

Rabbi
Moshe Zionce
Director,
Project Inspire
Toronto
(416) 782-6283
mzionce
@projectinspire
.com

PROJECT
INSPIRE
Presents:

Shabbos INSPIRE. PARSHA SHEET

In Nisan We Were Redeemed

By Moshe Zionce

In a triumphant display of pride and joy, we charged out of Egypt's dark past and collectively embarked on a journey into a hopeful new tomorrow. The Gemara (ראש השנה יא) declares: "In Nisan we were redeemed, so too in Nisan will we be redeemed." The time of our redemption is upon us! The energy is flowing now as it did at that auspicious time in our history. Pesach provides each and every one of us with the unique opportunity to experience redemption. However, as we delight in the mitzvos of our freedom, are we including others with us in our figurative journey home? Is it conceivable that there could be a National redemption today that would not include all Jews?

The Jewish Nation is one cosmic body. Our collective departure from Egypt culminated in the giving of the Torah just 50 days subsequently. At that time it was imperative that the entire nation stand at the foot of Har Sinai to accept the Torah. There were 600,000 men present from the ages of 20-60, representing the sum total of all root souls of the Nation. The שיר השירים on Shir Hashirim explains that each neshamah corresponded to one of the 600,000 letters found in a sefer Torah. Just as each letter is vital to the kashrus of a sefer Torah, so too, every individual was integral for the acceptance of the Torah to occur. If one Jew had been absent at Har Sinai, the entire Nation would have been deemed unworthy.

If indeed each and every Jew is an integral part of the whole, how is it possible that a minority of the Nation was redeemed in Egypt while the majority of the Nation never departed? The famous Rashi (שמות יג), expounding on the Mechilta, explains that only "מחשית" / one fifth of the Yidden in Egypt at the time of the Exodus, were worthy to be liberated. The other four-fifths perished during makkas choshech. Were these four-fifths not deemed an essential part of the Nation, that we were able to leave Egypt without them? Did Hashem relinquish their status as members of Klal Yisroel, enabling the rest of the Nation to endure?

Perhaps the answer to this question can be found in the Haggadah. The rasha asks, "What purpose is this service to you? He says 'To you', thereby excluding himself from the community... Therefore, blunt his teeth and tell him, had he been there he would not have been redeemed." It seems that the rasha on some level has removed himself from the collective merit of the Nation. The ba'al Haggadah is apparently teaching us that the rasha can make an informed choice to "separate" from the Nation.

It would seem therefore, that at a time in Egypt the collective body of the Jewish people did not necessarily include all Jews. If this was true then, is it true as well today? Some four-fifths of our Nation do not identify with traditional Torah values. Slowly they are disappearing, apparently for eternity. Have they excluded themselves from the community? Have they brought their own fate upon themselves? If this is the case, perhaps we are not obligated to include them?

There is a beautiful Chassidish explanation of the four sons of the Haggadah that I would like to employ in answering our question. The four sons represent the four generations of the Jewish family struggling for survival in a long, bitter galus. The first son is the chacham. In his generation the mesorah is clear. With great fortitude he diligently studies the Torah and practices all the mitzvos... Next, is the generation of the rasha. He is the son of the chacham. However, he does not

continued on back >

Good Neighbors

By Gavriel Horan

In a few days we will read from the Haggadah that each and every one of us are obligated to picture ourselves as if we went out of Mitzrayim. It's not always so easy to do. If we take a moment to look around ourselves, however, we will notice a mind boggling and disturbing thing: the majority of the Jewish people are still in a Mitzrayim - apparently cut off from the Jewish people.

* * *



For years, the O'Connor family was one of the only non-jewish families in the neighborhood. You might have expected me to say that they were one of the only "non-affiliated" families—O'Connor isn't exactly a Jewish sounding name—but as we will soon see, "non-affiliated" is a more accurate description. You see, Mrs. Beverly O'Connor was Jewish—although she knew nothing of her Jewish heritage—and therefore all of their children were Jewish as well. Mr. Jack O'Connor on the other hand, was born and raised an Irish Catholic. He was a naval war veteran and served in the NYPD for most of his life until his retirement at the age of 60. Although Far Rockaway was once a diverse neighborhood, little by little most of the non-Jews and non-frum families moved away from the growing Orthodox enclave. The O'Connors however, stayed behind, but became more and more reclusive.

For years the community tried to reach out to them as much as possible, with friendly greetings and smiles, but the O'Connors never seemed to return the warmth. For the most part they kept to themselves—understandably so. They were surrounded by a strange and foreign culture that they knew nothing about. And although their neighbors were nice, it never got beyond a very formal relationship to say the least.

continued on back >

ARIZONA
Scottsdale
Phoenix

CALIFORNIA
Calabasas
Hollywood
Los Angeles
North Hollywood
Northridge
Oakland
Sacramento
San Jose
San Francisco
San Diego

COLORADO
Boulder

CONNECTICUT
West Hartford
New London
Stamford

CANADA
Thornhill
Toronto

DISTRICT OF
COLUMBIA
Washington

FLORIDA
Aventura
Boca Raton
Fort Lauderdale
Hollywood
Miami
North Miami Beach
Sunny Isles Beach
Surfside
Tampa

OHIO
Cincinnati

MARYLAND
Baltimore
Silver Spring

MASSACHUSETTS
Brookline

NEW JERSEY
Cherry Hill
Fairlawn
Highland Park/Edison
Lakewood
Linden
Long Branch
Passaic

NEVADA
Las Vegas

NEW YORK
Airmont
Bayswater
Boro Park
East Northport
Far Rockaway
Flatbush
Flushing
Forest Hills
Fresh Meadows
Harrison
Hewlett
Kew Gardens Hills
Lawrence
Marine Park
Monsey
New Rochelle
Spring Valley
Staten Island
Woodmere

PENNSYLVANIA
Bala Cynwyd
Montgomery
Lancaster

TEXAS
Dallas
Houston

› continued from front

share the same conviction as his father. The rasha challenges authority and slowly but surely leaves his glorious heritage behind...His son in turn is the tam. He is so many years removed from true tradition that he does not have an opinion at all about Yiddishkeit. He is not a rebel or a conformist. He is "simply" going on his own way... Finally, the last generation is the son who does not even know how to ask a question. For him there is nothing left to reject or embrace. The אינו יודע לשאול lives in a time without questions, as nothing remains for him to see or to ask about...The tragedy of this pshat in the Haggadah is: there is not a son in the fifth generation at all to speak of. This son has vanished.

Our challenge is to embrace all Jews with love and to offer them opportunities that they otherwise might never have.

I would now like to candidly repeat our question. Have the less-affiliated Jews of this generation willingly left their tradition and Klal Yisroel behind? Are they to be held responsible for their own future like the rasha is responsible for his actions? That would seem to be irrational – the אינו יודע לשאול does not know any better. He has never experienced the true beauty of Torah and mitzvos. This son is like a תינוק שנשבה / an infant that is helplessly kidnapped from his parents. He cannot relinquish his status from amongst the Jewish people - he may not even know what it means to be part of the Nation.

Clearly today, less-affiliated Jews cannot be viewed as rebellious. They are lacking knowledge and education. We are therefore obligated to include and to teach all Jews the relevance and joy of their own

heritage. In the chain of generations, only we can infuse vital strength into an apparent final link.

Are we reaching out? Could this be the feat that is preventing the final redemption from becoming a reality in our current month of Nisan? We know that a תינוק שנשבה is not held responsible. There apparently is only one frightening answer to the question: Who is holding Moshiach up? Perhaps we are responsible. Perhaps we have not fulfilled our obligation to inspire, encourage and include.

In the Sivan 5770 issue of Mishpacha Magazine, Rav Yitzchak Berkovits, shlita (Rosh Yeshiva of The Jerusalem Kollel) was interviewed. Rabbi Berkovits was asked: "What do you feel are the most important aspects of kiruv you learned from Rav Noach (Weinberg) that you carry over to your activities today?" I really saw the state of Klal Yisroel in a very real and candid way. There was a conversation I had with Rav Noach, צ"ל, many times, and that was: what is the greatest issue facing Klal Yisroel today, the state of non-frum Jewry or the state of frum Jewry? He would say it is the state of frum Jewry, but if we could get every frum Jew to do kiruv, we'd save them. There are many concepts that would be reinforced by involving the frum in kiruv including emunah, bein adam l'chaveiro, integrity, and so many more..."

It is up to each and every one of us to make the difference. The Haggadah declares, "All who are hungry come and eat." This is the spiritual hunger of our brothers and sisters and this is the spiritual hunger of our own neshamah. However, we must invite them, in order to feed all that are hungry. Our challenge is to embrace all Jews with love and to offer them opportunities that they otherwise might never have. The ba'al Haggadah is reminding us and encouraging us to include Jews everywhere in our personal journey. Together as a Nation we can achieve redemption. As we take those faithful first steps into the desert and into true freedom, who would hesitate on the way to bend down and pick up a weary, discouraged Jew, yearning for meaning and connection? And if we reach down and inspire a fellow Jew, in reality, it is us that are often affected the most profoundly.

"In Nisan we were redeemed, so too in Nisan will we be redeemed." May this month be THE Nisan of our final redemption. **PI**

Moshe Zionce
Director, Project Inspire Toronto

› continued from front

A few years ago, after retiring, Mr. O'Connor was going through some family documents when he discovered an astounding thing: his mother had a Jewish sounding maiden name! When he looked into it further, he found out that she was indeed Jewish, having converted to Catholicism to marry his father. Mr. O'Connor was a Yid! Their grown children, who had been raised like non-Jews, were shocked to discover that they were Jewish, from both sides.

A short time after his discovery, Mr. O'Connor became terminally ill and it wasn't long before he succumbed to it. When he passed away, the entire community gathered around the family. Although Mr. O'Connor had opted to be buried in the military cemetery, a Rabbi on the block made sure that he received a proper tahara. One of the neighbors, Mr. Barry Weinstein, taught their son—a fire fighter by trade—how to say Kaddish, which they said together word for word during the shiva. The shiva only lasted an hour or so, but everyone from the block came by to pay their condolences to the family. Someone bought Mrs. O'Connor a beautiful flag holder to hold the American flag that had been placed on her husband's coffin. She was deeply moved by it and overwhelmed by the support and kindness that the community showed her.

That week, Mrs. Mindy Weinstein invited Mrs. O'Connor over to light candles in their house erev Shabbos. She was very lonely at home and was so happy to get out of the house—it was just her and the dogs since her children all lived far away. She has been coming to the Weinsteins for the Shabbos seuda ever since and has become a permanent part of the family! She absolutely loves it. The entire community as a whole has embraced her. An elderly lady takes her to the Jewish senior center each week, and others offer to help with her grocery shopping. She can't stop raving about her neighbors and tells anyone who will listen how amazing the frum community is. At the age of 78, her interest in Yiddishkeit is beginning to blossom and she is learning a tremendous amount every single day! Mrs. O'Connor has discovered a support system that has helped her with her mourning process—a new extended family. After living in the neighborhood for so many decades she has finally become part of the community!

* * *

This Pesach, when we start the Haggada, we invite anyone who's hungry to come and eat. Take a moment to look around. All around us our neighbors are starving for words of Torah. They are our brothers and sisters, still stuck in Mitzrayim. Let's open our homes and our hearts to them. In this zchus may we all merit the ultimate redemption, when all of the Jewish people can be free at last. L'shana habaah b'Yerushalayim! **PI**

ykdesigns@gmail.com

PROJECT
INSPIRE.
www.kiruv.com

If you would like to bring a Shabbos Inspire Parsha Sheet to your shul or for sponsorship, please contact Rabbi Yisroel Weinberg at (646) 961-4961 or yweinberg@projectinspire.com

Project Inspire is a grassroots movement inspiring the Jewish people to share the beauty and relevance of our heritage with our fellow Jews.