

# Yetziat Mitzrayim

The Encounter with the Other

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The Importance of Relationships in Torah Social Justice

The Biblical and Rabbinic Moral Constructions  
of the Other as Family, Enemy, Stranger, Self, and G-d.



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## I. The Charge : Telling Our Stories

<p><b><u>Mishnah - Pesachim, Ch. 10</u></b></p> <p>In every generation, one is obligated to see oneself like one has left Egypt oneself. As it says (Exodus 13:8): “And you shall tell your son on that day, saying ‘It is because of this that Hashem acted on my behalf when I left Egypt.’”</p>	<p>משנה מסכת פסחים פרק י</p> <p>בכל דור ודור חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאילו הוא יצא ממצרים שנאמר (שמות יג) והגדת לבנך ביום ההוא לאמר בעבור זה עשה ה' לי בצאתי ממצרים</p>
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<p><b><u>Abarbanel (Exodus 13:8)</u></b></p> <p>Each and every Jew will find him/her self in this exile with political subjection in it's own uniqueness as that which happened to our nation collectively in Egypt. For this reason, the Sages said that everyone should see him/her self like he/she left Egypt and this would not be possible without our problems and different distresses.....And since G-d saves us in <i>galut</i> every day therefore it is fitting that each and every person should see themselves as though he left Egypt, that it wasn't only our ancestors that were redeemed in our collective redemption but also us: G-d redeemed us and take us out from our different individual afflictions.</p>	<p>אברבנאל זבח פסח</p> <p>לפי שכל אחד ואחד מישראל ימצאוהו בגלות הזה משעבוד מלכות בפרטיותו מה שקרה לאומה בכללה במצרים. בשביל זה אמרו חכמים שכל אחד יראה את עצמו כאילו הוא יצא ממצרים לפי שאי אפשר מבלתי שיעברו עליו צרות ומצוקות שונות...וכיון שה' יתברך מציל אותנו בגלות בכל יום לפיכך ראוי הוא שיראה כל איש את עצמו כאילו הוא יצא ממצרים שלא את אבותינו בלבד גאל באותה הגאולה הכוללת אבל אף אותנו הוא פודה ומוציא בכל יום מצרות שונות</p>
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## II. The Stranger creates Obligations

### **Shemot 22:20**

“You shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the feelings of the stranger, having yourselves been strangers in the land of Egypt.”

### **שמות פרק כב**

(כ) וְגַר לֹא תוֹנֶה וְלֹא תִלְחָצֶנּוּ כִּי גֵרִים  
הֵייתֶם בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם:

### Devarim 10:18

### דברים פרק י

“Does justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, providing him with food and clothing. And **you shall love the stranger** as you were strangers in Egypt.”

(יח) עֲשֵׂה מִשְׁפָּט יְתוּם וְאַלְמָנָה וְאַהֲבֵה גֵר  
לִתְתּוֹ לוֹ לֶחֶם וְשִׂמְלָה :  
(יט) וְאַהֲבַתְּם אֶת הַגֵּר כִּי גֵרִים הָיִיתֶם  
בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם :

### Dvarim 24:14-15

### דברים פרק כד: יד-טו

**You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether he is of your brothers, or of your strangers** who are in your land inside your gates;  
At his day you shall give him his hire, nor shall the sun go down upon it; for he is poor, and sets his heart upon it; lest he cry against you to the Lord, and it should be sin to you.

לֹא תַעֲשֶׂה שֶׁק שְׂכִיר עֲנִי וְאֶבְיוֹן מֵאַחֶיךָ אוֹ מִגֵּר  
אֲשֶׁר בְּאַרְצְךָ בְּשַׁעֲרֶיךָ :  
כִּי־יִמּוּ תַתֵּן שְׂכָרוֹ וְלֹא תְבוֹא עָלָיו הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ כִּי  
עֲנִי הוּא וְאֵלָיו הוּא נֹשֵׂא אֶת נַפְשׁוֹ וְלֹא יִקְרָא  
עָלֶיךָ אֵל יְקֹנֶה וְהִיָּה בְּךָ חַטָּא :

### Devarim 24:17

### דברים פרק כד פסוק יז

“**Do not pervert justice** for the foreigner, orphan, and do not take the garment of a widow as a pledge.”

לֹא תִטֶּה מִשְׁפָּט גֵר יְתוּם וְלֹא תִחַבֵּל  
בְּגָד אֶלְמָנָה :

### Emmanuel Levinas: Beyond the Verse: Talmudic Readings and Lectures (142):

“The trauma I experienced as a slave in the land of Egypt constitutes my humanity itself. This immediately brings me closer to all the problems of the damned on the earth, of all those who are persecuted, as if in my suffering as a slave I prayed in a prayer that was not yet oration, and as if this love of the stranger were already the reply given to me through my heart of flesh. My very uniqueness lies in the responsibility for the other man; I could never pass it off to another person, just as I could never have anyone take my place in death: obedience to the Most-High means precisely this impossibility of shying away; through it, my ‘self’ is unique. To be free is to do only what no one else can do in my place. To obey the Most-High is to be free.”

### Emmanuel Levinas: Alterity and Transcendence (170)

“I have always described the face of the neighbor as the bearer of an order, imposing upon me, with respect to the other, a gratuitous and non-transferable responsibility, as if I were chosen and unique – and in which the other were absolutely other, i.e., still incomparable, and thus unique. But the men round about me are multiple. Hence the question: ‘Who is my neighbor?’ The inevitable question of justice.”

### **Emmanuel Levinas: Alterity and Transcendence (30)**

”The risk of occupying, from the moment of the *Da of Dasein*, the place of another, and thus, concretely, of exiling him, of condemning him to a miserable condition in some ‘Third’ or ‘Fourth’ World, of killing him. Thus there emerges, from that fear for the other man, an unlimited responsibility, one that we are never discharged of, one that does not end in the last extremity of the neighbor, even if the responsibility then only amounts to responding, in the powerless confrontation with the death of the other , ‘Here I am.’ A responsibility that harbors the secret of sociality, the total gratuitousness of which, though it be ultimately in vain, is called the love of one’s neighbor, love without concupiscence, but as irrefragable as death,”

### **Ha’Lachma Anya: Kol deechfin yaitai v’yaichol. Kol deetzreech yaitai b’yeefsach**

“Whoever is hungry; that person should come and eat. Whoever is needy, that person should come and celebrate Passover”

## **II. The Enemy**

### **1. Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 39b**

תלמוד בבלי מסכת סנהדרין דף ט עמוד  
& מגילה י:

...In that hour the ministering angels wished to utter the song [of praise] before the Holy One, blessed be He, but He rebuked them, saying: My handiwork [the Egyptians] is drowning in the sea; would ye utter song before me!

...באותה שעה בקשו מלאכי השרת לומר שירה לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא, אמר להן הקדוש ברוך הוא: מעשה ידי טובעין בים ואתם אומרים שירה לפני?...

### **2. Pirke Avot 4:19**

משנה מסכת אבות פרק ד משנה יט

Shmuel Hakatan says: “Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and let not your heart be glad when he stumbles; Lest the Lord see it, and be displeased, and He turn away his wrath from him.”

שמואל הקטן אומר (משלי כד) בנפול אויבך אל תשמח ובכשלו אל יגל לבך פן יראה ה' ורע בעיניו והשיב מעליו אפו:

### III. Freedom Enables A New Relationship With G-d

<p><b>Yerushalmi Pesachim 32c</b></p> <p>And what did he (Pharaoh) say? ‘Get up and leave from the midst of my people (Exodus 12:31). In the past you were slaves of Pharaoh. From now on you are slaves of G-d.’ At that moment they said: Hallelukah, give praise slaves of G-d (Psalms 113:1). It is written, ‘slaves of G-d’ and not ‘slaves of Pharaoh.’</p>	<p>תלמוד ירושלמי מסכת פסחים פרק ה דף לב טור ג ה"ד/ ומה היה אומר קומו צאו מתוך עמי לשעבר הייתם עבדי פרעה מיכן והילך אתם עבדי ה' באותה השעה היו אומרי' הללויה הללו עבדי ה' ולא עבדי פרעה תני</p>
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#### Tehillim 39:13

“Hear my prayer, Hashem, give ear to my outcry, be not mute to my tears; for **I am a foreigner with You**, a temporary dwellers like all my forefathers.”

#### תהלים פרק לט פסוק יג

שְׁמַעַה תְּפִלָּתִי יְקִיֵּןק וְשׁוּעָתִי הֶאֱזִינָה אֵל  
דְּמַעְתִּי אֵל תִּחַרְשׁ כִּי גֵר אֲנִי עַמֶּךָ תוֹשָׁב  
כָּכֹל אֲבוֹתַי :

### IV. Their Journeys To Create New Selves

#### Rambam, Moreh Nevukhim 3:32

For a sudden transition from one opposite to another is impossible.....It is not in the nature of man that, after having been brought up in slavish service...he should all of a sudden wash his hands the dirt (of slavery).....The deity uses a gracious ruse in causing (the people) to wander perplexedly in the desert until their souls became courageous ...and until, moreover, people were born who were not accustomed to humiliation and servitude.

<p><b><u>Genesis 32: 25-30</u></b></p> <p>Jacob was left alone. And a man <b>wrestled</b> with him until the break of dawn. When he saw that he had not prevailed against him,</p>	<p>בראשית פרק לב (כה) וַיִּנְתֵּר יַעֲקֹב לְבַדּוֹ וַיִּאָבֶק אִישׁ עִמוֹ עַד עֲלוֹת הַשָּׁחַר : (כו) וַיִּרְאָה כִּי לֹא יָכֹל לוֹ וַיִּגַע בְּכַף יָרְכוֹ וַתִּקַּע כֶּף יָרְכוֹ יַעֲקֹב בְּהֶאָבֶקוֹ עִמוֹ :</p>
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<p>he hit Jacob's hip at the socket, so that the socket of his hip was strained as he wrestled with him. The he said 'Let me go!' But he answered: 'I will not let you go, unless you bless me.' Said the other, 'What is your name?' He responded 'Jacob.' Said he, <b>'Your name shall no longer be Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with beings Divine and human and have prevailed.</b> Jacob asked, 'Please tell me your name.' But he said 'You must not ask my name.' And he blessed him there.</p>	<p>(כז) וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁלַחְנִי כִּי עָלָה הַשָּׁחַר וַיֹּאמֶר ל' א  אֲשַׁלְּחֶךָּ כִּי אִם בְּרַכְתָּנִי:  (כח) וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו מַה שְּׁמֶךָ וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב:  (כט) וַיֹּאמֶר ל' א יַעֲקֹב יֹאמַר עוֹד שְׁמֶךָ כִּי אִם  יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי שָׂרִיתָ עִם אֱלֹהִים וְעַם אַנְשִׁים וַתִּוְקַל:  (ל) וַיִּשְׂאֵל יַעֲקֹב וַיֹּאמֶר הַגִּידָה נָא שְׁמֶךָ וַיֹּאמֶר  לְמָה זֶה תִּשְׂאֵל לְשִׁמִּי וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתוֹ שֵׁם:</p>
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**Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, The Emergence of Ethical Man, page 153**

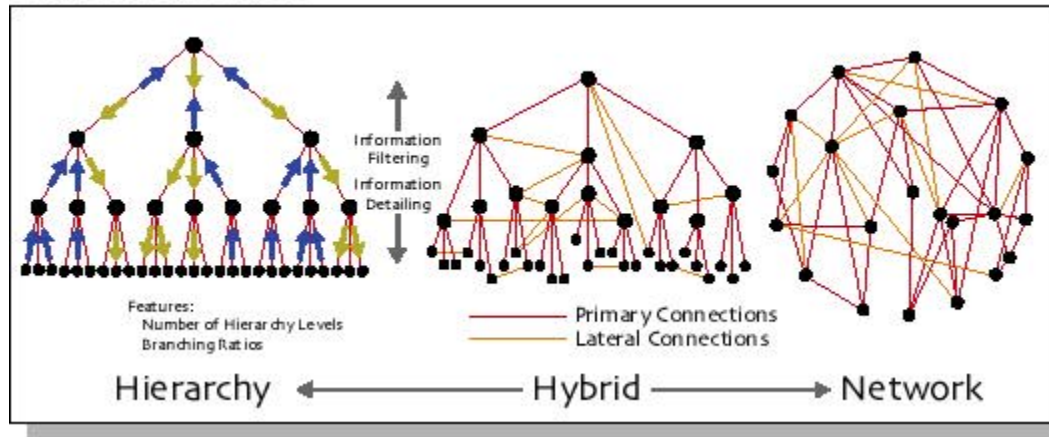
“Bondage to man excludes Divine friendship. The beloved must tear down all the social and political barriers that fence in the individual and imprison his initiative and liberty. The charismatic person is anarchic, liberty-loving; he frees himself from all the fixed formulas and rhythms of an urbanized civilization and joins a fluid, careless, roving nomad society. An ancient Egyptian document describes the nomads as follows: ‘Here is the miserable stranger... He does not dwell in the same spot; his feet are always wandering. From times of Horus he battles, he does not conquer, and is not conquered’ (Buber, Moses, 25). The stranger is indomitable; he may lose a battle, yet had never lost a war. He will never reconcile with political subjection. Roaming, wandering, he will escape persecution and oppression. When the need arises, the nomad stands up and fights for his freedom and many a time proves superior in battle to the settled king. Abraham’s heroism on the battlefield is the best illustration.”

**V. Relating to our ancestors (Constructing History)**

<p><b><u>Pesachim 116a</u></b></p> <p>(Our ancestors) started in disgrace and ended in praise. What is disgrace? Rav says ‘Our ancestors were idolaters.’ Shmuel says ‘We were slaves.’</p>	<p><b><u>תלמוד בבלי מסכת פסחים דף קטז עמוד א</u></b></p> <p>. מתחיל בגנות ומסיים בשבח מאי בגנות? רב אמר: מתחלה עובדי עבודת גלולים היו אבותינו. [ושמואל] אמר: עבדים היינו.</p>
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## Interconnectivity

### Control Structures



### Bakunin (19<sup>th</sup> C. Russian philosopher) (translated by Isaiah Berlin)

"I am not free if you, too, are not free; my liberty must be reflected in the freedom of others - the individualist is wrong who thinks that the frontier of my liberty is your liberty - liberties are complementary - are indispensable to each other - not competitive.....I am free and human only so far as others are such. My freedom is limitless because that of others is also such; our liberties mirror one another - so long as there is one slave, I am not free, not human, have no dignity and no rights."

## VI. Community Partnership

### Rav Soloveitchik, Festival of Freedom (150)

“The Halakhah knows of two kinds of shelihut, two kinds of power of attorney, of acting as a plenipotentiary, of acting by proxy. One type of shelihut is a purely formal-juridic assignment given to a person. The other type of shelihut is personalistic and experiential.....it is a relationship between two people who are united by a bond of friendship, two people committed to the same destiny, two people sharing in each other’s travails and joys, two people working for the same cause and confiding in each other, two people living in open, frank existence. These two people achieve a common identity from the viewpoint of the Halakhah.”

## Pesach as a remembrance of our Covenants to one another (Shared destiny)

### **Dr. Yeshayahu Leibowitz, Accepting the Yoke of the Heaven, (67)**

“We all regard Pesach as the symbol of the beginning and continuation of the history of the Jewish people, and we are all united in our desire and in our aim to being a continuing link in this historical chain.”

## Moving from Slave Mentality: Now Responsible for One Another

<p><b><u>Sotah 2a</u></b></p> <p>Rabbah bar bar Chana said in the name of R' Yochanan: And it is (as) difficult (for G-d) to macth up (a man and a woman for marriage) as it is to split the sea (to create a national relationship) as it is stated: 'G-d gathers individuals to a house. G-d releases prisoners at suitable moments.</p>	<p><b><u>תלמוד בבלי מסכת סוטה דף ב עמוד א</u></b></p> <p>אמר רבה בר בר חנה אמר ר' יוחנן: וקשין לזווגן כקריעת ים סוף, שנאמר: +תהלים סח+ אלהים מושיב יחידים ביתה מוציא אסירים בכושרות.</p>
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