

**Good Shabbos Everyone.** The Torah portion this week speaks about the beginning of the redemption of the Bnai Yisroel from Egypt. Hashem tells the Bnai Yisroel: "I shall take out My legions-- my people the Children of Yisroel from the land of Egypt with great judgments... and Egypt shall know that I am Hashem..." (Shemos 7:4,5)

The Sages tell us that our redemption from the current exodus will mirror the exodus from Egypt. Just as with the Egyptian exodus Hashem made Himself known, so too will Hashem make Himself known with the coming redemption. The main thing to keep in mind is that no matter how bleak the current exodus is, Hashem will lead us out of bondage to the Holy Land. The following story illustrates how one great Torah leader helped inspire others never to give up hope of redemption.

The Klausenberger Rebbe, Rabbi Yekusiel Yehudah Halberstam (1905-1994), was legendary for the encouragement he gave to the thousands of shattered Jews who came to the Displaced Persons camps after their liberation from the horrors of the concentration camps. To each of the bereaved, the Rebbe had different words of comfort and consolation. Everyone knew that it was the Rebbe, more than anyone else, who could give people hope and strength to renew their lives. At times, the Rebbe would refer to the unspeakable tragedies that he personally suffered. He lost his wife, Rebbetzin Pessel, and 11 children!

The Klausenberger Rebbe had a special interest in children. Even under dismal and sorrowful conditions he opened a yeshivah, *Sh'eiris Hapleita*, for 100 boys, and a Bais Yaakov school for 120 girls. One day, two men told him about Meshulam Yalver. (name has been changed). When Meshulam was 16 he was known as an exceptional *masmid* (diligent scholar), punctilious in his mitzvah observance; a boy who had a bright future as an exemplary Jew. Now, having gone through suffering, loss, and catastrophe, he rejected his Judaism and resisted any attempts to bring him back to the fold of observance.

The Rebbe asked the men to bring Meshulam to him.

When Meshulam entered the Rebbe's room, the Rebbe motioned for Meshulam to sit down next to him. *"I'm told that you are the son of Reb Laibish, whom I knew,"* the Rebbe said. *"Yes,"* Meshulam answered. Meshulam did not want to be lulled into a conversation where he would have to debate the Rebbe in topics of *emunah* (belief) and *bitachon* (faith). For him the world of religion ended in Auschwitz; there was nothing to discuss. *"They say that you were a great masmid (diligent scholar), back home. Is that so?"* the Rebbe asked in a non-confrontational tone. Meshulam just nodded.

*"But now you are angry?"* asked the Rebbe softly. *"Of course, I'm angry,"* Meshulam blurted out heatedly, unable to contain himself any longer. *"The best were taken away, the finest are lost forever."* The Rebbe extended his palm and touched the boy's face and said, *"You are so right. Look at me; They left me alive while my wife and all 11 children were taken away. You are right,"* the Rebbe said again, *"the best were taken away and look what's left..."* And with that the Rebbe burst into tears and began sobbing. And then together the Rebbe and the boy cried without stop on each other's shoulders.

No more words were spoken - for no words had to be spoken - for no words could be spoken. Two tortured hearts joined in a stream of tears. An hour later, Meshulam left the Rebbe's house. That night when Meshulam was alone, he recited *Krias Shema* (the Shma) for the first time in months. Within a few days he was wearing his yarmulka again. Eventually he became fully observant again. Years later, Meshulam then in his 70's, commented: *"There was nothing anyone could say to me, and the Rebbe understood that. Everyone spoke to my head; the Rebbe touched my heart."* (The Echoes of the Maggid, Rabbi Paysach J. Krohn, p.272)

Although the Klausenberger Rebbe went through horrible suffering and lost his entire family, he survived to rebuild his Chassidic community as well as spread Torah to thousands of Jews around the world. If anything, like many other survivors, the Klausenberger Rebbe's belief in Hashem was only strengthened by his life experiences. The Rebbe saw the beautiful Torah families, which sprouted like flowers from the ashes of war. The Rebbe then believed even more strongly that the hand of Hashem was on the Jewish people.

In fact, the miraculous continuous existence of the Jewish nation against all odds points to the existence of an all-powerful being, namely G-d. (Reb Yakov Emden siddur) This point is further strengthened by what Hashem tells us through the Prophet Yeshayahu "You are My Witness. ... and [you are] My servant whom I have chosen, so that you will know and believe in Me, and understand that I am He; before Me nothing was created by a god nor will there be after Me!" (Rav Uri Zohar citing Yeshayahu 43:10)

The only way to explain the continued existence of the Jewish People is to say that there is a G-d Who is guiding this world and Who has chosen the Jewish People. The Jewish people has come under attack in almost every generation and every land. Losses have been horrible and we bear the scars inflicted upon us by the nations. Yet, we are still here and we await with every day the coming of the ultimate redemption. **Good Shabbos Everyone.**