JUST FOR YOU!

by Rabbi Label Lam

I am HASHEM your G-d- Who took you out of the Land of Egypt from the house of bondage! (Shemos 20:2)

Blessed are you (You are the source of blessing) HASHEM Who teaches Torah to His people, Israel! (Conclusion of morning blessing on Torah)

The Kuzari asks, "Why, when HASHEM is introducing Himself to the Jewish People at Mount Sinai does HASHEM make such a diminutive claim? "I took you out of the Land of Egypt?" Would it not be grander to say, "I created the heavens and the earth!"? The answer he gives is that we as a nation experienced the exodus from Egypt. It was real to us and personal! It is not an abstract or cerebral exercise to believe or not to believe in HASHEM. The Mitzvah as described by the Rambam is to "know" that there is HASHEM. This is how we know! The giving of the Torah was not a hysterical revolution but a historical revelation! Perhaps there are alternate reasons as well for HASHEM's informing us, "Who took you out of the Land of Egypt!"

Just last week I flew out to St. Louis for just one day and back again to LaGuardia Airport! For me it was a tale of two flights! On the Tuesday morning I quietly boarded and took my seat 22C near the back of the plane. I dutifully stored my carryon stuff in the overhead compartment and with my seat in an upright-position, I buckled and prepared for takeoff.

In the meantime I took out my Shas-Pod and was lost in a page of Talmud till I felt a hum from my phone. It was my wife tenderly wishing me a safe flight and gr8 day. I was answering briefly, "Thnx U2" when the stewardess caught my attention and instructed me to discontinue with the phone and when I asked her about the Shas Pod she affirmed that it too should be closed. I immediately started to press the button to close down the Shas Pod which wasn't responding so efficiently. Then I began to try and shut off my phone. Just then the stewardess was standing there next to my row and glaring. She declared loudly with indignation, "The first time should have been enough!"

I realized that she thought I was still doing some phone stuff. I was only then trying to comply with her exact command. I was annoyed at being misunderstood. I did not even look up once during the safety demo. Later when she passed by, I beckoned for her attention and attempted to explain privately that I was in the middle of obeying her command before and I did not deviate from any word she told me from the moment she told me.

Again she took a belligerent posture and hands on hip she stated defensively and out loud, "Well you should have listened the first time!" as if she heard or understood nothing I said! I was inwardly upset. I had done nothing wrong! When the beverage cart came by and she asked me if I wanted anything to drink, I did not even look up! I just signaled with my hand, "No!" as infantile as that sounds!

I was wondering why I had that disturbing experience!? On the return flight I was given an exit seat for extra leg room. When the stewardess came by and asked me if I was prepared to assume the responsibilities and tasks associated with the exit seat I told her boldly, "I'm the guy you want here!" When they gave the safety-emergency demo I paid strict attention! When the drink cart came by I said "no with a smile and I had a pleasant feeling on the flight!

Only later, a profound educational lesson woke up in my mind! Learning and teaching Torah is not a purely academic exercise. It requires a relationship between a loving giver and a willing recipient. A child's feelings can be easily wounded by a wrong accusation or an inappropriate or disproportionate consequence! Then they can no longer learn from that person and their grades inexplicably begin to tumble. All are mystified! "Shimon's a smart boy!"

HASHEM, therefore, initiated the first lesson, when giving the Torah, with words that express to His People- His pupils, "I love you! I care about you! You see I have descended worlds below My dignity **just for you!**" DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and Torah.org.