

The Torah Any Times

from TorahAnyTime.com

Rabbi Zechariah Wallerstein zt"l Out of Your Egypt

Everybody experiences their own Mitzrayim, their own Egypt, which comes from the word 'meitzar,' which means narrowness. We all have our struggles, our Egypt, that we are trapped in.

We find that the Jews didn't change three things about themselves when in Egypt: the way they dressed, their language and their names. These three things kept up as a nation from falling into the forty-ninth level of impurity. As we sit down to the Seder, we should think about these three things, because if that is what saved us in those times, that is what will save us now.

In our day and age, we wonder why having our name be Jewish or having our clothing reflect Jewish tradition would mean so much. How would it save us?

These three things lead to assimilation. When we don't want to look like a Jew or have a Jewish name or talk like a Jew, that leads us to act in ways that de-identify us from acting as a Jew. These things deteriorate the fabric of Jewish identity.

When we become part of the world to such an extent that we forget who we are as Jews, we must remind ourselves of what distinguishes us. Therefore, even though we may have degenerated to serve idols in Egypt, we didn't assimilate. Moreover, there was

no immorality between Jews and non-Jews in Egypt. We were proud that we were Jewish and we knew we were different. That is what saved us in Egypt. What is affecting us today is identifying more and more like those around us in society.

As we sit at our Seder, let us think about these three areas and take on something that makes us act in line with our Jewish identity. Whatever we do, we should let others know: Judaism is something to be proud about. It is not something to hide. My father a"h used to say, "If wherever you are going, you can't wear a yarmulke, you shouldn't be there."

Jewish names are also another identifier. My father a"h was given a non-Jewish name when he arrived at Ellis Island, and he went to court twelve years prior to his passing and legally changed his name on all documents to Yitzchok. It always bothered him that he didn't have a Jewish name.

Take on something to be proud that you are a Jew and part of the Jewish nation.

I was once attending a meeting in preparation of arranging a Pesach program, after which one of the hotel managers, a woman, extended her hand. "Thank you very much, Rabbi," she said. "Have a good day." Knowing ahead of time that this could happen, I usually am prepared with a briefcase in one hand and a folder in another. I've done this, so that in the event someone extends

TheTorahAnyTimes is a publication of



Compiled and Edited by Elan Perchik

IN THIS ISSUE

Rabbi Zechariah
Wallerstein zt"l
Out of Your Egypt

Rabbi Yoel Gold
Standing Proudly

DEDICATIONS

L'iluy Nishmat

R' Elchonon Yaakov z"l ben R' Shmuel
Pinchos

Manish ben Esther

Meir Eliyahu ben Yaakov Dov

Bechor ben Rivkah

Shlomo Zalman ben
R' Mordechai Yisroel Tzvi

Esther bat
haRav Avraham Halevi zt"l

Moshe Simcha ben Doniel Dov Ber

Miriam bat Yeshayahu

Malka Bracha bat Shimon Chaim

R' Zechariah Shimon ben Yitzchok

L'refuah Sheleima

Deena bat Shoshana

Chaya Raizel bat Dena

Yerachmiel Eliyahu Ben Esther Riva

Reuven ben Rochel

their hand, I won't be able to put my hand out because I'm holding things. Given the halachic considerations of shaking a woman's hand, and yet being sensitive to her embarrassment, holding onto items in my hands gives me good reason to be unable to stick out my hand.

However, on this one occasion, I wasn't holding onto anything and I wasn't prepared when she extended her hand. Weighing the halacha against the embarrassment that she'd experience, as per some halachic authorities, I put my hand out in return. A short while later, this same woman went over to someone else who was with me and put out her hand again. "I'm really sorry," he said, "but it's our custom that men don't shake women's hands."

After the meeting, I began wondering to myself, "Why did I put my hand out? Why didn't I act like the other person did and say that I couldn't shake her hand?" I once spoke about this incident in front of my students, and while they said, "No Rebbe, it's okay..." I didn't take to it. While halachically it might have been okay as I didn't want to embarrass her, I still needed to honestly answer why I didn't react like that other person.

For a week, I tried to figure it

out. Was it really that I didn't want to embarrass her, or maybe I really did want to shake her hand? I needed to find out, because until I took a hard look at myself and got to the bottom of why I acted as I did, I'd end up doing it again. Even as my students were coming up with reasons why I acted that way, I didn't want to take any excuses. I needed to look into myself. Maybe I was desensitized, maybe I was in business too much? Whatever the reason, I speak to people about these things, and I needed to examine how come I acted as I did, so quickly and easily. Why didn't I try to get out of it? That is something I needed to work on myself. I could have just said, "Okay, Hashem, I'm sorry..." and moved on. But that wouldn't have helped me grow. If I didn't discover the source of my actions, it may happen again, and I would make more excuses for it. I needed to find out what was behind my behavior. Where did it really come from?

This is how we grow. Even if we say, "I'm sorry," in order to change ourselves, we need to get to the bottom of things. Why would someone like me do something like that? That is part of getting out of our Egypt, out of our slavery and becoming free.

Unless we understand our slavery and the chains that are holding us down, we will never have freedom. Freedom comes from understanding where that action really came from without any excuses. Rav Chaim Kanievsky zt"l wouldn't have put out his hand, no matter what. Was it because I was out of town and therefore out of my comfort zone? But does that mean that if I'm out of my comfort zone, I'll do it again? While my students responded along the lines, "C'mon, Rebbe, don't beat yourself up," I didn't want to go easy. Once I understood that action, then I could do something about it. But if I didn't understand my action, then just saying, "I made a mistake," is not enough. We need to understand where things are coming from.

And this takes introspection and thinking time. Why did I do this? Why couldn't I say no? Why am I still a slave? Once you figure that out, you can fix it.

Yetzias Mitzrayim is not just walking out of Egypt. It's walking out of your Egypt.

Rabbi Yoel Gold

Standing Proudly

I grew up in the most ultra-Orthodox neighborhood in Jerusalem. I learned in Bais Yaakov in Geula, the most ultra-Orthodox chareidi school in Jerusalem."

On July 24th, 2014, when Reuven Rivlin was sworn in as the 10th president of Israel, he appointed Rivka Ravitz as his chief of staff. Rivka grew up in one of the most chareidi neighborhoods

in Israel, Mattersdorf, was one of ten children at home, and now she herself was a mother of twelve. How did she become the chief of staff to the president of Israel?

When Rivka was 18 years old, she married Yitzchak Ravitz, who was the son of then Knesset member, Avraham Ravitz. Rivka was still a student, and was offered to work with her father-in-law in the

afternoons, after school. She took the offer and started working at the Knesset at the age of 18 and a half.

Two years later, her father-in-law had to let her go because the government passed a law that didn't allow for Knesset members or high level government officials to hire relatives. When he let her go, Reuven Rivlin, who was also a

Knesset member at the time, hired her in his office.

For six years, he was appointed to be the speaker of the Israeli parliament. Rivka was his chief of staff for those years. There were a lot of elections, primaries, and Rivka ran all of them. And then came the most important campaign in his life and probably also in Rivka's life. He wanted to be the Israeli president. They worked very hard for a year long, and he won it and became the Israeli president. He then asked which job Rivka would like to take in the office. She chose to be his chief of staff.

For the next seven years, she was planning, arranging and traveling with the president of Israel to all different countries and meeting the most powerful leaders around the world. Kings, queens, presidents and prime ministers. "If you would have to count on your fingers five of the most important leaders of the world," Rivka remarked, "I'm sure I met them. Putin, Merkel. Obama. Trump. Biden."

In November of 2015, Rivka was planning one of the most important meetings of President Rivlin. They were preparing to meet the Pope in the Vatican. The government in Israel attached tremendous importance to this meeting because the Vatican had massive influence on Israel's bilateral relationships, especially their relations with the Palestinians.

It was extremely important that when Reuven Rivlin and his staff were meeting the pope, they make a good first impression.

They had maybe a dozen of meetings in Israel preparing them. The ambassador came in as did the minis-

ter of foreign affairs. Even the Prime Minister came in to meet the President before his first time meeting with the pope. They kept rehearsing it, making sure they knew exactly what to expect and how to behave so that everything went smoothly.

They traveled to Rome, got to the hotel, and had another meeting with the special ambassador to the Vatican. They basically mapped out the palace. They were told that as they pull up to the palace, certain cardinals will be waiting outside to greet them. They'll take them into the palace. They'll go down a staircase, and walk through a hallway with many different chambers. When they get to the end of the hallway, they'll walk into a different hallway. When they get to the end of that hallway, they'll enter a room and they'll wait there. The cardinals will leave, and then the pope will enter through a side door.

When the door will open and they'll see the pope, they should stand in a line and enter into the room one after each other. Everyone should shake hands with the pope, bow to him, and then receive a small present from his hands.

As soon as Rivka heard that the pope will be shaking everyone's hands, she said, "Hold on, I'm an Orthodox woman. I don't shake hands with men." The ambassador said, "You know, if you don't shake hands, just take a bow."

"Usually I do and I could," Rivka said. "But this specific time I couldn't because the pope would be wearing a necklace of a cross and a Jew can't bow to cross. 'No problem,' the ambassador said, 'I will let the cardinals know and they will let the Pope know that you can't shake his hand.'"

The big day finally arrived and they were picked up with their limos. Rivka was in the car next to the president along with the ambassador. Turning to the ambassador, Rivka asked, "Did you deliver the message to the pope?"

"Oh," he said, "Rivka, I'm so sorry. I really forgot. I had such a hectic day, and I forgot."

Rivka's heart was racing, her palms were sweating. She was beyond nervous and anxious. And yet, she said, "In all my life, I haven't shaken the hands of another man other than my husband. I can't do that now. Please. Is there anything you can do?" The ambassador said, "Right now, we're in the car on the way to the palace. There's no way I can deliver the message on time. Please understand, Rivka, the weight that rests on your shoulders to make a good first impression as part of the delegation that represents the state of Israel."

The ambassador continued. "Rivka, listen, I'm sure if you call your rabbi, he would let you shake hands with men just this time because it's such an important meeting." But that was not what Rivka wanted to do, and Rivka just silently went on.

Rivka knew this was not negotiable. She wasn't going to violate her terms, and all she could do was pray. They pulled up to the palace and the entire delegation got out. Cardinals were waiting for them to usher them in. And as the ambassadors had mapped out, they got into the palace, walked down the staircase, walked through the chambers, the hallway, and finally got to the room where they waited for the pope to come in.

"We saw the big door," said Rivka, "and I was shivering and nervous."

Thank you for reading this edition of The TorahAnyTimes Newsletter. If you've enjoyed, please let us know – we'd love to hear from you! Email info@torahanytime.com.

And then the door opened and the pope was there. I was standing in second place. The president was first. He went in and shook his hand. He bowed to him. He got his present and then my turn came. I was so stressed. I was sure I was going to ruin this meeting and all the Israelis would be so mad at me.”

Rivka thought she wouldn't be able to live through the moment. And as the pope started shaking everybody's hands, he came to her.

“The pope put out his hand,” Rivka said, “and tried to shake my hand, and I started to explain that I can't do that. I am religious. The President was standing next to me and began telling him about my father in law who was the head of the ultra-orthodox party in the Knesset.”

The pope, even though he couldn't understand the language, had an interpreter, but he was able to sense the strength and the courage of Rivka Ravitz. And to honor her, the pope took a bow to her.

That moment was memorialized in a photo that went viral around the world. The pope bowed to an Orthodox woman who stood proud and tall of her values.

When Rivka came back to Israel, she received hundreds of phone calls. “Is that true? What happened?” As

Rivka was interviewed by dozens of different journalists and news media outlets, she kept repeating the same line.

“I think he bowed to me not because my name is Rivka, not because of me being a chief of staff to a president. He was bowing towards me because he honored the fact that I stood up for my values.”

Through all those years, Rivka had the honor to meet three of the American presidents: Obama. Trump and Biden. On her last visit with Rivlin to the White House, she still remembers being ushered into the Roosevelt Room.

According to protocol, President Rivlin was supposed to go first by himself into the Oval Room. Fifteen minutes afterwards, the staff would come in and be part of the rest of the professional meeting.

Rivlin turned to Rivka Ravitz and said, “It's our last visit. How would you like to join me alone with the President of the United States in the Oval Office?” Rivka was delighted. “Yes, I'd love to.” When President Biden walked into the Roosevelt Room and ushered Rivlin into the Oval Office, Rivlin motioned to Rivka to come along. When in the Oval Office, President Rivlin introduced Rivka.

When President Biden came to shake Rivka's hand, she pulled her hand back, and President Rivlin explained that she couldn't shake hands. “She comes from a very religious community in Israel,” he said, “and guess how many children she has?” President Biden wondered, “How many?” “She's a mother to 12 children,” Rivlin said. “Wow,” said Biden, “my mother should know you. If she would know that I'm meeting with a woman that has 12 children, she would admire you.”

And right away, Biden got on his knees and said, “I need to honor you.” In the picture, you can sense the reverence and awe he had for Rivka simply because she was a mother of 12 children.

These modern days, the value of family is not so valuable. And here came the President, one of the most influential leaders of the world, and admired the value of family.

“I will speak of your statutes before kings and will not be ashamed,” says Dovid Hamelech (Tehillim 119:46). Every time I felt compelled to stand up for my values and beliefs, I was treated with respect and understanding, a great deal of respect and a great deal of understanding,” said Rivka Ravitz proudly.

Join more than
14,000 Jews from
around the world!



Imagine the Impact that your single dollar of tzedaka a day
can make when it's combined with thousands of others.

\$8,568,387 Donated So Far	\$14,135 Donating Per Day	\$5,159,275 To Be Given Out Over The Next 365 Days
--------------------------------------	--	--

BECOME A #DailyGiver  WWW.DAILYGIVING.ORG · (914) 281-1499

TORAHANYTIME is the world's largest yeshiva without walls currently spreading 10 million+ hours of Torah learning every year through web and mobile app (Android+iOS). TorahAnytime is free for all users and exists solely on donations from great people just like you.

To share in this great merit, donate online at www.torahanytime.com/#/donate. By check: TorahAnytime 151 Camp Hill Rd. Pomona NY 10970