

And I shall put My hand upon Egypt; and I shall take out My legions – My People Bnei Yisrael – from the Land of Egypt. (7:4)

Hashem promised to take the Jewish People out of Egypt, dealing with the Egyptians and punishing them for mistreating the Jews. There is no question that the Egyptians deserved a very strong punishment – one which they would remember for all time. They persecuted and murdered an innocent people who had done nothing to them. Now, they would pay not only with their material bounty, but with their own blood. They would suffer as we suffered. While this is all understandable and unquestionably deserved by the Egyptians, did it have to occur before the Jews could be redeemed from Egypt? What would have been wrong to liberate the Jews immediately, allowing them to distance themselves from the moral filth of Egypt, and then punish the Egyptians? Why did the Jews have to spend an extra year in Egypt, while the Egyptians were receiving their due? The Jews could have “read” about it, while they were ensconced in *Eretz Yisrael*.

In his *Vayedaber Moshe*, **Horav Moshe Pollack, zl**, explains that, indeed, Hashem could easily have redeemed the Jews immediately, but he wanted to put them to a test, to see who really wanted to leave Egypt and who just did not want to be a slave. Had Hashem dispatched Moshe *Rabbeinu* to inform the people that they were promptly leaving, they would have all lined up waiting for the opportunity to leave. What fool would have chosen slavery in Egypt over freedom in *Eretz Yisrael*, even if it meant traveling through a miserable wilderness with its many challenges and dangers? Leaving Egypt was all that mattered. At least their children would be safe.

After an entire year of relative freedom, witnessing the wonders and miracles wrought by Hashem against the Egyptians, including a cessation of their work load – was it really necessary to pick themselves up and gather everything together, just to go to *Eretz Yisrael*? Would it be the end of the world if they were to remain free men in Egypt? True, a change in scenery is always invigorating and exciting, but, at the expense of uprooting oneself, perhaps it would be better to stay put.

These were the thoughts that entered the Jewish mindset during that year of plagues. Hashem did not want to force the Jews who were not committed to leave to abandon their “homestead” in Egypt. Indeed, as we are well aware, only twenty percent of the Jewish population in Egypt passed the test and left. The remaining eighty percent remained, Egypt became their everlasting resting place. To serve Hashem in *Eretz Yisrael* demands commitment to Hashem and His Torah. One who goes to *Eretz Yisrael* just to escape the travail of Egypt lacks the necessary commitment.

At any time during our tumultuous history, had the opportunity been given to leave for *Eretz Yisrael*, to live the life of a *ben Torah*, committed to observance, there is no question that everybody would have lined up to leave. The passionate belief in *Moshiach Tzidkeinu* was burning within the hearts and minds of all. Now, with the establishment of a relatively safe haven in the Holy Land, under a

secular regime – how many Jews still yearn for *Moshiach Tzidkeinu* with that same passionate fervor? Perhaps they think that this is it; they need no more. As long as we are not slaves, are we not free?

Sadly, throughout the generations, as was the case in Egypt, a large percentage of our people would rather settle for a figment of imaginary freedom than wait for the real thing. *Moshiach* will, *im yirtzeh Hashem*, arrive at the designated time. Until then, we continue hoping – as well as preparing for his arrival. After all, we want to be worthy of redemption.