

So Pharaoh sent and summoned Yosef, and they rushed him from the dungeon. (41:14)

Regardless of the circumstances surrounding one's *eis tzarah*, period of trouble, when the designated time for *geulah*, redemption/deliverance, arrives, he will not spend one extra moment in travail. Yosef was incarcerated with no immediate hope for release, but, when the Heavenly-appointed time for his liberation was reached, he was rushed out of prison. Likewise, explains the *Chafetz Chaim*, when the time for *Klal Yisrael's* redemption from exile arrives, we will immediately be freed. Nothing will impede our release.

Two types of redemption exist: collective redemption; and personal redemption. We must remember that, however bleak things may appear, this darkness will end. When we reach that moment, we will be set free from our troubles. This has been the scenario throughout our journey in exile. How often have we thought that it was hopeless; we were finished; we had no way out. We were wrong; we did have a way out. We had just not reached the appointed moment of deliverance.

The reading of the *parsha* that relates Yosef's redemption and confrontation with his brothers coincides with the festival of *Chanukah*. The future appeared very bleak for the Jews in *Eretz Yisrael*. The Greeks had prohibited Torah and the practices and principles of our faith. Matisyahu led a small band of fighters who waged war with the Greek majority. The Jews prevailed, and they proclaimed Chanukah to eternalize Hashem's miraculous intervention. We must be patient and not despair. Hashem has a plan, and we are part of it.

Exile does not always present itself in the guise of a person or persons subjugated by others. Indeed, every instance in which we struggle is also a form of subjugation, since the travail which hangs over our heads enslaves us. Another form of enslavement exists, one from which it is very difficult to emerge: when one is enslaved to himself, his desires, or his chosen way of life. The challenge arises from his unwillingness to concede that he is not in control. He is a slave to the life from which he either refuses -- or is unable -- to extricate himself. When the time for his emancipation arrives, Hashem will step in and provide him with the avenue for salvation. The following *Chanukah* story attests to this verity.

Jews who left Europe prior to World War I made their way to the shores of Australia with the hope for a new and better life. They moved to the rural communities where land was inexpensive, and soon those who had originally lived in abject poverty now lived in relative comfort. Unfortunately, religious challenges often accompany comfort. People would like to have their cake and eat it too. Thus, the parents who had been immigrants with lucid memories of Europe and the observant lifestyle which they led, retained their memories and remained observant. Their children, however, were not as fortunate, and they slowly distanced themselves from tradition and religious observance.

Our story is about Yaakov, who became Jack, the youngest of a family of European immigrants. As he grew educationally and socially, his observance digressed dismally. He took over his family's business and successfully built it up. As his economic standing changed, so did his religious affiliation, to the point that he became completely alienated from religious observance. When one does not know, he can hardly be observant. He married a like-minded woman who hailed from a similar background. Her named used to be Dinah, now it was Diane. In the early years of their marriage, they lived in the Jewish community, but, as time went on, they moved to the distant suburbs, breaking all ties with the Jewish community and Judaism. They became so assimilated that they soon forgot that they were even Jewish. The only memories they had were of the painful life they had lived in Europe. These were memories they wanted to erase from their minds. They would live as secular citizens of their adopted country.

Hashem, however, had another plan for their future. One evening during the month of *Kislev*, Diane read an article about the Jewish festival of lights, *Chanukah*. She was intrigued by the festival and the miracles surrounding it. She decided that she would light one candle in honor of *Chanukah* – not as a celebration of the festival – but purely from a cultural perspective. In the middle of the night, Jack woke up and had difficulty falling back asleep. He decided to go down to the kitchen and read the paper for a while. He, too, read the article and was intrigued. He figured that it would not hurt to light a candle in honor of the festival. It would not represent a commitment on his part. He lit the candle and returned to bed. One hour later, the sound of strong winds and heavy rain awakened Jack and his wife. It was a hurricane of epic proportion which was not uncommon in that part of Australia. Within a short time, the power was out, and the house was cast into darkness. To add to their misery, the banks of the river overflowed, and water was seeping into their house. Massive flooding was affecting the entire area. It was becoming dangerous to remain at home, but, without rescue boats, it was impossible to escape.

Searchers looked wherever they could, but, since it was a rural area and the power was out, it was difficult to discern whether anyone required transport. Jack had no flashlights with which to signal for help. They just stood by their window, banging and screaming for help. At first, the rescue teams passed their house, saw no light signaling for help and continued on to the next house. Suddenly, one of the searchers cried out, "Stop! I see a faint light!" They turned back and were able to get to the frantic couple. Jack and Diane were beyond emotion. Laughing and crying together all at once, they could not sufficiently thank the rescuers who saved them. Once they were ensconced safely in a boat, they asked their rescuers how they were able to locate them. One of the men replied, "I saw a faint, flickering light coming from your house." Jack realized that the two *Chanukah* candles gave off enough illumination for the rescuers to notice them. This became their personal *Chanukah* miracle, which ultimately catalyzed their return to their religious roots. When the time to return arrives, Hashem facilitates it. No Jew is left behind. He must, however, be willing to grab the "life preserver" when it is available.