

“Hashem Yitbarach Tamid Ohev Oti”

The most recent Israeli hit-song tells us about the current moment—and its reflection of the Exodus from Egypt.

The First Plague

You’ve probably heard this famous saying about family businesses: “The first generation makes it, the second generation maintains it, the third generation destroys it.”

Well, it occurred to me this week that this saying seems to reflect the story of the Egyptian exile.

This week, we begin reading about the Ten Plagues. It’s hard to remember all ten, but everyone knows the first one—the plague of blood, when G-d turned the waters of the Nile into blood.

Why did G-d choose to start with the Nile? What was so offensive about the Nile that it needed to be dealt with so urgently?

The Rebbe gives a fascinating explanation.

Rains vs. Rivers

The Torah states that the Land of Israel is, “*A land that G-d your G-d cares for.*” (Deuteronomy 11:12). How is “G-d’s care” practically expressed? The Rebbe says that the answer lies in the previous verse, which says, “*It drinks water from the rain of*

heaven.” In other words, Israel is entirely dependent on G-d’s Divine blessing for rain.

Israel has no large rivers to ensure an abundant water supply. In biblical times, and even long after, when agriculture was essential for survival, a farmer in Israel would plow and sow his fields while constantly looking to the heavens—praying to G-d to grant the rains he so desperately needed.

So, when Jacob and his sons lived in Israel, they had a deep awareness of G-d’s presence and guidance. Relying on Him for their daily sustenance was second nature; they didn’t need reminders or explanations—they simply felt it.

But then famine struck, and Jacob and his family were forced to descend to Egypt, a land with a vastly different reality. Unlike Israel, which depends on rainfall, Egypt’s survival did not hinge on rain at all—it had the Nile.

The Nile, one of the longest rivers in the world, originates in Ethiopia and flows thousands of kilometers before reaching Egypt. Egypt’s entire agricultural system relied on the rainfall in East Africa and Ethiopia. During the summer monsoon season, the Nile would flood, irrigating the extensive canal networks branching from it.

In this way, Egypt was the complete opposite of Israel. The Nile operated like clockwork—every year between July and September, its waters would rise and flood the land. Egyptian farmers didn’t need to pray for rain; nature provided for them automatically. As a result, they did not feel dependent on G-d.

Jacob was therefore hesitant to go down to Egypt. In Israel, dependence on G-d was a way of life; in Egypt, it wasn't as obvious. It was easy to fall into the illusion of self-sufficiency, thinking that nature alone provided one with all their needs.

Life in Israel required faith, but in Egypt, people placed their trust in nature.

The Jews in Egypt

Yet, the truth was that even the Nile itself was dependent on G-d.

Jacob arrived in Egypt in the midst of the famine predicted in Joseph's dream. The famine emerged from the fact that the Nile was experiencing a low tide, and its waters weren't rising to irrigate the land. The turning point was during Jacob's meeting with Pharaoh, when he blessed Pharaoh that the Nile would miraculously rise to meet him whenever he approached it. Thanks to Jacob's blessing, the famine came to an end.

For a time, this miracle helped sustain awareness of Divine Providence. The first generation of Jacob's descendants in Egypt still had a strong consciousness that everything came from Heaven. Even though they now relied on the Nile, they remembered that its rising waters were a direct blessing from Jacob. His presence served as a constant reminder that all sustenance ultimately came from G-d.

Even after Jacob's passing, as long as the second generation—Joseph and his brothers—were alive, they continued to serve as a bridge to the land of Israel and its deep-

rooted belief in Divine dependence. Their influence kept the awareness of G-d alive within the community.

However, things began to shift with the third generation—the one we encounter in *Sefer Shemot*. Unlike their parents and grandparents, they had never experienced the dependency on rain that characterized life in Israel. They were born and raised in Egypt, surrounded by a reality where nature seemed to take care of everything.

Without the firsthand experience of relying on G-d for rain and without the previous generations to guide them, they gradually lost touch with their spiritual heritage. In Egypt, where the Nile consistently provided water, it was easy to believe that divine mercy wasn't necessary. Over time, this generation drifted from their awareness of G-d's presence, becoming disconnected from their roots and embracing a worldview that placed nature, rather than G-d, at the center of their existence.

The Spiritual Decline

This insight sheds light on why the Book of Exodus opens with the phrase, *“These are the names of the children of Israel who came to Egypt.”*

At first glance, this seems redundant, as the Torah already listed their names in Parshat Vayigash. However, the repetition emphasizes that after *“Joseph, all his brothers, and that entire generation passed away,”* a second, deeper descent took place—this time, not a physical exile, but a spiritual one.

The third generation, who neither saw nor heard firsthand

accounts of their ancestors' connection to G-d, experienced a profound spiritual disconnect. What was once a vibrant, living faith had faded into distant memory, leading them further into exile—not just geographically, but spiritually and culturally as well.

A similar phenomenon can be observed in the evolution of the Yiddish language among Jewish immigrants. For nearly a thousand years, Yiddish was the primary language of European Jews. When the first generation immigrated from Europe, they still spoke Yiddish fluently. The second generation could understand it but rarely spoke it. By the third generation, it was gone. All that remained was the awareness that their grandparents spoke a language they did not understand. What was once an essential part of their daily life had become a relic of the past.

This explains why the first of the Ten Plagues specifically targeted the Nile. The Egyptians viewed the Nile as an independent source of sustenance. It was the centerpiece of the idea that G-d's blessings were no longer necessary. So, the plague of blood shattered this illusion. It demonstrated that the very source they relied on could turn into a curse at G-d's command.

The Modern Awakening

This same spiritual decline is true of the modern Jewish reality as well. Modern science and technology have given people the feeling that they can control every aspect of their lives. In recent generations, we've lost touch with that intimate connection with G-d—with that feeling that our prayers on Rosh

Hashanah could really influence our coming year, or that the real cure to illness is—alongside a doctor’s attention—G-d’s blessings.

This is even true about water, in the land of Israel. In the past, rain was a constant reminder of our dependence on G-d’s mercy, but with Israel’s groundbreaking advancements in seawater desalination—removing salt from seawater to make it drinkable—we no longer feel this sense of reliance. Today, 80% of Israel’s drinking water comes from desalination plants, a remarkable achievement—which has provided a sense of security and control over the country’s water needs.

But since October 7th, that sense of control has been profoundly shaken. Every Jew in Israel is now acutely aware that G-d is our ultimate protector. The realities of war and uncertainty have stripped away the illusion of self-sufficiency.

This awakening is not limited to those in Israel. Jews around the world, witnessing the dangers Israel faces—surrounded by enemies intent on its destruction—are also experiencing a renewed recognition of our reliance on G-d’s protection. At the same time, the countless daily miracles, both large and small, serve as a powerful reminder that G-d is watching over His people.

This has brought about a major shift in Jewish and Israeli culture.

Just this past summer, a new song came out in Israel and became an instant hit. The song, *Tamid Ohev Oti* (Always Loves Me), has taken the country by storm. The chorus goes: “*Hashem*

Yisbarach tamid ohev oti, v'tamid yihiyeh li rak tov, v'yihiyeh li od yoter tov, v'od yoter v'od yoter tov," which means, "G-d, may He be blessed, always loves me, and I will always have only good. And it will be even better, and even better, and even better."

The song's message of deep faith, hope, and unwavering optimism about G-d's unconditional love for every Jew has struck a chord with people across the country. Its catchy, uplifting tune has made it one of the most popular songs associated with the current war—some would even say *the* most popular.

Two of the hostages released this past week were from Kibbutz Kfar Aza, a community known for its roots in the secular kibbutz movement. Religion isn't typically part of their identity, yet when the hostages returned home, the atmosphere was one of profound gratitude to G-d. The viral video that captured the moment was of people dancing and singing with all their hearts—to the song "*G-d Always Loves Me.*"

Of course, not everyone is on board. Some people can't bear the idea of such an openly G-d-focused song becoming mainstream, especially since it's being embraced by Israelis from all walks of life—both religious and secular. But at the end of the day, the people have spoken. The song has become a unifying anthem, and it's already been translated into multiple languages.

It's a powerful reminder of what we're living through right now. The Jewish people are experiencing something deeply

reminiscent of the Exodus from Egypt—an overwhelming awareness of G-d's presence and protection in our lives. Let's seize the moment; as our sages said, *"In the merit of faith, our ancestors were redeemed from Egypt."*