

SECOND DAY PESACH 1987
Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

On the second day of Pesach we read as the Haftorah a portion from the book of Kings which speaks about the fact that King Josiah found a book of the Torah that had almost been forgotten completely among the Jewish people, the book of Deuteronomy, and, based on the book of Deuteronomy, he threw out all the idols from the Temple. Not only did they have idols there, they had a house of sodomites, sacred prostitution of the Temple. He threw them all out. He reinstated the pure worship of G-d. Also it said the king commanded all the people, "Make Pesach the G-d your G-d as is written in the book of this covenant." Therefore, we read this Haftorah because it talks about how the people once again observed Pesach in the correct way. It seems strange that of all the Haftorahs that could have been chosen that this one was chosen. After all, there are many Haftorahs which speak about freedom, about freeing the slaves, about man's responsibility to man and man's responsibility to G-d. Why should we read this particular Haftorah? What's more, we also read in the Torah a strange portion. We read a description of all the holidays in the book of Leviticus. Why don't we read more about the Exodus on the second day? After all, on the first day we read very little about the Exodus. The whole first half of Exodus has to do with the Exodus from Egypt. Why don't we read about it? Why do we read about all the holidays of the Jewish people?

It seems to me that these questions are related. We know that it has often been asked, why do we make a seder at all? After all, if someone was walking down the street and someone hit him with his car and took him to the hospital and paid his medical

bills and gave him some compensation when he came out of the hospital, should the person thank him and praise him? After all, the person hit him. It was only right that he should have taken him to the hospital and paid his bills. Why should we be thanking G-d the night of the seder? After all, it was G-d who put us in Egypt and He certainly should have taken us out. But the rabbis explain that that is not really so. It was the Jewish people who put themselves in Egypt. Because the Jewish people sold Joseph into slavery condemned themselves to slavery. G-d said, "If you can sell your brother into slavery, you do not feel for your brother. You do not understand your brother. If you could put him into slavery, then you do not understand what being a people is. You do not understand mutual responsibility. I will make you all slaves and then you will understand." Also, the sons of Leah did not treat the sons of the handmaidens, Bilah and Zippah, right. They lorded it over them. G-d said again, "You do not know how to treat each other as equals? I will teach you how to treat each other as equals. I will make you all slaves in Egypt until you learn that lesson." Rabbi Soleiveitchik tells a story about how when he was in Germany in the 1920's a rabbi got up and said he had more in common with faithful Christian Germans than he had with Polish Socialist Jews. This, of course, shocked Rabbi Soleiveichik. The rabbi continued by saying that the faithful Christian Germans at least believed in G-d and the veracity of the Torah while the Socialist Polish Jews doubted G-d and the veracity of the Torah. This appalled Rabbi Soleiveichik very much because this rabbi did not understand that we Jews live with three covenants with G-d. One covenant we share with all humanity. All humanity is in a covenantal relationship with G-d since the time of Noah. We are

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all children of G-d. We received another two covenants with G-d. The second covenant was with Abraham that was eternal, and that was a covenant that was passed down to Isaac and Jacob as a covenant that the Jewish people had in Egypt. This covenant states that as long as we are from the seed of Abraham and we want to have the name Jew upon us, that we are Jews, even if we are backsliding Jews, even if we have not complied fully with the third covenant, the covenant we received at Sinai. The covenant that we received at Sinai was a goal to work for, and that, of course, is why we read the Haftorah we read, because the Jews there were backsliders. They were not observing the religion the way it should be observed. They could still come back, though, because they had the name Jew upon them.

That is, too, why we read the Torah portion we do. All the Jewish holidays are tied to the Jewish Exodus from Egypt. Of course, on Pesach we learn about it. On Shavuos, in which we read about the giving of the Torah, we do not even read about the giving of the Torah. All we learn about is the harvest, and what we learn about the harvest is that when you harvest your land you should not cut off the corner of your field and the gleanings of your harvest you should not collect. To the poor and the stranger you should leave them. I am the Lord your G-d. The rabbis explain that the poor means mitzvahs and field means spiritual experiences. We should never cut ourselves off from any Jew, that we should allow every Jew to have spiritual experiences. Those who are poor in mitzvahs will come back eventually and serve G-d. Why did the brothers sell Joseph to Egypt? The rabbis explain it was because the brothers had an ideological conflict with him. Joseph knew times were changing,

that Egyptian power was getting stronger, that they had to adjust to Egyptian ways in order to preserve Judaism. The other brothers did not want to. Because of that, they sold him into Egypt. They thought they were preserving Judaism but they were perverting Judaism.

When we learn about the holiday of Succos we also mention the Exodus from Egypt. We say, "In order that they should know your generations that - Ensbuz - I caused to dwell the sons of Israel and I brought them out from the land of Egypt." It does not talk about bringing them in front of Mount Sinai. We Jewish people were under a covenantal relationship even before the covenant of Sinai. We had a covenant with Abraham. Every Jew must remember that, that we Jews have much in common different from the rest of the world. All the rest of the world has a covenantal relationship through Noah, but we have an additional one from Abraham. True, we have a third one, but that is a goal to which we are all working. If we will work for that goal we will be able to achieve it eventually, and all Jews will recognize it. Meanwhile, we have much in common with all our Jewish brethren, and we have to treat them accordingly. We know that a Jew can always opt out of Judaism. Abraham had 8 children: one by Hagar, one by Sarah, and 6 by Ketura. Only one remained a Jew. Yitzchak had two children, Esau and Jacob, and only Jacob remained a Jew. Jacob, though, was able to maintain all his children. He was able to maintain them because he never rejected them. Abraham rejected the children that he did not agree with. Yitzchak did not see any bad in any of his children. Jacob never rejected his children, but he also pointed out to them the correct path they should walk. We should not worry too much

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about whether all Jews are living completely according to the covenant of Sinai. We should reprove them when they are wrong, but we should never take away our love for them and care for them and concern for them, whether it is a Jew in South America filled with revolutionary ideas, or a Jew in Europe engrossed in private pursuits, or a Jew in Israel who lives on a kibbutz far from religious ideals. They are all still Jews. We all share the covenant of Abraham with them. As long as they still want to maintain the name Jew and do not reject Judaism for another religion, then they are all Jews, and we have to be concerned about them.

That is why we read this portion on Pesach to teach us all that. The Jews were redeemed from Egypt as Jews even before there was a Torah, and we, too, should always be concerned with every Jew no matter who he is or where he is or what his ideological beliefs are as long as he still retains the name Jew.

I am reminded of the story they tell of a man from UJA who was collecting. He called a family named Cohen. He said, "Mr. Cohen, I am collecting for the UJA. Would you please make a contribution?" The name said, "I'm surprised you called me because I am not Jewish." The UJA man said, "What do you mean? I have your card here and it says you are Jewish." The man replied, "My good man, I am not Jewish. My wife's name is Kathleen. My son's name is Keith. My father's name, Alo Sholem, was Brian." Those type of Jews we do not need. They have already taken away their name Jew, but every other Jew who still says he is a Jew, even though he may have different ideas than us, is still under the covenant of Abraham, and we have much in

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common with him. We must always help him so that eventually the complete redemption will come quickly in our day. Amen.