



House of Bondage

by Rabbi Aharon Soudry

Josef's dispatch by his brothers ended up in him being 2nd in command in Egypt. This sale was the cause of some of our tragedies such as the Golden Calf, the execution by the Romans of our 10 Martyrs (see 'Ellei Ezkerah', these I will remember: Yom Kippur Mussaf repetition) and more.

Jacob, 130 years old, upon hearing that his beloved son is still alive expressed his intense desire to 'go and see him before I die' (Genesis ch 45, v 12). His intention was to just see Josef and return to Canaan. In Beer-Sheva, G-d appears to him at night saying: "... Have no fear of descending to Egypt, for I shall establish you as a great nation there. I shall descend with you to Egypt..." (46, 4). According to our commentators, Jacob feared that his voluntary exile to Egypt will hasten the realisation of G-d's decree that his descendants will be enslaved for 400 years. Thus G-d's reassurance that the long sojourn will be followed by the continuation of His promise: "I shall establish you as a great nation there..".

Nevertheless, Jacob's original intention was to return to Canaan. His own will, therefore, clashed with G-d's. Guess who wins. Hence the Haggadah mentions Jacob's intention was to only dwell temporarily in Egypt "Lo Yarad... Le-hish-take'a Ella Lagur Sham..."

Reading through the lines, I understand that G-d's apparition to Jacob helped him accept the decree and assuage his fear. That He, G-d, will be at all times with Jacob's family, is of immense comfort. Our sages extrapolated this concept and concluded that He accompanies His children wherever they go. 'They were exiled into Egypt, His divine spirit was with them. They were exiled into Babylon, the Sh-chinah went with them'. (Talmud Taanit 29). We know consequently that His spirit is with us in this long exile too.

Another message of Pessach is the affirmation of His continuous Presence, support and Guidance.

Wishing you Chag Sameach. As they were redeemed on those days, may we also be redeemed speedily and see a durable peace in the Middle East.

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