



RABBI MOSHE HAUER ZT" L

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The Twilight Zone of Redemption

From the archives: Written a year ago after the release of some of the hostages, but still relevant today. Rabbi Hauer zt'l describes world events that make us both happy and sad, hopeful and fearful, and how we should move forward.

It feels like we are living in *Parshat Va'eira*. The essential story of the *galut* in Egypt is comprised of three primary chapters. *Parshat Shemot* opens the story of the intensifying bitter enslavement of the Jewish people; *Parshat Bo* closes it with their leaving Egypt. *Parshat Va'eira* is the prolonged twilight zone in between, when things start to get better as Hashem shows His hand on behalf of His people and beats back their enemies but does not do so decisively enough for their complete deliverance. Time and time again the Egyptians are made to feel the pressure but ultimately resist it and continue the bondage.

We can only imagine the roller-coaster of emotions that the Jewish people felt during that period with their hopes repeatedly raised and dashed until the story properly concludes with the Egyptians' clear recognition that they have been defeated. From the outset, Moshe made clear that it was going to be the plague of the first-born that would produce their ultimate deliverance (*Shemot* 4:22-23), and that would come as described in *Parshat Bo* (11:6), with terrible cries coming from the Egyptians. Put differently, it ain't over until Klal Yisrael sings and the Egyptians cry.

That is the straightforward meaning of the Talmud's reading (*Sanhedrin* 22a) of *Tehillim* 68:7: "G-d brings the isolated home, setting free those held captive with weeping and with song," referring to the weeping of the Egyptians and the singing of the Jews. Those are the sounds of the unambiguous clarity of the definitive victory of good over evil.

At this moment in time, we are not quite there yet as we find ourselves doing both the singing and the weeping. We have been blessed to see Hashem deliver via the heroic soldiers of Tzahal plague after plague to our enemies and miraculous protection for the Jewish people from hostile attacks, yet those attacks continue. We received the news of the freeing of three of the hostages earlier this week with mixed emotions; joy for them, sadness for those remaining

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in the hands of the Hamas monsters, and fear for the unfinished business of defeating the enemy. And we watched Hamas and many Palestinians cheer and jeer when handing over the hostages and celebrate the return of their own murderous and unrepentant terrorists from Israeli jails while raging over the death and damage inflicted on their own homes and families. Both sides are laughing and crying, a sure sign that there is as yet no clear victor. The tide may have turned, but it is not over.

What will it take to bring this to a conclusion? We cannot dare to “answer” that question, but we can think about it in broader terms. Jewish thought sees the essence of *galut* in its ambiguity and confusion, a “twilight zone” condition that originates in the original exile of Adam from the Garden of Eden. Rambam (Moreh Nevuchim 1:1) noted that the nature of the original sin was such that it shifted our view of the world from the objective and clear knowledge of truth and falsehood – *da'at emet v'sheker* – to the more subjective and ambiguous knowledge of good and evil – *da'at tov v'r'a* - while Rav Chaim of Volozhin further noted (Nefesh Hachaim 1:6), that good and evil became so jumbled together that we are left without absolute good and evil. Emerging from that external confusion requires our own internal definitive clarity and commitment which will ultimately be reflected in a greater clarity in the world around us.

We may be astonished to consider that within the twilight zone of *Va'eira*, despite all the divine plagues being visited upon the Egyptians, the Jews' faith in God was incomplete and they were still attached to the idol worship of Egypt. It is only as they approached the final plague, the moment of clarity, that they “withdrew their hands from idol worship” (see Rashi to 12:6) and slaughtered/smashed the sheep/idols of the Egyptians. If the Jewish people were themselves

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vacillating on what they believed in without definitively standing for what was right and true, this would continue to be reflected in the ambiguity of their condition.

We are in a twilight zone. The world around us is terribly unclear; events are happening that make us both happy and sad, hopeful and fearful. Perhaps our best step out of this murkiness of *Va'eira* is to move to the clarity of *Bo* by turning from analyzing what is happening around us to focusing on what we ourselves believe and do, withdrawing our minds and hands from that which we know to be false and thinking and acting with greater clarity, purity, and consistency. ■

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