

# *The message of the Exodus*

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## **1. Exodus 12:41**

“It was at the end of four hundred and thirty years, it was on that very day, all the hosts of Hashem went out from the land of Egypt.”

## **2. Mishna Pesachim 10:5, quoted in the Passover Haggadah as well**

“In every generation one is required to view oneself as if one left Egypt, as it says (Exodus 13:8) ‘You shall tell your child on that day, saying, it is because of that which God did for me in my leaving Egypt.’”

## **3. Exodus 20:2**

“I am the Lord/Hashem your God who took you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.”

## **4. Psalms 35:10**

“All my bones shall say, ‘Hashem, who is like you? You save the poor from someone stronger than him, the poor and needy from his despoiler.’”

## **5. Exodus 23:9**

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

## **6. Leviticus 19:33-34**

“When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not wrong him. As one of your citizens he shall be to you, the stranger who resides with you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt; I am Hashem your God.”

**7. Exodus 12:49**

“There shall be one law for the citizen and for the stranger who dwells among you.”

**8. Deuteronomy 11:22**

“For if you shall diligently keep all this commandment which I command you, to do it, to love the Hashem your God, to walk in all his ways, and to cleave unto him . . .”

**9. Babylonian Talmud, Sotah 14a**

Said R. Chama b. R. Chanina: What is [the meaning of] that which is written, “Go after Hashem your God” (Deuter. 13:5)? Is it then possible for a person to go after God’s Presence? Is it not already said, “For Hashem your God is a consuming fire” (ibid. 4:24)? Rather, “go after” the attributes of the Holy One Blessed be He: Just as He clothes the naked, as it says “Hashem Elohim made cloaks of skin for man and his wife and dressed them” (Genesis 3), you, too, clothe the naked. The Holy One Blessed be He visited the sick, as it says, “Hashem appeared to him in Elonei Mamre” (Genesis 18) you, too, visit the sick. The Holy One Blessed be He consoled mourners, as it says “After the death of Abraham, Hashem blessed Isaac his son” (Genesis 25), you, too, console mourners. The Holy One Blessed be He buried the dead, as it says “He buried him in the valley” (Deuteronomy 34), you, too, bury the dead.

**10. Amos 9:7**

“To me, you are like the Ethiopians (children of Ethiopians), O Israelites (children of Israel),” says Hashem, “True, I brought up Israel from the land of Egypt, but also the Philistines from Kaftor and the Arameans from Kir.”

Texts for further study about the stranger/ and about leaving Egypt/

**Relationship to the stranger:**

Exodus/Sh'mot 12:49

Leviticus/Vayikra 24:22

Numbers/B'midbar 9:14, 15:14-16

What's the difference between these formulations? Why the repetition?

Exodus/Sh'mot 22:20

“You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.”

Exodus/Sh'mot 23:9

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

Rashi on Exodus/Sh'mot 22:20

“**For you were strangers:** If you wrong/abuse him, he can also wrong/abuse you and say to you: ‘You too descended from strangers.’ About a fault that you have, don’t speak to your fellow.” (Modern version: The pot should not call the kettle black!)

Rashi on Exodus/Sh'mot 23:9

“**The soul of the stranger:** How hard it is for him when they oppress him.”

What is the difference in the way Rashi reads these two verses and what is that distinction based on?

**Exodus in relationship with God:**

Exodus/Sh'mot 6:2-6, Leviticus/Vayikra 25:13 – classic formulations, one before the fact and one after.

Leviticus/Vayikra 25:55 – ‘eved’ can be slave or servant.

Psalms/Tehillim 146:9

In this verse, we see God’s role defined in light of the *ger*. How does this whole Psalm fit with the message of the rabbis in Sotah?

**Exodus and our relationship to the Egyptians**

Deuteronomy/D'varim 23:8

Where do the plagues and brutality of the Pesach story fit into this narrative of kindness to strangers?

**Exodus and social justice**

Leviticus/Vayikra 19:36, Deuteronomy/D'varim 5:12-15, 15:12-15, 24:17-22

**Exodus and commandments: what is the relationship?**

**David Hartman: (A Living Covenant, pp. 271-2)**

“The permanent significance of the Exodus from Egypt for the covenant of Sinai is thus that it prevents the misunderstanding of *mitzvah* as an inward spiritual category, unrelated to social and political conditions, which refers to the soul’s longing for eternity and spiritual freedom. Our constant recall of the Exodus counteracts the temptation of escaping into otherworldliness because it anchors the covenant in history and in the social and political life of the community.

Regarded in this last way, the Exodus story insists that the covenant can have meaning only to the degree that Jews enjoy freedom to organize their lives and believe they are capable of meeting the challenge placed before them at Sinai. As long as Jews lack social and political freedoms, they are under constraints that prevent them from obeying the rule of God . . . Those whose life is tightly controlled and manipulated by human masters cannot in true conscience declare their allegiance to the rule of God, for they do not have the experience of living as free individuals under the guidance of God’s *mitzvah*. The *mitzvot* are obligatory only when one is free. Thus “I am the Lord thy God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage,” can also be understood to mean that “I am the God who chooses to be loved and worshiped by a free people.” Only free, dignified beings can enter into the covenant. The Exodus, therefore, complements the story of creation, which affirms that human beings are endowed with freedom. Taken together, the two stories show that only in a posture of human dignity and responsibility is a covenantal reality possible.”