

"And it was when Pharaoh let the people leave. (13:17)

The *Talmud* explains that where an episode in the *Torah* begins with the word "hvhu" (and it was) there is a negative implication. This seems puzzling in regard to the Exodus from Egypt; what negative aspect is there to leaving the bondage and depravity of Egypt? On the contrary, this should be a source of joy and excitement. There are various reasons given to explain the number of plagues and miracles which Hashem wrought in Egypt. One of the purposes of the plagues was to imbue in the Jewish people a strong belief in Hashem and His awesome powers, so that they would have a strong desire to leave Egypt with its corruption and impurities. Nonetheless, even after all the plagues and miracles, the Jews did not leave of their own free will; it was Pharaoh who sent them out. This is the sadness of the Exodus.