

"I WOULDN'T WANT TO BE THE ONE TO BREAK THAT CHAIN!"

by Rabbi Label Lam

And you should know it today and return it to your heart that HASHEM is G-d in the heavens above and on the earth below and there is no other. (Devarim 4:39)

The Rambam states that foundation of foundations and the pillar of all wisdom is to know that there is a prime source of reality- namely G-d. It is not a matter of belief or speculation but rather of knowledge. He continues, "The knowledge of this matter is a positive commandment, as it says, "I am HASHEM your G-d Who took you out of the land of Egypt..." The Kuzari asks, "Why such a small claim?" "I am HASHEM Who created heaven and earth" would be more grandiose. The answer is that we were not there when the world was created but we did experience the Exodus from Egypt and the pronouncements on Mt. Sinai. This was a historical revelation and not a hysterical revolution. We, as a nation, were there and we witnessed it. That's how we know.

A general caught wind that that his army was beginning to grumble and complain overmuch. When he learned that the main source of their discontent was the quality of the food he became enraged and decided to address the troops. He barked at them, "Do you think Napoleon's men at Waterloo would have complained about the bread?" A small voice was heard from amongst the troops, "No sir! It was fresh then!" Leaving Egypt and receiving the Torah occurred 3318 years ago and it was fresh then. How do we "know it today"?

What occurred at Mt. Sinai was not an isolated moment of inspiration which fades like a sun tan. No! The memory of those uniquely powerful events were captured and bottled in many detailed programs of action, sublime souvenirs that are bubbling and alive till this very day. Just a few examples; At least twice daily we mention leaving Egypt fulfilling the verse, "In order that you should remember the day you left Egypt all the days of your life" (Devarim 28:3)

Tefillin, which are worn daily, "... should be a sign on your arm and for Totafos between your eyes, because with a strong hand HASHEM took us out of Egypt." (Shemos 13:15) Kiddush is recited as a testimony- a "remembrance of leaving Egypt", "You must remember that you were slaves in Egypt, when HASHEM your G-d brought with a strong hand and an outstretched arm. It is for this reason that HASHEM has commanded you to keep the Shabbos." (Devarim 5:13-15) Pesach each year a whole week and more is dedicated to memorializing the events of leaving Egypt. Needless to say Shevuos commemorates and invites the re-reception of the Torah. Sukkos for seven days too is, "In order that your generations should know that in Sukkos I housed the Children of Israel when I took them out of Egypt." (Vayikra 23:43) Not a day or a week in 3318 years has passed that the echo those

events are not felt and acted on with earnest by multitudes of loyal Jews. About this the prophet Isaiah declared, "You are my witnesses, says HASHEM!"

One year when looking for a place in which to make a seminar we happened upon a fancy and yet reasonably priced hotel. We were taking a last walk through with the hotel staff before signing the contract. We came to the kitchen and met the chef and his crew. There was sufficient equipment and space for us to share however there was only one exit. We realized it would be hard to ensure the integrity of the Kashrus with their waiters and ours co-mingling. It was a deal breaker. A palpable tension filled the room. I explained that it was not that we did not trust them. Even accidentally a spoon of theirs could end up in one of our sinks and change the whole equation. They didn't buy it. I tried again, "It's not ours to negotiate. We have been doing it this way for 3300 years!" Just then a Chinese chef wearing one of those tall white hats broke the silence. With his cute accent he exclaimed, "3300 years? **"I wouldn't want to be the one to break *that* chain!"** Text Copyright © 2006 by Rabbi Label Lam and [Torah.org](https://torah.org).