

And there arose a new king who did not know Yosef. (1:8)

Galus, exile, is interpreted to mean displacement. A person in exile is a displaced person. A person in exile is no longer himself; as he is an expatriate from his home, his self-image is distorted. A Jew in *galus* is a *galus* Jew who is devoid of the treasures and qualities that had been a part of his life prior to his forced emigration from Yerushalayim – or, at least, he should feel that way. The fact that we no longer feel (or ever really felt) that we are missing our “home” is, in and of itself, another and – perhaps deeper – sign of *galus*. While we might have many treasures – both material and spiritual – that are part of our lives, they are displaced, since we really belong elsewhere. That defines *galus*.

Horav Moshe Shapiro, zl, observes that the Egyptian exile, the first of our exiles, commences (in the Torah) with the words, *Vaykam melech chodosh*, “A new king arose.” The redemption from Egypt begins with the words, *Hachodesh ha’zeh lachem rosh chodoshim*, “This month shall be for you the beginning of the months” (12:2). This is a reference to the *mitzvah* of *Kiddush HaChodesh*, Sanctifying the New Moon. New king – exile; new moon – redemption. The word/concept of newness, in regard to both exile and redemption, is not coincidental; it is by design. We derive from here that our exile and redemption revolve around the concept of newness, novelty. Veritably, if one were to peruse the thesaurus for synonyms for “new,” he would find a host of words/terms, some of which (in the context of *galus/geulah*, exile/redemption) do not seem appropriate. As the *Rosh Yeshivah* explains, the *galus* began with one form of newness, and the redemption began with another form of newness. The exile began with the distortion of this concept; the redemption set it right. How did this transpire? We must first understand the meaning of “new.”

Nothing is wrong with seeking to innovate, to add newness. The question is: at what and at whose expense? Novelty is wonderful; innovation is laudatory, when it is built upon and based on the past. *Rav Shapiro* quotes the *pasuk* in *Hoshea* 5:7, which *Chazal* cite as the explanation for, “A new king arose over Egypt.” The *Navi* says, “They betrayed G-d for they bore strange children; now newness shall devour them.” *Klal Yisrael* sinned by transgressing the law prohibiting intermarriage with non-Jews. It was an innovation that was counter to the Torah. They were punished with a new month, a *Chodesh* (*chadash*, new), the month of *Av*, during which the *Bais Hamikdash* was destroyed and we were exiled from our Land.

Chazal teach that after Yosef died (*Vayamas Yosef*), the people repealed the *mitzvah* of *Bris Milah*. They declared, “Let us be like the Egyptians.” To be like them, we had to look like them. The *Bris* could not engender an identity crisis, when the people strived so hard to be like the *goyim*. Once they did this, Hashem gave them a “new” king; actually, he was the same king with renewed decrees. When our concept of innovation is defined by doing away with the old, Hashem delivers to us something “new”, that comes in the form of payback/punishment for our rejection of Him.

Our longing for novelty – rejecting the old, tried and proven for the new – is something with which we are sadly acquainted. At the close of the eighteenth century, the mother of rebellious

movements, the *Haskalah*, Enlightenment, began to take root among Jews in Europe and Russia. The scourge of newness encouraged Jews, who had for centuries been removed from the influence of the gentiles, to leave the ghetto. *Haskalah* preached innovation, a new face, acculturation, assimilation, and ultimate *shmad*, apostasy. *Haskalah* was the precursor of the “isms”: Communism; Socialism; and others that followed, presenting themselves as Jewish by nature, such as secular Zionism, a new religion based on the Holy Land as their religious dogma. As the *Navi Hoshea* said, “Now newness shall devour them” – and it did.

Innovation is screaming for more innovation and doing away with the old. Openness and newness seem to be holding hands, with the Jewish religion as their victim. Such newness which abrogates the old and traditional is all- consuming – in the sense that it consumes, devours and destroys any connection with the old.

We did not learn from the Egyptian exile. The redemption came as a result of newness – but it was a newness of, “This new month is yours”. This type of “newness” adds new, more, building on the tried and proven, while the other type of “new” expunges the old, devours and consumes. I think the *pasuk* that best describes our yearning for the “added” new is expressed by the *Navi* (*Eichah* 5:21), *Hashiveinu Hashem eilecha, v’nashuvah chadeish yameinu k’kedem*, “Bring us back to You, and we shall return, renew our days as of old.”

Simply, this reflects our yearning for a return to the days when the majesty of the *Bais Hamikdash* permeated our lives, when we were able to live as Jews in our homeland, serving Hashem and following His Torah. What is the meaning of “Renew our days as of old”? Do we seek new or old? The *Navi* is hereby relating to us the prescription for seeking newness, the approach to redemption – “renew as of old.” We do not want to do away with the old – nor do we want to reject innovation if it will increase and embellish our service to Hashem. We want to renew, add newness to the old, but never regret the glorious life that we had. Those who denigrate the *shtetl* because they seek modernity and openness “open” themselves to assimilation. To them, tradition is archaic and shameful when, in fact, it should be our greatest source of pride. Perhaps our motto should be “innovation in continuity”, every moment is a new moment added onto the old. As *Rav Shapiro* says, “Life of now is not life of before – a moment earlier was life of then, now is the welling forth of the moment.”

One is alive because he lives now – not because he has continued from before. There is a *chiddush* in every moment. Hashem creates us with every breath. Life is the constant welling forth of life, which is renewed incessantly at every instant. That is the “new” of redemption.