

MAYBE NEXT YEAR, IN JERUSALEM!

by Rabbi Label Lam

This is the bread of affliction that our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. Whoever is hungry, let him come and eat: Whoever is in need, let him come and celebrate the Pesach. This year we are here; next year may we be in the Land of Israel. This year we are in slavery; next year may we be free people.
(Haggadah)

Right at the beginning of the Seder we confront a major problem. First we declare that we are here and now, presently in exile. Then we for the rest of the evening we build up a world of gratitude for having exited Egypt. One could cynically ask, "What was the accomplishment of the Exodus experience if now we find ourselves back in the hot soup of history. What changed?

The Maharal writes in Gevuras HASHEM 31: "Some ask, "What does it help us if we are already under the authority of others? What was made different by the Exodus from Egypt?" These are hollow words. When Israel went out from Egypt they received an essential quality of good to the extent that they are intrinsically fit to be free because of the essence of their being. Circumstance can never nullify the essential. Because Israel is imbued with this quality that they are free people and they just happen to be presently in a setting of exile..."

Let's decode the words of the Maharal. What is the meaning of the distinction he makes between "etzem"-essential and "mikroh" - circumstance? Imagine a wealthy man who having left his hotel room and consumed a sumptuous restaurant meal discovers that he forgot his wallet with his credit cards and ID. Now he finds himself in serious negotiations with the management. They study him with suspicion and although he is humiliated in the process, he knows deep inside that behind a locked door in a hotel room on the other side of town is a little black leather folio that holds the answer to his problems. So he endures the indignities with equanimity. He is essentially a rich person but his present circumstance has the trappings of poverty.

A couple of close friends of mine who were learning in Yeshiva in Israel happened to be golf pros. Although they were enthused about learning Torah they never lost their love for "the game". One day they put on the old uniforms and indulged themselves with a round of golf, yes (don't ask me where) in the holy land. Returning to Jerusalem with their golf bags over their shoulders, they encountered the visage of a monkish looking fellow in full black robes with hood and icons and all. It's not such an uncommon sight in Jerusalem, but my buddy Label commented whimsically to his golf partner Reuven who is a Cohen, "See that fellow over there! He's no priest but you with the golf bags, you are a priest!" Son after son for 3320 years from Aaron the High Priest undeniably qualifies

him as a priestly candidate whatever uniform he happens to be wearing on a given day.

In war torn Europe a young girl was standing with her parents and all their possessions in tow. It was obvious they were on the run. An observer approached the child with great sympathy for her plight and commented, "It's so unfortunate that you don't have a home! The little girl answered profoundly, "I have a home! I just don't have a house to put it in!"

As we sit around the table on Pesach night, we too can declare, "We have a home! As long as we are together, we have a home. We may not have a house to put it in yet. Maybe next year, in Jerusalem!"
DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and [Torah.org](https://torah.org).