

"Because they were thrust out of Egypt, and they were not able to tarry." (12:39)

Klal Yisrael were not able to remain in Egypt any longer. *Chazal* teach that if they had remained there even for another moment, they would have sunk to the depths of impurity, reaching the fiftieth level of *tumah*, spiritual defilement. This statement does not seem consistent with the fact that during their entire exile in Egypt *Klal Yisrael* continued to adhere steadfastly to their distinct Jewish nationalism. They maintained their manner of dress, and they did not change their names or language. If they had been able to hold closely to their traditional customs, why were they not able to ward off the threat of assimilation?

Furthermore, our present *galus*, exile, has lasted over two thousand years. Although we are by no measure perfect, we do not sense an imminent threat of spiritual extinction looming over our lives. What difference is there between our present day adversity and the travails of our ancestors in Egypt?

Horav Zalmen Sorotzkin z.l., asserts that the answer lies in one word -- *Torah*. In Egypt, the Jewish people had not yet received the *Torah*, the only true protective shield against assimilation. Despite their allegiance to those nationalistic traits which distinguished them from the Egyptian society and ultimately was their merit for redemption, they would have assimilated had they remained in Egypt one more moment! Jewish "nationalism" without *Torah* is not a sufficient safeguard against spiritual extinction. Our hope for maintaining Jewish distinctiveness, our only prospect for Jewish spiritual survival, is *Torah*. Protected by *Torah*, we shall never assimilate!