

7th DAY PESACH 1984
Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

We read from the Torah how on the 7th day the Jewish people left Egypt and then how G-d had them turn back and camp before Piah Kiros. Once again Pharaoh had a change of heart and harnessed his chariot and took his army with him to recapture the Jewish people. The Jewish people really were not free until this army would be destroyed because any time that Pharaoh would want he could always go and recapture them. When the Jewish people saw that the Egyptians were pursuing them they turned on Moshe and said, "Is it because there weren't any graves in Egypt that you took us out in the desert? What is this that you did to us to take us out from Egypt? It would have been better for us to serve Egypt than die in the desert." In other words, it was better to be red than dead. Moshe turned to the people and told them, "Do not be afraid. Stand and see the deliverance which the Lord will do for you today. G-d will fight for you and you should be quiet." Immediately in the next sentence we have a strange comment by G-d. "And G-d said to Moshe, 'Why are you crying to Me? Speak to the Sons of Israel and they shall travel.'" Where do we find that Moshe ever cried to G-d? What's going on here? The Rabbis tell us that there were four groups who put forth their opinion as to what the Jewish people should do. One of them said, "Let's give up and become Egyptians and go back to slavery." The second group said, "Let's commit suicide." The third group said, "Let's fight to the last drop of blood", in effect agreeing with the second group. The fourth group said, "Let's protest and scream and cry." None of these groups were right. Moshe was talking to those who were screaming and yelling, "Be quiet." It is no answer to go back to Egypt and be a slave. To commit suicide is no answer. We Jews do not believe in the heroic gesture. Masada is really not a Jewish symbol. Some people doubt that Josephus gave an accurate account of what really happened. We Jews do not believe in committing suicide. Fighting to the very end, to the last drop of blood is also, in effect, committing suicide. Right now we are celebrating the 40th anniversary of the uprising of the Warsaw ghetto. The Warsaw ghetto was not actually an act of life. It was an act of desperation. It was just to make a statement. People ask, why weren't there any earlier revolts? Actually, there were, but other people got credit for them. Those revolts, and actually the

Warsaw ghetto revolt, were not really a heroic gesture. The people in the Warsaw ghetto actually believed that if they would revolt they would ignite the Polish Resistance to help them and the Allies to help them. They were, of course, wrong. Fighting just to die is not a Jewish position. We do not believe in the tragic hero. We fight in order to live. At the end if there is no other way we must fight. Protesting, too, just for protesting's sake is not an answer. What we have to do is face our problems and overcome them. That's why G-d told Moshe, "Do not cry to Me. You initiate a plan. You start to travel and I will help you." Sometimes we get up to our necks in water before G-d shows us the way. G-d has promised, though, that if we act He will help us solve our problems. So many people today are afraid. Newsweek has dubbed our age as full of phobias. People are afraid to drive on the freeways or ride an elevator, etc. We must face our fears and devise a way to overcome them and then G-d will help us overcome them. That's why it says, "Speak to the Sons of Israel and they will travel." First they will travel, they will devise plans, and then I will help them. I am reminded of a zany story a kid told me this week about a sign in a park that said, "Please ring for the caretaker." Of course, it meant that he would open the door. One of the little boys rang and bell and an old man in his 80's came and asked the boy what he wanted. The boy said, "How come I have to ring the bell for you? Why can't you ring it yourself?" G-d is telling us the same thing. Ring the bell, devise solutions to your problems and I will help you.