

SEASONS OF THE MOON

The Month of Nissan

Nissan / 5758 March 28, 1998 - April 26, 1998

Nissan, the first month of the Jewish Year, is called the king of the months. Its sign is *Taleh* — the lamb (Aries).

When the Jewish People were about to leave Egypt, G-d commanded them to take a lamb, which the Egyptians worshipped as a god, and lead it through the streets to their homes.

They tied the lamb to their bedposts, and three days later it was this lamb which served as the *Pesach* sacrifice. Its blood was used to mark the doors and lintels so that G-d would “passover” the Jewish homes, and this lamb was eaten at the first *Seder* on the very night that the Jewish People left Egypt.

THIS MONTH'S SIGN TALEH / ARIES

On Shabbat, the tenth of Nissan, the Egyptians saw the Jews leading lambs through the street and asked “What is this lamb for?” The Jews replied “We’re going to slaughter it as a *Pesach* sacrifice, as G-d has

commanded us.” You can imagine how the Egyptians felt — seeing their god led through the street and tied to a bedpost. Miraculously, however, they were prevented from harming the Jewish People. They ground their teeth in fury but did not utter a murmur.

We commemorate this miracle on the Shabbat immediately preceding *Pesach* on *Shabbat Hagadol* — the Great Shabbat.

THE DARKEST HOUR...

Freedom is something only a slave can really appreciate. Only someone who emerges from the darkness to the light can have any idea of what light really is.

Had the Jewish People never been enslaved in Egypt, we would never have experienced the true freedom that we commemorate on the festival of *Pesach*.

In our long history, in times of the greatest darkness, when we



have emerged, it has been to the greatest light. Our era has seen some of the darkest nights of our history. G-d has promised us that exactly when the night is darkest, He will bring the final redemption. And when will that moment be? In the month of Nissan. For Nissan is the appointed time for the redemption of the Jewish People. May it be *this* year in Jerusalem!

ESCAPE FROM THE FIELD OF THORNS

It always amazes me that a garden left to itself sprouts nothing but weeds. Couldn't it sprout the occasional tulip or rose amongst all those thistles?

Why is it that when we leave nature alone that the result is weeds, whereas growing food or beautiful flowers takes a lot of hard careful work?

It wasn't always like this. When Man was first put in

the Garden, weeds didn't grow automatically. Only when Adam sinned did Hashem curse the land to yield “thorns and thistles.”

What does it mean that now the land produces thorns and thistles?

Before Man sinned, the potential for Good was like a beautiful flower which grows and blooms

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almost by itself. Good emerged into the world with but the minimum of effort.

After Man sinned, another potential came into existence: The potential for Evil. Simultaneously, the potential for Good now could be realized only by hard work. If Adam had not sinned, our true potential would have been able to emerge automatically without special effort and work. The potential for Evil, however, requires no work or assistance. It sprouts and multiplies by itself. It is as invasive as a weed.

That's the meaning of "Thorns and thistles shall it sprout for you, and you will eat from the herb of the field" (Bereishis 3:18).

Left to our own instincts, we become a field of weeds. To become elevated — to flower and blossom — we must put in a lot of digging and weeding of the soul.

"We were slaves to Pharaoh in Mitzraim"

The Exodus from Egypt gave us the potential for the ultimate escape from this field of thorns.

A slave can never realize his own potential. He can never flower. All he can do is to bring

his master's potential to fruition. A slave is like a field that can only grow weeds.

A free person is able to bring his entire potential into reality. With hard work he can blossom and bloom. The slave, like an abandoned field, is a fertile place for all kinds of weeds: The weeds of immorality; the weeds of lawlessness.

When the final redemption, the final *geula* comes, all domination in the world, everything which holds us in thrall, will be removed. There will be nothing to prevent us from realizing our full potential.

That is the very definition of *geula* — that our entire potential is realized to its fullest. Nothing remains latent and frustrated.

Hashem placed Adam in the Garden "to work it and to guard it." However, that work was complementary to man's nature. It wasn't slave labor. It wasn't back-breaking. It was work that man wanted to do.

What breaks a person is doing work that he hates, work that goes against the very nature of a person.

When Hashem freed us from slavery, He gave us the possibility to bring our potential into actuality. *Geula* is the full realization of potential.

It is the ultimate escape from the field of thorns.

EYELESS IN GAZA PLAZA

*We, who gazed upon
The chimes of freedom flashing,
Who burned our eyes
from watching
The world welding itself
Into an iron vest,
Who saw the test,
The rhymin' Simon rantin',
The mousetrap Kantian crumblin';
We, whose eyes
were put out
in the Marketplaces of
Gaza Plaza NY NY,
Who arrived before the party
And left before the fad,
We, above all, have known
The Balm Of Gilead.*

Sources: *This Month's Sign/ The Darkest Hour*: Sefer HaToda'ah, Rabbi Eliahu Kitov, translated by Rabbi Nachman Bulman
Escape From The Field Of Thorns - Rabbi Moshe Shapiro

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