

JOGGING ANCIENT MEMORIES

by Rabbi Label Lam

In each and every generation a person is obligated to see himself as if he went out of Egypt. (Talmud Pesachim- Haggada)

Is this just a game or a play that we are about to act out for the 3315th time? How are we to really see ourselves as if it was us that went out of Egypt on that night?

It's a little like that bad joke. The general caught wind that his troops were grumbling about the quality of the food so he decided to give them a tough minded lecture. He asked rhetorically, "Do you think Napoleon's men at Waterloo complained that the bread was stale?!" A small voice interrupted, "No sir! It was fresh then!" How do we relive and experience in all earnest an event that happened so long ago? It was fresh then!

Rabbi Shimon Schwab zl. brought the subject closer to home with the following analogy. It's a known scientific phenomenon that every seven years or so every cell in the human body is cycled out and replaced that is except for the brain cells.

It's a remarkable feat that's worthy of admiration, awe, and of course extreme gratitude, as we say three times daily, "We shall thank You and relate Your praise- for our lives which are committed to Your power...for Your miracles that are with us every day, and for Your wonders and kindness at each moment- evening morning and afternoon..."

There are 60 Trillion cooperative cells in the adult human. Every second 8 million blood cells die and are replaced. We continue to function as each delicate brick is systematically replaced. Wow!

Therefore every seven years we are almost entirely new people. Hey, maybe we can make that fact work to our advantage. Do you think that a court in the land would accept the following argument? 21 Years into a 30- year mortgage I decide to leave the agreement to pay the loan based on the premise, "It's not me! I've changed three times since that paper was signed! It was somebody else who signed on the dotted line!" Absurd! Right? A husband turns to his wife of seven years and says, "You're not the woman I married!" Can he just walk away? No! Why not?

When I started to run regularly a few years ago it wasn't easy getting started. The young Dr. who had encouraged me to begin and who was kind enough to coach me at first once told me, "This should be easy for you. You used to be an athlete and muscles have memories." I answered him back, "Well, I think mine have Alzheimer's!" It took a while for the muscles and me to wake from their

lethargy and remember but they eventually did!

When we look at the Jewish People over history it is similar to the way we might view ourselves over the course of our lives. There are my baby pictures. I was seven pounds and seven ounces then, only two trillion cells. That's me again at the Bar Mitzvah, at the wedding and again twenty years later, a little more gray and a few trillion cells paunchier, a little less vigorous but in some ways wiser and in other ways more foolish. It's all me!

When we imagine the configuration of the nation as described in the Exodus, that was us, the Jewish Nation in our infancy. There we are again receiving the Torah. Now we are entering the Land of Israel. Here we are now thousands of uninterrupted years later with a different group of individual cells but the core is still the same. The brain cells have remained.

The experiences and the commitments of thousands of years are etched into our psyche today and are as relevant and binding as they were as the time that they originally happened. The Pesach Seder may not be an exercise in education or imagination as much as it is just jogging ancient memories.

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