



SHOSHANA JUDELMAN

TORAH TIDBITS CONTRIBUTOR

Believing in Our Own Potential

I was not a good student when I was young and, quite honestly, school was torturous for me. Every year I would imagine things being different. This year I would be organized. This year I would do my homework. This year I would not zone out in class. And then the year would begin...and I would revert right back to those frustrating behaviors. I was stuck.

Until 11th grade when I was assigned a history teacher (Mrs. Velasco!) who treated me differently. It was like she saw my potential and determined that she would enable it to blossom. And she did.

Chazal tell us that a person cannot free *themselves* from prison. Some outside help is needed. Prison can take many forms, but the very worst form of imprisonment is when you believe that nothing can change. That you are doomed to the same old habits and patterns forever.

In Mrs. Velasco's eyes I was capable of so much more than I thought I was. She expected big things from me and somehow (seemingly miraculously!) by tapping into her vision, I was able to break out of the cycle of limitation I had fallen into.

Her belief in me enabled me to believe in myself.

This is what happened for Am Yisrael at Yetzias Mitzrayim.

The word "Mitzrayim" is related to the word "meitzarim," limitations, and imprisonment.

The Midrash tells us that when Hashem saved Bnei Yisrael at the Yam Suf, the angels were astonished. They pointed out that Bnei Yisrael looked and behaved the same as the Egyptians. Why should they merit to be saved while the Egyptians were drowning?

Hashem answers that Bnei Yisrael are the children of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov and that they are destined to receive the Torah on Har Sinai. In other words, we were different because Hashem saw us differently and chose us.

Rebbe Simcha Bunim of Peshischa comments that the hearts of the Jews were affected by this Heavenly confrontation. When the accusing angels were disparaging Bnei Yisrael it had a real-time effect on the Jews and they cried out in fear and panic.

וּפְרָעָה הַקָּרִיב וַיִּשְׂאוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־עֵינֵיהֶם וְהִנֵּה מִצְרַיִם נֹסֵעַ אַחֲרֵיהֶם וַיִּירָאוּ מְאֹד וַיִּצְעֲקוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־ה':

"As Pharaoh drew near, the Israelites caught sight of the Egyptians advancing upon them. Greatly frightened, the Israelites cried out to G-D."

Why would Hashem choose to save them? In our own eyes we were so lacking. We were so stuck in the slave mentality that we

couldn't see our potential.

But when HaKadosh Baruch Hu argued on our behalf, Bnei Yisrael's hearts were lifted in real time and they began to believe in themselves. As the Torah says:

וַיִּשְׁעַה' בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִיַּד מִצְרַיִם

Thus Hashem delivered Israel that day from the Egyptians

That moment transformed us. It gave us an identity as Hashem's Chosen Nation, a nation that would change the world. That moment itself was the salvation.

On that first Pesach, Hashem broke us out of jail. His love and belief in us are for all time. Every Pesach, when we retell the story, we infuse ourselves with the knowledge of Hashem's belief in us. And, with this awareness, the potential for growth breaks all boundaries.

May Hashem bless us to believe in His belief in us. To know that we are the Nation of light, truth and Geulah and to tap into the story and mitzvos of Pesach as the vehicle of living in that energy.

Chag Kasher v'Sameach! ■

Shoshana Judelman is passionate about learning and growing through Chassidus. She gives shiurim to women in many communities around Israel, including Efrat, Elazar, Raanana and Jerusalem as well as at Midreshet Rachel V'Chaya. Shoshana also guides groups at Yad Vashem and leads journeys to Poland and other countries around Europe for JRoots.

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