

# REDEMPTION IS NOT EASY

*by Rabbi Berel Wein*

Salvation and redemption do not come easily. In this week's parsha the cost of Israel's redemption is graphically detailed in the Torah. Though the major cost and punishment is meted out to the Egyptian Pharaoh and his nation, the oppressors and enslavers of the Jewish people, Midrash teaches us that the Jews also suffered great loss in this process of redemption and of gaining their freedom.

According to certain midrashic opinion most of the Jews never were able to leave Egypt at all. Only a minority successfully followed Moshe out of the house of slavery. And ironically, even most of those who did leave Egypt would eventually be unable to live to see the promised land of Israel.

Why must the process of redemption and independence be such a long and painful one? After all, the Lord could certainly have made it much easier on all concerned. The obvious lesson is that freedom and redemption, both physical and spiritual, has little value if it is not hard won.

That is the symbol of the blood on the doorposts that signaled the immediate moment of redemption. "And I [the Lord] said unto you: With your blood [and sacrifice] shall you live!" The rabbis interpreted the repetition of this phrase twice as referring to the paschal sacrifice and the blood of circumcision.

Redemption is apparently meant to be hard won. It is not a gift that entails no cost. Becoming a Jew entails blood at the beginning of life. Becoming the truly free Jew that the Torah commands us to become entails lifelong sacrifice and the blood that this entails.

Our generation is also involved and absorbed in a struggle for redemption and salvation, both personal and national. This struggle has taken a great toll on our enemies, but in a psychological and spiritual measure, perhaps even a greater toll upon us. Much blood has been spilled in this struggle and, truth be said, no imminent success is yet visible to us.

A great portion of world Jewry in the twentieth century did not survive to see the beginnings of our redemption and restoration to sovereignty in our ancient homeland. Many others have now faltered in their resolution to see it through until reaching the Promised Land. Whereas the Jews leaving Egypt had dominant figures such as Moshe and Aharon to lead and inspire them our times and situation lack such towering personalities.

But that may be precisely what the rabbis meant when they stated; "We have no one that we can

truly rely upon except for our Father in Heaven." Every generation experiences crises of faith and belief. Our generation which is witness to the death of all of the false ideals that permeated Jewish society over the past two centuries is truly left with no one to rely upon "except for our Father in Heaven."

But the prophet has assured us that "as the time when you left Egypt, so too now will you witness wonders and greatness." The bitter and costly process of redemption is upon us. May we be privileged to see its successful completion with great speed and minimum pain.

Shabat shalom.

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