a slave to my fears, not fixing them, but adding to my fears, I could feel my anxiety mounting. I knew I wasn’t going to make it here. My mother, who was born in Egypt and speaks Arabic fluently, would translate what the Arabs were saying on the loudspeakers heard around the yishuv. “You must kill the Jew....” There was no wall separating us. There was just a chain link fence between “us” and “them.” We could see each other. Terrified, I had reached my breaking point. I remember this grassy field in the middle of the yishuv and I looked up to the sky and I said, “HaShem, I can’t... I can’t do it anymore. My bag of fears is too heavy! I just can’t carry it anymore. I need you to carry it.” And Hashem did just that. And I let go! I was able to breathe again. I no longer pictured myself being attacked, but let go. That month

ended up being the greatest catalyst for change in my life. I spoke to HaShem everyday and found Him everywhere and in everything.

I once heard Rabbi Avraham Twersky describe how a lobster grows. The lobster is a soft mushy animal with a hard rigid shell. As it grows, the shell becomes very confining. And if it feels uncomfortable, it then hides under rocks from predatory fish, leaving its shell to form a new one. Every time this lobster attempts to grow and gets uncomfortable, he has to break through the hard exterior, it’s “Mitzrayim,” and forms a new shell. The lobster does this many times. The stimulus for the lobster to grow is that it feels uncomfortable. If the lobster took a painkiller to not feel its discomfort, it wouldn’t grow. Sometimes that uncomfortable Mitzrayim is what we need to help us get there. What is your Mitzrayim? Will you set yourself free?

In this painting here, this woman is trying to squeeze through her Mitzrayim and set herself free. In order to do this she must let go of all that doesn’t serve her well. Sometimes we carry too much baggage. First little bags from our childhood, and bigger through adulthood. Let



go and enjoy the Freedom! Wishing you all a happy and kosher Pesach!

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