



## Slaughtering the Korban Pesach: The Act of Liberation Rabbi Zach Truboff

### **1. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Spirit of Christianity*, 189-190**

When Moses, an isolated enthusiast for the liberation of his people, came to the elders of the Israelites and spoke to them of his project, his divine calling found its legitimation not in a heartfelt hatred of oppression, not in a longing for air and freedom, but in certain tricks with which Moses baffled them and which were performed subsequently with equal skill by Egyptian conjurers. The deeds of Moses and Aaron worked on their brethren precisely as they did on the Egyptians, i.e., as a force, and we see how the latter defended themselves against subjection by just the same means.

The increased hardships consequent upon Moses discourse in Pharaoh's presence did not act as a stronger stimulus to the Jews, but only intensified their sufferings. Against no one were the Jews more enraged than against Moses, whom they cursed (Exodus v. 21, vi. 9). Moses alone takes action. Permission to depart he extorts because of the king's fear. The Jewish faith does not even allow the king to forget his fear of his own accord and rue the decision extorted from him; on the contrary, his words, expressive of his refusal to subject himself to their god, they rake to be their god's doing.

For the Jews a great thing was done, but they do not inaugurate it with heroic deeds of their own; it is for them that Egypt suffers the most diverse plagues and misery. Amid general lamentation they withdraw, driven forth by the hapless Egyptians (Exodus xii. 33-34); but they themselves have only the malice the coward feels when his enemy is brought low by someone else's act... The Jews vanquish, but they have not battled. The Egyptians are conquered, but not by their enemies; they are conquered (like men murdered in their sleep, or poisoned) by an invisible attack, and the Israelites, with the sign on their houses and the profit which all this misery brings, look like the notorious robbers during the plague at Marseilles.

The only act which Moses reserved for the Israelites was, on the evening which he knew to be the last on which they would speak to their neighbors and friends, to borrow with deceit and repay confidence with theft. . . It is no wonder that this nation, which in its emancipation bore the most slave like demeanor, regretted leaving Egypt, wished to return there again whenever difficulty or danger came upon it in the sequel, and thus showed how in its liberation it had been without the soul and the spontaneous need of freedom.

### **2. אבן עזרא שמות פרק יד פסוק יג**

(יג) התיצבו וראו את ישועת ה' כי אתם לא תעשו מלחמה, רק תראו את ישועת ה' אשר יעשה לכם היום. יש לתמוה, איך יירא מחנה גדול של שש מאות אלף איש מהרודפים אחריהם, ולמה לא ילחמו על נפשם ועל בניהם? התשובה, כי המצרים היו אדונים לישראל, וזה הדור היוצא ממצרים למד מנעריו לסבול עול מצרים ונפשו שפלה, ואיך יוכל עתה להלחם עם אדוניו, והיו ישראל נרפים ואינם מלומדים למלחמה.

### **Ibn Ezra, *Shemot 14:13***

“Stand by, and witness the deliverance which God will work for you today,” for you will not make war, just see the deliverance of God that HE will do for you today. One can question how is it possible that a great encampment of six hundred thousand people would fear those pursuing them. Why would they not fight for themselves and their children? The answer, because Egyptians were the masters of Israel, and the generation which had left Egypt learned from their youth to suffer to yoke of Egypt and its spirit was lowly. How could they now fight against their masters? And Israel was weak and not trained in war.

## 2. שמות רבה טז:ב

וכן אתה מוצא לישראל כשהיו במצרים היו עובדין עבודת כוכבים ולא היו עוזבין אותה, שנאמר (יחזקאל ב, ח): איש את שקוצי עיניהם לא השליכו, אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא למשה כל זמן שישאל עובדין לאלהי מצרים לא יגאלו, לך ואמר להן שיניחו מעשיהן הרעים ולכפר בעבודת כוכבים, הדין הוא דכתיב (שמות יב, כא): משכו וקחו לכם, כלומר משכו ידיכם מעבודת כוכבים, וקחו לכם צאן, ונשחטו אלהיהם של מצרים ועשו הפסח, שבכך הקדוש ברוך הוא פוסח עליכם, הוי (ישעיה ל, טו): בשובה ונחת תנשעון

### ***Shemot Rabbah 16:2***

You will find that when Israel were in Egypt, they served idols, which they were reluctant to abandon, for it says: They did not every man cast away the detestable things of their eyes (Ezek. xx, 8). God then said to Moses: 'As long as Israel worship Egyptian gods, they will not be redeemed; go and tell them to abandon their evil ways and to reject idolatry.' This is what is meant by: DRAW OUT, AND TAKE YOU LAMBS, that is to say: Draw away your hands from idolatry and take for yourselves lambs, thereby slaying the gods of Egypt and preparing the Passover; only through this will the Lord pass over you. This is the meaning of 'In sitting still and rest shall ye be saved.'

## 3. רש"ר הירש שמות

### פרק יג פסוק ג

מבית עבדים. בית עבדים הוא בית, בו האב והאם וכל צאצאיהם אחריהם הינם עבדים. כזה היו בתיהם במצרים. עבדים מלידה היו שם.

### ***Rabbi Sampson Raphael Hirsch, Shemot 13:3***

"From the house of bondage"- The house of bondage is a home, and in it the father and mother and all their descendants were slaves. Such were their homes in Egypt. They were slaves from birth there.

### פרק כ פסוק ב

"מבית עבדים". ארץ מצרים היתה לנו "בית עבדים", ובה היינו עבדים מלידה (עי' פי' לעיל יג, ג). שלילת חירותנו בכוח הזרוע כבר נשכחה מלב הבריות, והעבדות נחשבה כמעמדנו הטבעי.

### ***Rabbi Sampson Raphael Hirsch, Shemot 20:2***

"From the house of bondage"- The land of Egypt was for us a "house of bondage", and in it we were slaves from birth. The negation of our freedom as brought about by the might of the Egyptian hand caused it so that freedom was forgotten from the heart of all Jews. Slavery was considered to be our natural position.

## 4. שמות רבה טז:ג

דבר אחר, משכו וקחו לכם צאן, הדין הוא דכתיב (תהלים צז, ז): יבשו כל עבדי פסל, בנשעה שאמר הקדוש ברוך הוא למשה לשחט הפסח, אמר לו משה רבון העולם הדבר הזה היאך אני יכול לעשות, אי אתה יודע שהצאן אלהיהן של מצרים הן, שנאמר (שמות ח, כב): הן נזבח את תועבת מצרים לעיניהם ולא יסקלנו. אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא חייך אין ישראל יוצאין מכאן עד שישחטו את אלהי מצרים לעיניהם, שאודיע להם שאין אלהיהם בלום. וכן מצינו שנעשה, שבאותה הלילה הנה בכוריהם של מצרים ובו בלילה שחטו ישראל פסחיהן ואכלו, והיו המצרים רואים בכוריהם הרגים ואלהיהן שחוטין ולא היו יכולין לעשות בלום, שנאמר (במדבר לג, ד): ומצרים מקברים את אשר הנה ה' בהם כל בכור ובאלהיהם עשה ה' שפטים, הוי: יבשו כל עבדי פסל.

**Shemot Rabbah, 16:3**

3. DRAW OUT, AND TAKE YOU LAMBS. Another interpretation: It is written: Ashamed be all they that serve graven images (Ps. xcvil, 7). When the Holy One, blessed be He, told Moses to slay the paschal lamb, Moses answered: 'Lord of the Universe! How can I possibly do this thing? Dost Thou not know that the lamb is the Egyptian god?' As it says: Lo, if we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, will they not stone us? (Ex. ,22 π ). God replied: 'As thou livest, Israel will not depart from here before they slaughter the Egyptian gods before their very eyes, that I may teach them that their gods are really nothing at all.' This is what He actually did; for on that night He slew the Egyptian firstborn and on that night the Israelites slaughtered their paschal lamb and ate it. When the Egyptians beheld their firstborn slain and their gods slaughtered, they could do nothing; as it says: While the Egyptians were burying them that the Lord had smitten among them, even all their firstborn ; upon their gods also the Lord executed judgment (Num. xxxtt, 4). Hence 'Ashamed be all they that serve graven images'

**5. Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit, 114**

And it is only through staking one's life that freedom is won... The individual who has not risked his life may well be recognized as a person, but he has not attained to the truth of this recognition as an independent self-consciousness.

**6. Immanuel Kant, Metaphysics of Morals, 320 fn.**

The dethronement of a monarch can still be thought of as if he had voluntarily laid aside the crown and abdicated his authority, giving it back to the people, or as if, without any attack on the highest person, he had relinquished his authority and been reduced to the rank of a private person...

Of all the atrocities involved in overthrowing a state by rebellion, the assassination of the monarch is not itself the worst, for we can still think of the people as doing it from fear that if he remained alive he could marshal his forces and inflict on them the punishment they deserve, so that their killing him would not be an enactment of punitive justice but merely a dictate of self-preservation...

The reason for horror at the thought of the formal execution of a monarch by his people is therefore this... his execution must be regarded as a complete overturning of the principles of the relation between a sovereign and his people (in which the people, which owes its existence only to the sovereign's legislation, makes itself his master), so that violence is elevated above the most sacred rights brazenly and in accordance with principle Like a chasm that irretrievably swallows everything, the execution of a monarch seems to be a crime from which the people cannot be absolved, for it is as if the state commits suicide.

**7. Slavoj Zizek, Enjoy Your Symptom, p. 51**

The act differs from an active intervention (action) in that it radically transforms its bearer (agent): the act is not simply something I "accomplish"—after an act, I'm literally "not the same as before." In this sense, we could say that the subject "undergoes" the act ("passes through" it) rather than "accomplishes" it: in it, the subject is annihilated and subsequently reborn (or not), i.e., the act involves a kind of temporary eclipse, *aphanisis*, of the subject. Which is why every act worthy of this name is "mad" in the sense of radical *unaccountability*. By means of it, I put at stake everything, including myself, my symbolic identity; the act is therefore always a "crime," a "transgression," namely of the limit of the symbolic community to which I belong. The act is defined by this irreducible *risk* in its most fundamental dimension, it is always *negative*, i.e., an act of annihilation, of wiping out—we not only

don't know what will come out of, its final outcome is ultimately even insignificant, strictly secondary in relation to the NO! of the pure act.

#### 8. רב צדוק, רסיסי לילה נז

אבל ידוע למאן דעיילי ונפקי כי דבר זה כפי מדריגת האדם וצריך ליכנס בהדרגה ממדרגה למדרגה אבל אם ישיג השגה שלמעלה ממדריגתו יוכל לצאת נפשו כענין (חגיגה יד:) בן עזאי הציץ ומת מתוקף ההשגה. וכן מיתת נדב ואביהוא היה על דרך זה ובמתן תורה גם כן בדבור אחד יצאה נשמתם (שבת פח:) שלא היו מוכנים כולם למדריגת נבואה אלא שהוריד טל של תחיה היינו שפע חיות חדש שנעשו בריה חדשה וכן בכל השגה שלמעלה ממדריגה.

והבעל תשובה שזוכה בשעתא חדא ברגעא חדא לתכלית השלימות כידוע גם כן כשקונה עולמו בשעה אחת תצא נפשו כר' אלעזר בן דורדייא בע"ז (יז.). וידוע דביציאת מצרים השיגו ברגעא חדא שלא בהדרגה רק בדילוג וקיפוץ על המדרגות ובחפזון ועל כן הוצרכו להגנת דם פסח על המשקוף ומזוזות...

#### **Rav Zadok, Resisei Lailah, 57**

It is known to one who "enters and leaves" that this is only according to the level of the person and that a person must enter gradually from step to step. But to ascertain an understanding that is far beyond his level can cause his soul to depart as can be seen (Hagiga 14b) Ben Azai peeped and died from the intensity of what he grasped. So too the deaths of Nadav and Avihu were in similar way and in the giving of the Torah, so too when God spoke, their souls depart (Shabbat 88b) because they weren't all prepared for the level of prophecy so the dew of redemption was brought down upon them, the overflowing of a new lifeforce and they were made a new creation, and so too this happens when one attempts to go far beyond one's level.

The *baal teshuvah* that merits in one moment, at one time, to achieve the goal of perfection as is known that one can acquire their world (the world to come) in one moment, their soul departs like Rabbi Elazar ben Dordaya (Avodah Zarah 17a). It is known that the Exodus from Egypt was ascertained in one moment and not gradually rather by jumping and skipping up the stairs quickly. Therefore they were in need of being protected by the blood of the Pesach on the doorway...

#### 9. יחזקאל פרק טז

- (א) וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְקֹוֹק אֵלַי לֵאמֹר:  
(ב) בְּנֹאֲדָם הוֹדַע אֶת־יְרוּשָׁלַם אֶת־תוֹעֵבֹתֶיהָ:  
(ג) וְאָמַרְתָּ זֶה־אָמַר אֲדָנָי יְקֹוֹק לִירוּשָׁלַם מְכַרְתֶּיהָ וּמְלֻדֹתֶיהָ מֵאֶרֶץ הַכְּנַעֲנִי אֲבִיר הָאֲמֹרִי וְאָמַר חֲתִית:  
(ד) וּמוֹלְדוֹתֶיהָ בְּיוֹם הוֹלְדָתָ אֶתְךָ לֹא־כִבַּת שׁוֹרֶךְ וּבְמִים לֹא־רַחֲצָתָ לְמַשְׁעֵי וְהַמְלַח לֹא הִמְלַחְתָּ וְהַחֲתַל לֹא חֲתַלְתָּ:  
(ה) לֹא־חָסָה עָלֶיךָ עֵינָן לַעֲשׂוֹת לְךָ אֶחָת מֵאֲלֵה לְחַמְלָה עָלֶיךָ וְתִשְׁלַכִּי אֶל־פְּנֵי הַשָּׂדֶה בְּגַעַל נַפְשֶׁךָ בְּיוֹם הוֹלְדָתָ אֶתְךָ:  
(ו) וְאָעֵבֶר עָלֶיךָ וְאֶרְאֶה מִתְּבוֹסֶסֶת בְּדַמֶיךָ וְאָמַר לְךָ בְּדַמֶיךָ חַיִּי וְאָמַר לְךָ בְּדַמֶיךָ חַיִּי:

#### **Ezekiel 16:1-6**

- 1) The word of the LORD came to me:
- 2) O mortal, proclaim Jerusalem's abominations to her,

- 3) and say: Thus said the Lord GOD to Jerusalem: By origin and birth you are from the land of the Canaanites—your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite.
- 4) As for your birth, when you were born your navel cord was not cut, and you were not bathed in water to smooth you; you were not rubbed with salt, nor were you swaddled.
- 5) No one pitied you enough to do any one of these things for you out of compassion for you; on the day you were born, you were left lying, rejected, in the open field.
- 6) When I passed by you and saw you wallowing in your blood, I said to you: “Live in spite of your blood. Yea, I said to you: “Live in spite of your blood.”