

~~How Do We Achieve AT TRUTH~~

BO

Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

In the Torah portion, Bo, we learn about the last plagues that G-d sent to Egypt. G-d had wanted that Pharaoh would recognize that slavery was wrong. The Rabbis explain this when it said that G-d hardened His heart it means that He gave them the strength to withstand the suffering of the plagues. Pharaoh was to recognize himself that slavery was wrong. The plagues were just to direct his thinking toward it. The Jewish people were to leave Egypt. The Torah says that it was "a night of watching unto the Lord for bringing them out of the land of Egypt". This same night is a night of watching for the Lord for all the children of Israel throughout the generations. We can understand why this was called a night of watching for Israel and, of course, we observe and watch on that night, but why is this called a night of watching for G-d? After all, G-d is above time. That's what His name, Yud Kay Vahv Kay, symbolizes. In fact, since Einstein we know that time is not constant. We all have read science fiction stories about how someone took a long spaceship ride and came back to earth in what he thought was his aging process in two years, only to find that the generation that was alive now on earth were his great-great-grandchildren. G-d does not need a special night to watch. What is He watching? Perhaps we can understand this question if we analyze the last two plagues. All the plagues but the last one could be seen as natural occurrences. The river got filled with a red parasite which killed all the fish, etc. In fact, there are red tides in Florida to this day. Because the river was no longer habitable the frogs deserted it and entered the people's homes. Then vermin came, etc. The ninth plague, darkness, could be explained as a result of a volcanic eruption. The last plague, though, is a supernatural type of plague. We know of no disease which attacks only the firstborn. The Rabbis say that this ninth plague of darkness was a terrible plague, the worst. The Torah describes it this way: "No man saw his brother and no one rose from his place for three days and to all Israel there was light in their habitations." The Rabbis explain that the worst plague is when nobody can see his brother. Today we are all afflicted with the idea that the most important thing in life is personal growth and nobody, it seems, wants to bother with anybody else. You do not want to look at your brother and help him because it may stifle your growth. In America today so many people believe this. Rabbi Greenblatt was telling me how his daughter,

who lives in New York, got sick on a subway and fainted. Nobody helped her. She just lay there until she revived. Nobody wants to see his brother. The Torah here is teaching us that there can be no personal growth without seeing your brother. Any growth you really have is selfishness. In order to have growth you must look at your brother. G-d was watching to see whether Israel is still looking at their brother. If they are not then they are not really worthy of their freedom. In the last plague, the striking of the firstborn, we learn that the Jewish people were spared because they put the blood of the lamb on their doorpost. The lamb was a symbol of Egyptian idolatry. We had to reject it entirely before we were deserving of freedom. The Midrash says that not only was the blood of the lamb put on the door, but also the blood of circumcision. The Jewish people in Egypt had forsaken circumcision. When they were to leave the Jewish people not only had to show that they were against evil things, slavery and idolatry, but that they were for Jewish values. All too often today we find that our young people especially are against the evils they find in society but they really, in many instances, do not have Jewish solutions. Most of the positive movements in the West were founded by Jews; the labor unions, civil rights, even the Red Cross in America, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, etc. It is not, though, enough to be against things. We must also be for things with positive Jewish values. Pesach, then, is a night of watching for G-d, too. He is watching whether or not she helps each other and not only rejects false views but also works to implement positive Jewish views. If we do that then we will remain free forever internally if not externally. We Jews must not only point out faults but we must, like those who founded the labor unions and worked for civil rights, be positive and we must always be positive for particular Jewish values as well. The blood of the circumcision was mixed with the blood of the lamb. If we do then we will be assured that we will be free inwardly. G-d is watching to see how we are acting. The story about the man who was 80 years old. He lifted his eyes up to G-d and said, "G-d, I never asked You for anything all my life. I have struggled and tried to do my best. I have never asked You for anything. Now I am going to ask You for one little thing. Let me win the New York lottery." The next day he opened the paper and his name was not in there. He lifted his

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eyes to heaven and said, "G-d, why didn't I win? What's going on here? Let me win next week." The next week he opened the paper and, sure enough, he didn't win. He once again looked up and said, "G-d, what's wrong with You? Why didn't I win?" He heard a heavenly voice say, "Mr. Goldberg, give Me a break. Don't you think you should buy a ticket first?" We all must buy a ticket first. We must know what we are against, but we must be positive for something. Judaism can only survive if we are for Jewish values.

This Torah portion deals with the last few plagues of the Jewish people's exodus from Egypt. They were actually thrust out. The Egyptians kicked them out at the end. In this Torah portion we also learn the first commandments that were given to the Jewish people. We learn how the very first commandment was to set up a calendar. The second commandment was to take a lamb on the 10th of the month and to slaughter it on the 14th. The third commandment was that all the people were to gather together in family units and eat the lamb. Enough families should gather to make sure to have enough to eat the lamb. This seems very strange that these are the first commandments which were given to the Jewish people. These do not seem to be the type of commandments that you would give to slaves who were about to go free. There were no ringing declarations in them. There are no appeals to brotherhood, etc. These three commandments, though, illustrate what the Jewish conception of freedom is. What differentiates a slave from a free man in Jewish law? A slave has three disabilities in Jewish law. One, he cannot testify as a witness in any matter. Second, he is not bound by any commandments that have to do with time. Three, he cannot get married. A slave suffers from these three disabilities. Because slavery denies a person three important characteristics which make up freedom. To our modern way of thinking freedom means that you can do anything you want when you want to whomever you please. Pharaoh probably thought he was defending his freedom when he resisted Moses' efforts to free the slaves. Freedom in our modern conception means we are not bound to anything. To Judaism, on the other hand, freedom means that you have no master but you are bound by certain constraints otherwise you will not have freedom. To a slave time has no meaning. He can make no progress. He cannot get ahead. He has no sense of responsibility. All he wants to do is get through the day without injury. The concentration camp time was inverted. Days dragged but the years sped by because

every day was really the same. If we carefully analyze what we really are we will find that we are actually only an alarm clock, a time bomb. Each of us has hormones that go off at intervals that change us, that make us grow and eventually bring our death. The cells we have this year in our body are not the same cells we had last year, but scientists have found that even if we take cells and put them in optimum environments they will only reproduce a certain amount of times and then they will stop. We are like programmed entities who go through cycles. Time is very important. We must seize time or we will lose our freedom to act. A slave has no time. A free man knows how to use time, to seize it. A slave also is not bound by truth. He lives under fear and truth is second to survival. The Jewish people were commanded to take the lamb and kill it. Other religions misinterpret the meaning of the lamb. The lamb was worshipped by the Egyptians. It was a symbol of falsehood. In order to be free you have to recognize that you are bound by the truth, that you must live lives according to the truth. If you try to escape from the truth you become a slave of your own fantasies. Finally, freedom means that you are bound by relationships, that you can have relationships. You are bound by your family. A slave can have no family. Children, spouses are bought and sold. In order to be free we must be bound by time, by truth, and by family. This is also why the Sabbath and the Tephillin are signs which remind all Jews of the exodus. They are signs of freedom. The Sabbath has to do with time and the Tephillin, on the hand and head show that we are bound by truth and by relationships. In our day many people have become slaves because they do not realize that they have to be bound. The story about the man who came into the country club a little drunk yelling, "Happy New Year" at which point the people looked at him and said, "What are you talking about? It's the middle of May". "Oh my gosh" yelled the man, "my wife is going to kill me. I've never been this late before". Freedom requires a consciousness of time, relationships and truth

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There are two main signs besides the Seder for remembering the Exodus from Egypt. One of them is Shabbos and the other is the tephillin. Why should the tephillin be considered a sign of the Exodus? The Jewish people did not put tephillin on in Egypt and the tephillin had nothing at all to do with the Exodus. The answer to this question, I believe, is found in the basic Jewish premise that the world is not redeemed. There are never any perfect solutions. Any solution always brings in its wake other problems, but partial solutions are important. It is much better to have the problem of too much food rather than the problem of no food. It is much better to have the problems of freedom than the problems of slavery. Many times people will say that something has failed because it has not solved all the problems. They fail to realize that we can never solve all of any problem. All our solutions will end up spawning new problems. It is not true that the great society failed. Lyndon Johnson's programs solved many of the problems of America, but not all of them. It is true that Jewish education will not solve all the Jewish problems. It is true that the State of Israel will also not solve all the Jewish problems, but it is much better to have Jewish education than not and to have the State of Israel than not to have it. In this week's Torah portion, Bo, we learn how the Jewish people were to be free. Sure, their freedom would bring problems but freedom's problems are so much better than slavery. According to Halacha, there are three differences between a slave and a free man. In the olden days if a Jew owned a slave the slave had to agree to be circumcised or he would have to be sold or given back to his original master. Today, thank heaven, there is no such thing as slavery. A slave cannot be a witness. A slave could not get married. A slave did not observe the Commandments having to do with time. To be a slave means that you really have no time. Time is not yours. There is nothing you can accomplish, nothing you can do. The days drag on and the years fly by. To a slave there is no truth, because he must squelch his true feelings. He does not want to get beaten or killed. A slave has no family because children and his wife can be separated from him. A free man, though, is bound by time and by truth and by family. Freedom does not mean you can do whatever you want to do. You have to make good use of your time otherwise you are a

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slave. You have to be bound by truth, by trying to do the right thing otherwise you are a slave. And you have to be bound by family otherwise you are a slave. The Sabbath teaches a Jew about time. The Seder teaches the Jew about family, and the tephillin teaches a Jew that you must bind truth to your hand, your heart and your mind. There is a story about a teacher who asked the class, "A mother has five children but only four potatoes. How can she divide the potatoes equally among the children?" One of the boys said, "I know, she should mash them". Maybe some of the children will not like mashed potatoes but this partial solution is still a good solution. Freedom brings problems. Freedom binds us to the truth, to family, and to time.

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In the Torah portion, Bo, we learn about Layed Shimureem. We learn about the night of watching. This was the night in which the Jewish people put the blood of the lamb on the door and they made a Seder. They were to eat the lamb and to eat it with their loins girded and their shoes on and their staff in their hand. They were even to eat Matzah and Moror. They had a real Seder. It is strange, though, that they had a real Seder commemorating their freedom when they were not free yet. In the sentence before we learn about Layed Shimureem we learn that it was at the end of 430 years. According to the Rabbis, it was 430 years since the promise was made to Abraham that his children would inherit the Land of Israel, but first they would go down to Egypt. They had actually only spent 210 years in Egypt. It says that this was a "night of watching for G-d and Israel throughout all their generations". It does seem strange, though, that they were celebrating the Exodus before they were free. They did not leave Egypt until the next morning. What is this all about? In life there is an objective state and a subjective state. We all live in our minds as well as in the world. One of the big errors of modern man is to fail to realize that there are these two different realms of human living. Especially since the second World War, people are being taught to do what feels good. Their subjective state is all that counts. If something feels good to them then it must be good, and if something does not feel good to them then it must be bad. There are no objective criteria right and wrong just how to feel about something. The only problem with this type of morality is that many times it can feel good to kill and hurt somebody, but we cannot say that it is good. People say revenge is sweet, but that does not make it right or good. We in Judaism have always believed that there are objective criteria outside ourselves that make for right or wrong,

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and when there is a conflict between what we want to do and what we should do, then we have to do what we should do. It is not always easy, and many times we fail, but that's why we have the concept of Teshuva, or repentance, so we can try again. We do not say, though, that because I failed to do the right thing I am going to do the wrong thing and it is right. The whole purpose of Jewish education, the Rabbis have commented, is to make you want to do what you should do, to get you so involved in the issues at hand that you cannot but want to do the right thing. Jewish education is not just to teach you a few rituals. It is to connect you in life so that you will always want to do the right thing. The end result is not as important as learning how we got there and why and how we are doing things. It is not enough just to tell a person to make the Kiddush. After learning six blatt of Gemora on the Kiddush and Shabbos you understand it much deeper and you want to do it. When Jewish learning stops the Jewish religion stops. Many Jews do not want to learn because they do not want to do what they know they should do in many areas of life. I remember when several young South African boys came here a few years ago and they all told me how stupid football was, how slow it was compared to soccer, how it is so complicated with tight ends and flankers, etc. However, after a few years I notice that these same boys are following football more avidly than even American boys. They got into the game. They understand all its intricacies. They understand it thoroughly and they really want to go see it and play it. This is the same thing with many aspects of Judaism. You have to know about it, know its intricacies and then you will want to do it. This is what Layel Shimureem is reaching us. The Jewish people were not free yet, but they had prepared so much for

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it, they had learned so much about it that they could feel and taste it even before they had it. Freedom is sometimes elusive and sometimes people would rather not have it if it means sacrifice, but the Jewish people had prepared for it. That's why even to this day Pesach is a holiday we prepare for more than any other holiday, and they could taste it and would, therefore, appreciate it even more when they were given it. In life many times many people are failures because they do not attack their tasks with enthusiasm, with drive. They do not feel inside that the tasks they are doing are important or worthwhile or interesting and, therefore, they only go through the motions and they fail. There is a very strange Medrash which says that the blood the Jewish people put on the door the night before they were to leave Egypt contained not only the blood of the lamb but also the blood of circumcision. The lamb, of course, was a symbol of Egypt culture. The people worshipped the lamb especially at that time of the year. Even today the sign of the Zodiac for that time of the year is Aries, a fancy word of lamb. The Jewish people had to reject the pagan false concepts of Egypt. That's why the blood of the lamb had to be used. But, it is not enough just to be against things. Unfortunately, there are many Jews today who are only Jews because they are against things, not because they are for Judaism. They remain Jews only because of anti-Semitism. They remain Jews only because they are against the false ideas of the outside world, but they, themselves, do not really believe in Judaism. In fact, they probably have even negative views about it. That is not enough to be against something in order to accomplish important and worthwhile things. You must be for something. The Jews, before they could get freedom, had to be against slavery and the Egyptian culture, and they also had to be for Judaism. That's why this strange Medrash says that

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the blood of circumcision was placed along with the blood of the lamb on the door. The blood of the lamb stands for negative rejection. The blood of the circumcision stands for a positive commitment to Jewish values. In our day and age, unfortunately, there are not enough people who are for things. The Jewish people celebrated a Seder even before they left Egypt celebrating their freedom because internally they were already free. Internally it was already theirs. They had rejected Egyptian slavery and had believed in Jewish goals. They celebrated even before they were free physically because mentally and spiritually they were already free. This made possible their physical redemption. Today when we attack tasks we must be filled with enthusiasm and belief in our task otherwise we will not succeed. Anticipation and preparation are more important than the task, itself. That's why Jewish learning is so important and critical. The story about a man who was walking down a dark alley and was beset by a bandit who wanted his money. He fought with the bandit for over an hour. The bandit finally overcame him and said, "Give me your wallet." When he opened it there was only 50¢ in it. He said, "Why did you fight for over an hour for 50¢?" The man replied, "I didn't fight over the 50¢. I thought you wanted the \$100 in my shoe." It is not inner things that people can see that are the most important. That determines whether or not we will be a success.

How Free Can We Be

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Many times people come to me and say, "Rabbi, you have to help me. I feel trapped. Things are caving in all around me. I am not in control. I do not know what is happening. I feel powerless, and I want to gain some feeling of freedom and independence. I feel like I am a pawn, a robot. I am not the true me. I want to feel free." Usually, the people who come to me with this feeling are suffering from a midlife crisis. They wake up to the fact that they are 40 or 45 or 50, and they panic. They feel that they have not lived.

In their youth, they worked hard and got good grades mainly to please their parents. They spent long years in school preparing for a career, and then after they embarked upon a career, they got married. They, again, had to put in long hours in order to be a professional success and to support their families. Suddenly, they feel trapped. Is this what life is all about, hard work, constant effort? They feel they have never had freedom. They want it. Many times these people actually throw over their families and even their professions in order to try to be free and to find out who they really are. Unfortunately for them, most of the time they find out that who they really are is the person they were before they threw everything over. They then frantically try to regain what they had given up, and find, much to their chagrin, that in most instances it is very difficult and, many times, impossible. They realize now that their quest for a feeling of freedom was an illusion, and that they really felt the best when they had definite goals and people to work for who needed them.

Freedom is a difficult proposition. In fact, modern man has been going in two directions on the subject for at least the past 100 years. On

the one hand we have been proclaiming that we all must be free to do what we want, when we want, how we want, while, on the other hand, we have been championing philosophical materialism which states that man is only the product of cause and effect, and that we really have no freedom at all. Just as when we throw a ball into the air we can determine where and how it will land by filling in a scientific formula, so, too, when we deal with man all we need to know is the differing forces working on him in order to calculate how he will act. You apply certain forces and his actions are inevitable. Materialism, in a philosophical sense, does not mean that we are all interested in getting Cadillacs and swimming pools and big houses. It means that there are no forces working on us except the forces that can be seen and that these forces can be determined in the same way that we determine the forces that act upon the a-beam of a birdge we are building.

In the Torah portion, Bo, we learn how the Jewish people gained their freedom from Egypt. At the same time, we learn something very strange. We learn how the first Commandment which was given to the Jewish people was the commandment to construct a calendar, and not just any calendar, but a lunar calendar. We are told "Ha-Chodesh Haze Lochem" "this month is for you". Later on we learn "V'hoyo Lochem", "and it shall be to you". The Rabbis interpret this to mean that the Sanhedrin was to determine the dates for the festivals in Judaism and were to declare the new moons. In Biblical and early Talmudic times, the Sanhedrin fixed the new moons by actual observation and the dates of the new moons were sent out by messengers from Jerusalem to the surrounding countries. A lunar month is $29\frac{1}{2}$ days. Since there is no such thing as a half a day in nature, some months had to be 29 days and some months had to be 30 days. The

Rabbis were able to manipulate the calendar so that Yom Kippur never fell on a Friday or a Sunday.

The reason that this Commandment of constructing a calendar was so important was because it explains what freedom is all about. Fixing the calendar is really a paradigm of man's freedom in the world. Ultimate time is fixed but there is still a role for man to play in it. In determining the individual months we can control when the holidays occur. There is a freedom within order. The Sanhedrin could change when the holidays occurred by many days by how they arranged the calendar. Their control of leap years, which occur seven out of every nineteen years when we add a whole month to make sure that the lunar calendar, which contains only 354 days, would jibe with the solar calendar of $365\frac{1}{4}$ days, gave the Rabbis even greater leeway in determining when the holidays occurred.

This idea of freedom within order is very similar to the findings of modern science where scientific laws are conceived of as probabilities and not absolutes. The second law of thermodynamics is a probability. We do not know what an individual electron is going to do. Scientific laws are like weather forecasts which predict that the chances for rain are 60%, 80%, 90%. Most scientific laws are like this, too, except that the chances given can be 99.99%. There is then a certain amount of play in all scientific laws. There is now, once again, a place for G-d in science. G-d can intervene in the world without seeming to intervene. The basic scientific law holds, but on a subatomic level things are not predictable. This fits exactly the Jewish view of freedom. The first Commandment that G-d gave us was the Commandment of the calendar in order to emphasize this fact. It was to show us what freedom is

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and how we are to use it. This example of the calendar was meant to show us that not everything was determined. We could still determine when the holidays occur. However, not everything was possible either.

There were still only $365\frac{1}{4}$ days in a solar calendar year and still only $29\frac{1}{2}$ days in the lunar month. There is, though, still enough ambiguity in the system so that we can, within ~~the~~ limits, manipulate the calendar.

Freedom with order. This is the Jewish definition of freedom. We cannot free ourselves from ^{the} restraints of time. We are mortal. We age and we die. We are subject to all sorts of hormonal pressures. We need others. We have intense drives and ambitions and compelling needs.

However, they do not completely determine us. Within this framework we can make innumerable decisions which can add immeasurably to the quality of our life and our well-being. However, we cannot [✓] alter absolutely our human condition. We cannot act at 45 or 50 as if we ^{were} ~~are~~ 18 or 20. Our bodies cannot take it and our emotions cannot take it and we will end up, most of the time, much worse off than before. We have the ability to manipulate the calendar, but we cannot make Yom Kippur come out in the spring or Pesach come out in the summer. We human beings are 90% or maybe even 99% pre-programmed. However, that 10% or 1% area of our lives in which we can make choices and in which we can act is very important. Anyone who looks at a well-groomed man or woman knows this. Washing the face and combing the hair or putting on makeup or standing up straight is less than 1% of the total physical appearance, but it makes such a difference.

In the Hebrew language we have many words which, when pushed to their extremes, change from a positive to a negative concept. For example,

the word "Kodesh", which means to consecrate or sanctify, can, when this concept is pushed too far, end up to mean a prostitute. In ancient days both men and women would act as prostitutes for different temples and all proceeds from their activities were given to the temples. When a person ^{PUSHES} pushes the concept of consecration, self-sacrifice, too far he ends up by destroying himself. These people became living human sacrifices to their gods. The same is true of the word "Tahor". This word means pure, but it can also mean to whitewash. These words in the Hebrew language illustrate an important concept, that words or ideas pushed too far destroy. They do not build.

Exaggerated ideas of man's freedom or man's dependence crush a person.

They do not enhance his life. Those people who come to me complaining that life is crushing them have not learned either how to make positive choices in the 1% or 10% areas of life where they can, or they have an exaggerated sense of what freedom is, and they want to be free entirely from their own biological, chemical, and acknowledged moral restraints.

When a person shucks off his family and his obligations at midlife, he is not exercising freedom. He is just preparing himself to enter a new slavery. What he or she would be ^{best to} more advised to do would be to stay within the framework that he or she is in and learn how to exercise the many options that are still there open for him or her. We can, within any framework, determine many things, but freedom does not mean that we can determine everything.

Distinguishing Between Needs & Wants

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Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

One of the major problems that we face today is how to distinguish between what we want and what we need. Not everything that we want is something that we need. It is hard to distinguish between the two. When we were children our parents would do this for us. Many times when we were children we would go into a supermarket, grab a candy bar, and say, "I want this. I want this." Our mother would take it from us, put it back on the shelf, and say, "You don't need it," and that would end the matter. But now how do we determine what is it that we need, and what it is that we just want? Wants and needs are two separate things. It is difficult to determine whether something is actually a necessity or just a wish. Many marriages have foundered because the couple could not determine jointly what it was they needed and what it was they just wanted. One spouse would think something was a necessity, and the other would think it was only a want. In life it is difficult to tell what is really a need and what is only a wish.

In the Torah portion Bo we learn about the last plagues which were inflicted on Egypt before Pharaoh finally let the Jewish people go. After the seventh plague, the plague of hail, Pharaoh was told by Moshe that if he continued to refuse to let the Jewish people go, then G-d would send an eighth plague, ^{the} a plague of locusts, that would eat up everything that was left from the hail. Pharaoh did not want to let the Jewish people go, but his own servants came to him and said, "How long will these people be as a trap for us? Send them so that they can serve their G-d." Pharaoh then called back Moshe and he said, "Who will go to serve your G-d?" Moshe said, "We will go with our youth, our elders, our sons and our daughters, our sheep

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and our cattle." Pharaoh got mad and said, "Not so. Only the men will go." Pharaoh did not think it necessary that the whole family leave in order to serve G-d. He would agree to only send the men. Pharaoh was determined that only he could dictate what was necessary for the Jewish people to serve G-d.

The same thing happened again after the ninth plague, the plague of darkness. Pharaoh called Moshe and said, "Go. Worship G-d." He was ~~even~~ willing this time to even let them take their wives and children. He only said that the sheep and cattle had to stay behind. Moshe refused his offer saying that they needed the cattle in order to offer sacrifices to G-d. Pharaoh said, "This is entirely unnecessary. I will let all the people go but the cattle will stay behind." Once again Pharaoh felt only he could determine how the Jewish people could serve G-d. Then Pharaoh told Moshe, "Because you are so stubborn, you will never see my face again, because the day you see my face again you will die." Moshe agreed that he would never see Pharaoh's face again, but before he left he warned Pharaoh that another plague, the tenth plague, the killing of the firstborn, would be brought upon Egypt, and this time not only would Pharaoh allow the Jewish people to go worship G-d, he would expel them from Egypt.

Pharaoh tried to impose his own value system upon the Jewish people. He confused needs with wants. He felt that he knew best what these people needed. This is the same attitude that many times we find among people who employ others. They think they know what is best for them, even in their ^{personal} lives. They don't really need health insurance. They really don't need guaranteed income. After all,

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they will just spend it. What do they need more money for? People in power many times try to impose their own values on those who are dependant on them. This, in itself, is a form of slavery. Pharaoh would not give the Jewish people credit for being able to make the correct distinction between needs and wants.. Pharaoh felt that the Jewish people were genetically incapable of making such distinctions. They could never become mature human beings. Children do confuse needs and wants. They do confuse their priorities, but we believe that all sane adults do have the capacity to distinguish between needs and wants.

This perhaps explains, too, why the first commandment that was given to the Jewish people was to set up a calendar, a calendar which was dependent upon both the sun and moon, a calendar which was also originally dependant on the visual sighting of the moon by witnesses. Man had to be involved even in determining time. Even when it came to nature, man's input was necessary. We have something to say even in delineating our time. We get to set our priorities within time. The moon waxes and wanes. So do our fortunes. We have to remember this. Although our days are limited, we are not passive beings subject to fate. We can, in many ways, control our destinies. This teaches us that we are free, but we are not totally free, that life is not a complete mathematical model in which we can ^{do} anything we want. We are subject to time and the passing of time. On the other hand, even though the earth revolves around the sun for 365 days a year, these 365 days can be divided up many ways. We have the freedom to grow, the freedom to mold, to a large ^{extent} extend, our time, especially the use of our time.

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It is up to us to use this freedom by determining carefully what we really need in life. Just as certain things are constant needs (that is, of course, what the sun tell us; the sun rises and falls; we need to sleep and eat every day), there are certain things that are not constant every day occurrences. They happen at more random intervals, like the rise and fall of the moon. These needs, too, are not exactly precise, but we can spot them and incorporate them into our lives knowing that they are things we need and not just wants. Freedom demands that we make this choice and not have others make this choice for us.

Therefore, it is outrageous when people who are in positions of power treat those dependant on them with contempt and feel that they know what is best for them. That is the problem, too, with much of our welfare system where people in power feel that, because a person is poor, they can dictate to him what is necessary and what it not necessary. When a person loses a good paying job through no fault of his own, he has not lost his maturity. He has not lost his dignity. He has not lost his ability to discriminate between needs and wants. He does not become a child. He should not be forced to sacrifice real needs for temporary wants.

Much of Judaism is meant to teach us this. That is why in this sedra, too, we learn what the Jewish people had to do before they could gain freedom. They had to learn how to distinguish between wants and needs, how to make priorities. They had to learn that we all need ^{integrity.} ~~truth.~~
We all need dignity. One of the first priorities of life is not to

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be forced to sacrifice our integrity. That's why the Jewish people had to slaughter the lamb. The lamb was a symbol of falsehood. Jews who bowed down to the lamb were destroying themselves, being false to themselves and their beliefs. We could in no way believe that the spirit of Aries was incarnate in the lamb, that this lamb should be worshipped because spirits inhabited it, and that these spirits had great power. This is an abhorrant idea to Jews. We must live with dignity. Anything which compromises our dignity, our self-understanding, we must reject.

Secondly, family is important. That is why we had to gather as a family to make a seder on the eve of our Exodus. It is better to live on matzah and be surrounded by loved ones than to live with millions of dollars all alone, hated and ostracized, because of the terrible tricks you have played on your family and friends. Sacrificing everyone for wealth is not discriminating between needs and wants. Unfortunately, in this country many people sacrifice real needs for wants. Because they desire to be rich, they sacrifice their integrity, their family, their honesty. This is wrong. That is, too, probably why the lamb had to be eaten whole. Certain things you cannot compromise. When it comes to ~~truth~~, integrity, honesty, you cannot compromise.

Later in this Torah portion, too, we learn how we are not to choose puffery, fakery, over reality. This is another reason why before they left Egypt they had to eat matzah. Bread is just puffed up matzah, matzah filled with hot air, things which rise beyond what they really are. We must look at the reality of things, strip away the appearance. Today so many people judge things by appearance and not by reality.

Finally, too, we have to realize that certain things are worth struggling for. This was symbolized by the putting of blood on the door. The rabbis tell us the blood on the door contained not only the blood of the lamb but the blood of circumcision. In Judaism we believe that we have to struggle not only against falsehood, but we also must *struggle* ~~be~~ for truth. We are not only against things; we are also for things. We must be positive Jews who believe Judaism has much to give the world. We need to make this a better world. If not, we will lapse into depression or worse.

We must always differentiate in this world between wants and needs. We need our integrity. We need our self-respect. We need family. We need to know that we can make a difference in the world. Unless we feel we are important, unless we feel that G-d needs us, cares for us, and is concerned about us, we will find that it will be very difficult for us to make it in this world even if we have a lot of money. True, we need a certain amount of money in order to make our way in the world but beyond this amount, money is only a want not a need. We need to know that we are important, that we have a role to play in the world. We need to know that we have dignity and self-respect so we are not filled with self-hate.

That is why this Torah portion ends by telling us about putting on tephillin. The tephillin speaks about the marriage between man and G-d. It was not enough for the Jewish people to be free. They also needed to know that they were important. They needed to know that G-d counts on all of us so, therefore, we can be counted on. They

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had to know that they had dignity and self-respect, to know that they could make the proper decisions when it comes to what is a need and what is a want. Pharaoh thought that his slaves were slaves, that they could never rise so that they could determine what was a need and what was a want. He patronized us the same way that many people patronize other who they feel are beneath them. This is wrong. Every ^{Same} ~~same~~ adult has the capacity to distinguish between needs and wants. ^{Everyone} ~~They~~ should ~~all~~ be given a chance to demonstrate this. What we all need most in life is family, dignity, self-respect, and the knowledge that we are important and that our life counts. Let us all hope and pray that we will always recognize this so that we can live meaningful lives.

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In the Torah portion Bo we learn about the exodus from Egypt. We learn how, after the ten plagues, Pharaoh relented, and not only did he allow the Jewish people to go worship G-d for three days in the desert, he expelled them for good. He did not want to have them in his kingdom anymore. Later he was to change his mind, but in this Torah portion he thrust the Jewish people out of Egypt. We know that the Jewish people held a seder on the night of the 15th to celebrate their freedom. It is hard to understand why the Jewish people made a seder to celebrate their freedom on the night of the 15th because they actually did not leave Egypt until the morning of the 15th. We know every Jewish holiday starts from the night before. Shabbos starts on Friday night. Every holiday starts on the eve before. The eve of the 15th is when the Jewish people had their seder, when they celebrated their freedom, but they were not free yet. They did not leave until the next morning. G-d wanted them to leave in the daylight so that everybody could see that they did not sneak out of Egypt, but that they left with their heads up high and that they were, in fact, told by the Egyptians to leave, and they left with dignity and respect and did not leave running out under the cover of darkness. But if this is so, why was it that they celebrated their freedom before they actually had their freedom? What's more, we know that when G-d appeared to Abraham and told him that the Jewish people would be given the land of Israel, He also told Abraham that the Jewish people would be slaves for 430 in the land of Egypt. The rabbis explain that meant 430 years from the time when G-d appeared to Abraham at the treaty between the pieces. Thirty years later Isaac was born, and that the Jewish people, all told, spent 210 years in Egypt, and that that very night, the 15th of Nisan, was when the 430 years were up, that the Jewish people actually, to fulfill G-d's promise literally, should have left on the evening and not during the day, but G-d wanted the Jewish people to leave with pride and dignity

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so that the whole world could see that Pharaoh, himself, had succumbed to G-d and had given up and had told the people to leave, that they did not leave in the middle of the night because there was some confusion in Egypt, but they left because Pharaoh told them to leave.

In the Torah it is interesting to note that there is a special Posuk which speaks about this night of the 15th as "Layil Sheemurim - the night of watching". "It was a night of watching unto the Lord for bringing them out from the land of Egypt. This same night is the night of watching unto the Lord for all the Children of Israel throughout the generations." The rabbis ask, what does this mean? Some explain that this means that on this night we Jewish people are specially protected throughout all the generations. That is why it is a custom not to say the Shma or the whole Shma when we go to bed on that night because we are no longer afraid, as we are on other nights, of the terrible persecutions which used to fall upon us and which still do fall upon some Jews throughout the world.

What's more, that is one of the reasons why we open the door to Elijah. We are not afraid that we have to bolt our door tight on this night because we feel we have G-d's special protection. Other rabbis explain that this was the night that G-d was watching for, that G-d was eagerly anticipating this night, and, therefore, this was a night of watching for G-d. Other rabbis say, no, this was the night of anticipation of the Jewish people, that the Jewish people anticipated this night for a long time. Others say this was the night that we look for eagerly every year. That is why we prepare the house for Pesach. That's is why we get rid of all the chometz. It takes us several weeks to complete our cleaning, that we have to make preparations for the seder, so, therefore, we Jews are looking eagerly forward to Pesach, and that is why it is called the night of watching.

This still does not explain or answer the question why it was that the Jewish people ^{we} did not leave on the evening of the 15th, ~~but~~, yet, ~~they~~ celebrated a seder celebrating their freedom when they were not yet free. How come they had a seder celebrating their freedom when they were not yet free? Some rabbis explain that on this night, according to the Medrash, the soul of all the Jews of Egypt, all their souls, went to Jerusalem, and then they came back at the end of that evening and they physically left Egypt the next morning, but their souls had already gone to Jerusalem that night. What does that mean? That means that much of what happens to us in life depends upon our own positive attitude. If we feel that we are free, if we feel that we are as good as everyone else, if we know that we can achieve freedom, then we already are free. There was a very famous essay ^{by Achad Ha'am} which ~~talked~~ about slavery in the midst of freedom and freedom in the midst of slavery, ~~and he~~ ^{Wrote} ~~talked~~ about the condition of the Jewish people in eastern and western Europe 100 years ago. The condition of the Jewish people in eastern Europe was very severe. They were persecuted. They were hounded. They could only live in certain areas. They could not occupy certain positions. They could not enter certain professions. They could not engage in certain types of trade. They were harassed. They had special taxes put upon them. We know that their physical condition was not good. They were, in a certain sense, enslaved, but spiritually they were free because they never felt inferior to their gentile neighbors. They knew that they were as good as the Russian czar's people, if not better. They were never culturally enslaved, and so, therefore, they could hold their heads up high. ^{to themselves that} They said this was just a momentary passing era, but that soon they would be free and soon they would be in Jerusalem. The Jews in western Europe were physically free. They had no restrictions. Culturally they were enslaved. They were afraid people would find out

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they were Jewish. Some even changed their appearance, and some changed their religion. That is what ~~Henry Heilich did~~ ^{Heine D. Ales} and ~~Die... father~~ did ^{so} ~~in order~~ that they could get ahead. The Jews, although they were physically free, were spiritually enslaved. ~~Of course, this spiritual enslavement lead eventually to physical enslavement again, that~~ The Jewish people in eastern Europe were, in a certain sense, freer than the Jews were in western Europe. Hitler's onslaught, ~~the Holocaust, proved this analysis correct, that the Jews in western Europe ended up in slavery,~~ ^{western European Jews} ~~too, and one of the reasons was that they were not culturally-free.~~ They felt inferior.

When we look at the achievements of many people we can see that they were able to achieve things because problems did not overcome them. They were not daunted by difficulties. They always felt they could achieve, and, therefore, they adopted a positive attitude, and, therefore, they did achieve their goals. On the other hand, there are certain people who are blessed with education and wealth who end up miserable failures. Many times it is because they never had self-confidence. They never felt they could overcome. They never felt they could solve their problems, so, therefore, ^{the vision of the Jews} ~~they had~~ a self-fulfilling prophecy. Because they felt they could not overcome their problems, they did not overcome their problems and could not overcome their problems, while those who felt they could overcome their problems eventually succeeded. In 1948, in spite of all the problems in Eretz Yisroel, the Jews in Israel felt they could overcome their problems even though they were immediately attacked by 7 Arab nations, even though they had terrible problems assimilating and absorbing three times the number of Jews in the society as were originally there. Even though they had terrible problems with famine and food and even water, yet, they had confidence they could overcome their problems.

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Today, unfortunately, we see in the last few years that there are a lot of Jews in Israel and in America who feel that the problems cannot be solved, even though we are in a much stronger position now. They feel that we cannot solve the problems, that we are helpless in front of these problems. Unfortunately, the people who persist in thinking this way will be defeated. The problems will defeat us. We will not defeat the problems. Of course, that is why many people are leaving Israel and why many people do not go to Israel, because they feel the problems are too immense and cannot be solved. That is a negative attitude. When we approach problems we have to feel that we can solve them. The Jews felt they had freedom even before they had freedom, and, therefore, they got their freedom. If they would have thought that freedom was impossible they would never have been able to achieve it. Even with G-d's help you cannot achieve it unless you feel you can achieve it. This is true, too, in the United States where the blacks under Martin Luther King felt they could achieve freedom and they did achieve freedom. There were many who decades before thought it was impossible and they did not even try, but Martin Luther King infused them with the spirit that they could achieve, and they did achieve. This applies to personal life as well. There are many students who doom themselves to failure because they feel it is too hard and they cannot do it. Therefore, it becomes impossible. This does not mean we should adopt a Polyannaish attitude that we can overcome all problems without study, without effort, without looking at reality, without studying the facts. We have to be careful with Arafat in his statements now. We feel that we can overcome. We can achieve. We can eventually achieve peace with Arabs. We have to make sure that we know what we are doing when we see what Arafat is doing in the world. He speaks one way to the United States but speaks another way in Arabic to the Arabs. He tells the Arabs that if they would give him the Palestinian state on the west