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The essence of the Exodus

From Egypt and from Europe

The parting of the sea marks the completion of the Exodus from Egypt. But what is the essence of the Exodus?

Granted, it is about ending slavery and the physical migration from Egypt to Canaan, but as we learn from God's communication with Moses, those are primarily tools to achieve the ultimate essence of the Exodus: instilling godly consciousness – to the Israelites and to the nations

At the onset of the Exodus, God outlines the seven-item redemption program: I will *bring you out* from under the burdens of the Egyptians; I will *deliver you* from their bondage; I will *redeem you* with an outstretched arm, and with great judgments; I will *take you to Me* for a people, and I will be to you a God; *Ye shall know* that I am the LORD your God; I will *bring you in* unto the land, I will *give it you for a heritage*: I am the LORD."

From this we can reverse back into understanding the nature of the Israelites' life in Egypt: They were both physically suffering, and in a mental bondage. But then we learn from God's plan that there was a deeper problem: They forgot that they were God's people. Perhaps it was unclear if their forefather's covenant was still in-effect. Ultimately, we learn from God's program that during those centuries in Egypt, "atheism" emerged, and hence, God instills knowledge that He is the Lord.

Like the Egyptian exodus, the European one is a powerful tool to instill Godly consciousness

God then turns to the migrational aspect of the program. We can ascertain from it that the Jacob-era intention to return to Canaan has evaporated into a dream. God's "Goshen Program" brings the Israelites back to their land. Yet mere infiltration into Canaan without sovereignty would be unsustainable. Hence, God creates global recognition that Israelis are the rightful heirs of their ancestral land, giving it to them "for a heritage."

And so, after centuries in Egypt, the Israelites parted the sea, and Moses promised, "For the way you have seen the Egyptians today, you shall no longer continue to see them for eternity." But then...

'Once more there was an Egypt'

The Exodus from Egypt and the exodus from Europe 3,000 years later are so similar that biblical critics in the far future might argue that they were one and the same.

For centuries, the Jews have been mentally enslaved in Europe, developing ghetto traits that are unnatural to them. (About 90% of Jews lived in Europe during most of this time). They were suffering from chronic European opposition that manifested in antisemitism. They, too, began to lose their faith, perhaps unsure if their covenant with God was still intact. The intention



HERZL IMMORTALIZED in Dimona. (Wikimedia Commons)

to return evaporated into a dream, which itself became sanctified and a tenet of exile Judaism (Judaism 2.0).

And then God sent Theodor Herzl, and deployed the same seven-item redemption program he used in Egypt: He brought the Jews out the burdens of Europe, delivered them from their bondage, took them for a people and instilled godly consciousness. Indeed, the vast majority of Israeli Jews – observant and secular alike – are believers. He then brought them back into the land and gave it to them as heritage, secured in international law and by now, globally recognized.

The language is different because the cultural context is different. Back in Moses's time it is described

overtly as God's actions through Moses, while in Herzl's time it is described as Herzl's actions and is left to the reader (or Herzl interpreters) to decide how Herzl came up with Zionism. Herzl – perhaps the second most humble person in Jewish history – does not say "God sent me." But he does sprinkle subtle hints, such as recounting Vienna's Chief Rabbi Dr. Moritz Gudemann urging him at the onset of the European exodus: "Remain as you are. Perhaps you are the one God called."

Like the Exodus from Egypt, the one from Europe is not merely about the geographical migration to Palestine, nor just about emancipation from the enslavement of European antisemitism. Those are primarily tools to achieve that same third objective. No wonder Herzl insinuated that the exodus from Europe should be added to the Passover Haggadah: "Once more there was an Egypt". Just like the Exodus from Egypt, the one from Europe is a powerful tool to instill godly consciousness upon generations upon generations of Jews.

Indeed, just as the one from Egypt, the exodus from Europe is about the transformation of Judaism. Hence, the contemporary idea of post-Zionism is akin to the idea that Judaism ended with the Exodus from Egypt. Spoiler alert: The Torah and biblical Judaism (Judaism 1.0) continue to develop way past the Exodus, and so does Zionism (Judaism 3.0).

The writer is the author of the upcoming book Judaism 3.0. For details, go to Judaism-Zionism.com. For his geopolitical articles: EuropeAndJerusalem.com. For his commentaries on the weekly Torah portion: ParashaAndHerzl.com

Judaism 3.0 gives us new tools to understand our past

The astonishing similarities between the Exodus from Egypt and the exodus from Europe gifts our generation with unprecedented tools to understand the Torah and various aspects of Jewish history.

The Holocaust give us tool to better understand the destruction of the Temple, and the growing nuanced movement of Israel-bashing gives us tools to better understand previous iteration of European opposition to Judaism, including 20th-century antisemitism.

For example, in early 2021, a new blood-libel has been spreading: "Israel vaccinates its people, and lets the Palestinians die of COVID." Ironically, this comes from the same people who view the Palestinian Authority as a sovereign government and refer it as "the State of Palestine." This split-screen propaganda sheds light on older versions: Jews rejoicing in Passover eating matzot, and dead Christian children by the rivers. Then and now, the two sides of the screen portrayed truths. The hate lied in the causality. The death of Christian children was not caused by Jews eating matzot prepared with their blood, and the high number of COVID cases among Palestinians

was not caused by Israel vaccinating its citizens.

Our generation can also better understand the biblical movement to go back to Egypt. We can learn from contemporary movements in America and Israel to philosophically "go back to Europe." The antisemitic ploy about Jews and COVID made it across the ocean into America's holiest of holies as a well-respected senator made exactly this argument in Congress!

The senator, a good friend of Israel and of the Jews, adapting old European dogmas, gives us greater ability to understand the 10 spies, whose actions led to God's sentencing the Israelites to 40 years in the desert. Those were highly respected leaders of the community – presidents of 10 tribes. There is no evidence that they meant harm to the Israelites – they were friends of Israel. They just failed to internalize the values of the Moses Revolution. In applying old Egyptian dogmatic thinking, they failed to recognize that Judaism has transformed.

Similarly, post-Zionism in our early days of Judaism 3.0 gives our generation unique insight to the logic of Datan, Aviram and other leaders of the post-Judaism movement in the early days of Judaism 1.0. – G.K.