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FREE RENDITION

By the Grace of G-d
11th of Nissan, 5723
Brooklyn, New York

To my Brethern, Everywhere
G-d bless you all -

Greeting and Blessing:

Pesach is the first day of Jewish independence, and the first festival in the history of our Jewish people. It is first in rank and significance, for it brought the liberation of our people from enslavement and made it possible for them to live a free and independent life as a nation, governed only by the Torah and its commandments dictated by G-d alone.

As such, Pesach is especially meaningful for our Jewish people, and for every Jew individually, at all times and in all places. For this reason also, every aspect of the festival, and every detail attending the historical Yetzias Mitzraim (the Exodus from Egypt), has a special significance in the way of a timeless message and practical instruction for the individual, the community and our people as a whole.

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One of the important details of Yetzias Mitzraim is the haste with which the Exodus took place. When the hour of liberation struck, the Jewish people left Egypt at once, losing not a moment, or, as our Sages express it - not even a heref ayin, "the batting of an eye-lid". They add, moreover, that if the Jewish people had tarried and missed that auspicious moment, the opportunity of the liberation would have been lost forever.

This seems incomprehensible. For it was already after the Ten Plagues, which prompted the Egyptians to virtually expel the Jews from their land. The situation was thus "well in hand". Why, then, was the haste of the moment so important? And how is one to understand the statement of our Sages that if that moment had been missed, the whole liberation would have been in jeopardy?

Above all, what practical lesson is contained in this detail, so that the Torah (Torah meaning "instruction") makes a point of revealing it to us with particular emphasis?

The explanation is as follows:

When the end of the road of exile is reached, and comes the moment of liberation from the "abomination of Egypt," the opportunity must be seized at once; there must be no tarrying even for an instant, not

even to the extent of "batting an eye-lid".

The danger of forfeiting the opportunity lay not in the possibility of the Egyptians changing their mind, but in the possibility that some Jews might change their mind, being loth to leave their habituated way of life in Egypt, to go out into the desert to receive the Torah.

The practical lesson for every Jew, man or woman, young or old, is:

"Yetzias Mitzraim", as it is to be experienced in the day-to-day life, is the personal release from subservience to the dictates of the body and the animal in man; the release from passions and habits within, as well as from the materialistic environment without. This release can only be achieved by responding to the perpetual Divine call, the call of the G-d of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, seeking out the "oppressed and enslaved", and promising: "I shall redeem you from bondage..that I may be G-d unto you." As at the time of the first Liberation, true freedom is conditioned upon the acceptance of the Torah and Mitzvoth.

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This call for freedom never ceases. "Yetzias Mitzraim" must be achieved every day; each day the opportunity beckons anew.

Unfortunately, there are individuals who tarry and consign the opportunity to the "three solemn days" of the year, Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur; others, at best, postpone it for Shabbos and Yom Tov; still others, who recall and experience "Yetzias Mitzraim" in daily prayer, fail to extend it to every aspect of the daily life.

What is true of the individual, is true also on the community and national level, except that on these levels the missing of the opportunities is, of course, even more far-reaching and catastrophic.

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The extraordinary opportunity which knocks at our door at this very moment, is the reorientation which has taken hold of wide circles of Jewry, especially of the younger generation, which has created a strong tendency to return to our original and authentic heritage.

Considerable sections of these circles which had been estranged from Yiddishkeit, are seeking the way to Torah and Mitzvoth; and many of those who had maintained some association with Torah and Mitzvoth, are seeking guidance to strengthen their bonds and identification with authentic Judaism.

With the exception of those who stopped thinking long ago, there is a widespread interest among all, and especially the youth, to know the full truth about Yiddishkeit; moreover, they demand to know the full truth. Even those who are not ready as yet to commit themselves fully, and to the leap to bring about a radical change in their lives, they are nevertheless mature enough and courageous enough to face the truth, untarnished and uncompromised, and not a half-truth or quarter-truth, or "made to order" truth".

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Experience has shown that where Jewish youth comes in contact with authentic Torah-and-Mitzvot Yiddishkeit, it is attracted to it, and many of them have begun to order their daily lives accordingly, with determination and enthusiasm, with which youth is so richly endowed.

It is painful to contemplate, however, that although this awakening has been in the process of fruition for a number of years, the opportunity has not been met adequately. Sadder still is the fact that the challenge has hardly been taken up by those who are supposed to be the spiritual leaders.

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As in the days of our ancestors in Egypt whose exodus was not delayed even for a moment, whereby they attained full liberation of the body and full liberation of the spirit (with the acceptance of the Torah at Sinai, which was the purpose and goal of the Exodus),

May G-d grant that every Jew and Jewess seize the extraordinary opportunity of the present moment, to achieve self-liberation and to help others in the same direction; liberation from all manner of bondage, internal and external, and above all, liberation from the most dismal bondage - the idea of "let's be like the rest,"

In order to return to the way of the Torah and Mitzvot in the fullest measure, and thus merit the fulfillment of the promise: When the Jewish people return, they are redeemed at once, with the true and complete redemption through our righteous Moshiach.

With prayerful wishes for a kosher and happy Pesach,

Signed /Menachem Schneerson/

Notes:

First day: כמש"נ זכור את היום הזה (שמות יג, ג) וראה שמו"ר (פי"ט, ז): הזהר כו' יום השבת כו' היום הזה.

First festival: ראה יבמות מו, א. ושם: To live..Torah: ר"ה בתחלתה.

Our Sages: במכילתא לשמות יב, מא-מב. הובא בפרש"י שם.

They add: מפרשים בשם הזהר (ז"ה רענן - הובא באו"ח להצ"צ).

Lost forever: .אנו ובנינו ובני בנינו - כמבואר בהגדה.

The danger: ראה תניא פרק לא.

Father of Abraham..I shall redeem: שמות ג, טז. שם ו, ט.

This call..never ceases: כהמאמר, תה"פ ווערט נמשך שטענדיג (שיחות תה"פ).

Purpose and goal: חש"ג - ל"ב ק"מ ח"א דמו"ר). שמות ג, יב. יבמות שם. ז"ה ר"פ.

Most dismal bondage: יתרו. ראה קונטרס ומעין סוף מאמר י"א.

The promise: רמב"ם הל' תשובה פ"ז ה"ה.