



The Geometry of Freedom

History tells us of many revolutions that began with sublime ideals and visions of liberty, only to be followed by deep disappointment and even greater tyranny and oppression.

The French revolution began in a magnificent blaze of "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity" and rapidly evolved into the Reign of Terror and the horrors of the Napoleonic Wars that so devastated Europe. In the end, the French exchanged bondage of neglect under the Bourbon Monarchs for bondage of abuse under the revolution. True freedom remained as elusive as ever.

The Russian people had suffered under the autocratic rule of the Romanov Kings for centuries. When they rose up in revolution in 1917, they and the world were filled with hope for a life of freedom and a new, more just and equitable society. This hope was slaughtered in the cellars and torture chambers of the Soviet secret police and frozen in the slave camps of the Gulag. The slavery to the Romanovs was paradise compared to the bondage, absolute lack of freedom, and the slaughter of millions in the new soviet state.



Attaining freedom is not merely about leaving a yoke of bondage behind; it is about a clear vision of a new paradigm for a better world. Otherwise, the revolution will be a true revolution — it will revolve a full 360 degrees and the same ingrained patterns will reassert themselves, and sometimes even worse. A true revolution needs to be one of 180 degrees — a whole new direction.

We see this theme articulated throughout the Passover story. At the burning bush, G-d tells Moses to instruct Pharaoh "Shalach ami vey'avduni" — "Let my people go, that they may serve Me." Just letting the people go is not going to accomplish anything in the long run, if they're not going to something — to something that's the alternative, indeed the antithesis, to Egypt. Most significantly, the encounter at the burning bush takes place at Mt. Sinai where the Jews would be given the Torah — a truly revolutionary document that would, through the agency of the Jewish people, transform and empower all of humanity.

During the wanderings of the Children of Israel through the desert, we find that every time there were those who shirked their duty, they raised the cry "Let us go back to Egypt." Did they want to suffer again as slaves? Surely not. I think that what the Torah is telling us is that abandoning the new vision and mission leads back to Egypt. Perhaps a new Egypt, but a slavery just the same.

All that is true of nations and world history is true of what the Talmud calls the "small world" of each individual person. Passover is not a commemoration. Passover is reliving and experiencing the liberating power of G-dliness in our lives.

The Hebrew word for Egypt, Mitzrayim, means "constraints." We suffer under the constraints of the habits we maintain simply because we had them yesterday. We are slaves to ingrained pathways of our lives and our world, because we are too busy dusting the covers of our Book of Life to read its pages.

On Passover, and especially at the seder, we put all else aside to concentrate on receiving the power of freedom that flows from G-d to each one of us. But for this experience to have a lasting effect, we need to remember that not only do we have to leave the old habits ("let my people go"), we need a vision and program of the new ("that they may serve Me"). Otherwise, we end up not far from where we started from.

The Hebrew term vey'avduni — "that they may serve Me" — actually means "That they may transform themselves thorough Me." When we look to the Torah — the receiving of which is the sole purpose of the Exodus — we discover that the freedom to realize the potential of every aspect of our being lies within its Mitzvot. Every area of life stands ready to yield purpose, meaning and fulfillment if we are willing to dare to be truly free. "Truly free" is not freedom from the bondage of whichever pharaoh, king or czar happens to be oppressing us at the moment, but freedom from the bondage of all self-imposed limits on our capacity to truly realize our G-dly potential.

The Previous Rebbe
Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, the "Frierdiker" Rebbe (1880 – Yud Shevat, 1950)

The life of Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn spanned a period of unprecedented upheaval and transition for the Jewish people. Born in the summer of 1880, he grew up in the small village of Lubavitch, the historic center of Chabad, 300 miles west of Moscow. Under the patronage of his father, it was there that he established the Tomchei Temimim Yeshiva, equipping a new cadre of students with the knowledge, vision and conviction to perpetuate traditional Jewish life irrespective of the political and social unrest that would soon sweep across Russia and the world.

He assumed the leadership of Chabad in the chaotic aftermath of Russia's revolution and civil war, rallying and reorganizing his scattered and disorientated chassidim in the face of famine, disease and heightening religious persecution at the hands of the communist regime. Following his 1927 arrest he relocated to Warsaw and built a new educational and institutional infrastructure from scratch, only to see it destroyed at the hands of the Nazis in 1939. Arriving in New York, he immediately set out to build a new network of educational institutions and activists. Despite personal illness and frailty he made intensive efforts both to save Jews from the Nazi onslaught and to imbue a new generation of American Jews with the potent spirit of Chassidism.

(from www.chabad.org)

We happily wish Mazel Tov to
Rabbi Larry and Mrs. Flo Ziffer and Family
 on the **Birth of a Granddaughter**,
 born to their children Rabbi Yitzchok and Ellie (Ziffer) Radner.



Mr. Yechiel and Mrs. Rochelle Rubin are sponsoring Kiddush this Shabbat
 in memory of Yechiel's father, **Ephraim ben Yechiel, z"l**,
 whose yahrzeit is this Shabbat.



Kol Hanaarim – every Friday evening during the winter at **7:30 p.m. in The Shul**. Cholent and pastries are served. Each session is 'topped off' at the end with a fascinating story by Rabbi Eli Itzkowitz. For any questions, please see Rabbi Itzkowitz.

Yahrzeits This Week:

Yechiel Rubin	6 Shevat - Friday night / Shabbat	for father	Ephraim ben Yechiel
Larry Ziffer	9 Shevat - Monday night / Tuesday	for mother	Rochel bas Meir Yehuda Leib HaKohen
Mindy Pazornick	9 Shevat - Monday night / Tuesday	for brother	Yezkiel ben Yekutiel

DAVENING AND SHIURIM SCHEDULE

Friday, 1/23 — 5 Shevat

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
 Shabbat Candles — 4:58 p.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 5:00 p.m.

Shabbat, 1/24 — 6 Shevat

Shacharit 9:00 a.m.
 Sof Z'man Kriat Shema — 9:47 a.m.
 Minchah — 4:45 p.m.
 Shiur — after Minchah
 Shkiah — 5:18 p.m.
 Ma'ariv — 6:00 p.m.

Sunday, 1/25 — 7 Shevat

Shacharit — 8:00 a.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 5:05 p.m.

Monday, 1/26 — 8 Shevat

Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 5:05 p.m.

Tuesday, 1/27— 9 Shevat

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 5:05 p.m.

Wednesday, 1/28 — 10 Shevat

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 5:05 p.m.
 Tanya Shiur: 2nd part of Tanya Shaar HaYichud
 V'Emunah which deals w/the nature of creation
 and the unity of Hashem — 8:30 p.m.

Thursday, 1/29 — 11 Shevat

Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 5:05 p.m.

Friday, 1/30 — 12 Shevat

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
 Shabbat Candles — 5:06 p.m.
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 5:05 p.m.