

# Our Personal EGYPT

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The Hagada says, "In every generation a person is obligated to see himself as if he had personally been liberated from Egypt." How do I personally make the transition from slavery to freedom when I was never a slave? Every person is, in a sense, born a slave - to ignorance, to lust, to passion, and to selfishness. Our task is to free ourselves from our personal EGYPT, which is spiritual slavery to the Yetzer Hara.

In Sh'mot ch. 6, the Torah mentions the Four Expressions of redemption from Egypt. Let us focus on the first expression of redemption. "...and I will take you out from under the oppressive burdens of Egypt." The Hebrew word for oppressive burdens is SIVLOT.

Yet the same word SIVLOT also means patience, the ability to bear an oppressive burden. The modern Hebrew word, SAVLANUT, from the same root, means tolerance and patience. The same phenomenon occurs in the English translation of the same root. The verb, to suffer, means to be in great pain, but it also means the ability to tolerate pain. When we suffer injustice such as worldwide terrorism, we are tolerating it.

G-d's promise to the Jewish People

was to deliver them not only from the physical oppressive burdens of Egypt, but to liberate them from the patience and tolerance of slavery. Patience is a virtue of the righteous, but it can also be the yoke of the slave. To be able to bear patiently with apathy and indifference, the yoke of Egypt, was the lowest depth of slavery and degradation.

Thus, when G-d saw the Hebrew slaves so rooted in their slavery that it had become their second nature (Sh'mot 6:9), "...for they did not listen to Moshe because of shortness of spirit and hard labor." Therefore, G-d had to redeem us.

The Jewish People had reached the ability to bear patiently the entire system of Egyptian slavery. That depression and fatalism that afflicted the Jewish People was the 49th level of impurity, for beyond that point there would never be any return. Israel then would be lost forever.

Therefore, even though G-d had told Avraham that his children will be enslaved for 400 years, G-d had to intervene after 210 years of slavery to redeem Israel before we reached the point of no return.