

This Year We Are Slaves, Next Year We'll Be Free: Moshe Breaks the Rules of the Game

1. Rabbi Sampson Raphael Hirsch, Shemot 20:2

"From the house of bondage"- The land of Egypt was for us a "house of bondage", and in it we were slaves from birth. The negation of our freedom as brought about by the might of the Egyptian hand caused it so that freedom was forgotten from the heart of all Jews. Slavery was considered to be our natural position.

2. Hannah Arendt, Origins of Totalitarianism

Slavery's crime against humanity did not begin when one people defeated and enslaved its enemies (though of course this was bad enough), but when slavery became an institution in which some men were "born" free and others slave, when it was forgotten that it was man who had deprived his fellow-men of freedom, and when the sanction for the crime was attributed to nature.

3. Karl Marx, Communist Manifesto

The history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary re-constitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes.

4. שמות פרק ב (פרשת שמות)

- (יא) ויהי בימים ההם ויגדל משה ויצא אל אחיו וירא בסבלתם וירא איש מצרי מכה איש עברי מאחיו:
(יב) ויפן פה וכה וירא כי אין איש ויף את המצרי ויטמנהו בחול:
(יג) ויצא ביום השני והנה שני אנשים עברים נצים ויאמר לרשע למה תכה רעה:
(יד) ויאמר מי שמה לאיש שר ושפט עלינו הלהגני אתה אמר כאשר הרגת את המצרי ויירא משה אכן נודע הדבר:
(טו) וישמע פרעה את הדבר הנה ויבקש להרג את משה ויברח משה מפני פרעה וישב בארץ מצרים וישב על הכרם:
(טז) וילכהו מדן שבע בנות ותבאנה ותדלנה ותמלאנה את הרקטים להשקות צאן אביהן:
(יז) ויבאו הרעים ויגרשום ויקם משה ויושעו וישק את צאנם:
(יח) ותבאנה אל רעואל אביהן ויאמר מדוע מהרתן בא היום:
(יט) ותאמרנן איש מצרי הציילנו מיד הרעים וגם דלה דלה לנו וישק את הצאן:
(כ) ויאמר אל בנתיו ואיו למה זה עזבתן את האיש קראן לו ויאכל להם: (כא) ויואל משה לשבת את האיש ויתן את צפרה בתו למשה:
(כב) ותלד בן ויקרא את שמו גרשם כי אמר גר הייתי בארץ נכריה
(כג) ויהי בימים הרבים ההם וימת מלך מצרים ויאנחו בני ישראל מן העבדה ויזעקו ותעל שועתם אל האלהים מן העבדה:
(כד) וישמע אלהים את נאקתם ויזכר אלהים את בריתו את אברהם את יצחק ואת יעקב:
(כה) וירא אלהים את בני ישראל וידע אלהים:

- (11) Some time after that, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his kinsfolk and witnessed their labors. He saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his kinsmen.
- (12) He turned this way and that and, seeing no one about, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.
- (13) When he went out the next day, he found two Hebrews fighting; so he said to the offender, "Why do you strike your fellow?"
- (14) He retorted, "Who made you chief and ruler over us? Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" Moses was frightened, and thought: Then the matter is known!
- (15) When Pharaoh learned of the matter, he sought to kill Moses; but Moses fled from Pharaoh. He arrived in the land of Midian, and sat down beside a well.
- (16) Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters. They came to draw water, and filled the troughs to water their father's flock;
- (17) but shepherds came and drove them off. Moses rose to their defense, and he watered their flock.
- (18) When they returned to their father Reuel, he said, "How is it that you have come back so soon today?"
- (19) They answered, "An Egyptian rescued us from the shepherds; he even drew water for us and watered the flock."
- (20) He said to his daughters, "Where is he then? Why did you leave the man? Ask him in to break bread."
- (21) Moses consented to stay with the man, and he gave Moses his daughter Zipporah as wife.
- (22) She bore a son whom he named Gershom, for he said, "I have been a stranger in a foreign land."
- (23) A long time after that, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites were groaning under the bondage and cried out; and their cry for help from the bondage rose up to God.
- (24) God heard their moaning, and God remembered the covenant with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.
- (25) God looked upon the Israelites, and God took notice of them.

5. שמות רבה (וילנא) פרשה א (פרשת שמות)

אמר הקב"ה אתה הנחת עסקיך והלכת לראות בצערן של ישראל ונהגת בהן מנהג אחים, אני מניח את העליונים ואת התחתונים ואדבר עמך, ה"ד וירא ה' כי סר לראות, ראה הקב"ה במשה שסר מעסקיו לראות בסבלותם, לפיכך ויקרא אליו אלהים מתוך הסנה.

The Holy One blessed be He said: 'You left your affairs and went to observe the Israelite's suffering, and you treated them in a brotherly manner; I will leave the upper and lower worlds to speak with you.' That is what is written: "The Lord saw that he had turned to see" (Exodus 3:4); the Holy One blessed be He saw that he turned from his affairs to see their burdens; therefore, "God called to him from the midst of the bush" (ibid.).

6. Todd McGowan, *Psychoanalytic Film Theory and The Rules of the Game*, 109

Of all the unwritten rules that Renoir shows, there is one that provides the foundation for all the others: one must not allow anything to disrupt everyday life. Whereas other unwritten rules vary from society to society, this one runs across societal barriers and provides the support for all the other rules. The social order aims at reproducing itself, and it does so chiefly not through

written laws or ideological demands but through the unwritten rule that ensures the dampening of any disruption... The demand to keep the wheels of society turning in spite of any disturbance holds even during radical shifts in governmental power. In his *Seminar VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan theorizes the role that the fundamental unwritten rule plays in terms of work. He states,

What is Alexander's proclamation when he arrived in Persepolis or Hitler's when he arrived in Paris? The preamble isn't important: "I have come to liberate you from this or that." The essential point is "carry on working. Work must go on." Which of course means: "Let it be clear to everyone that this is on no account the moment to express the least surge of desire." ...

What Lacan refers to here as a "surge of desire" is a disruption of the everyday working of the symbolic structure. The morality that he describes here is not confined to tyrants like Alexander or Hitler but applies to every social order that privileges the promotion of the social good—that is, every social order. Keeping the social order functioning trumps any other concerns because its functioning enables subjects to believe that it provides a stable ground for their actions. As long as things appear to be running smoothly, the society takes on the guise of having a substantial existence that it doesn't really have. If society is substantial, subjects have nothing to worry about because it works regardless of their activity. This is why the image of a substantial society represents a political danger. In order for society to appear to run on its own, subjects must turn a blind eye to what disturbs them psychically.

7. שמות פרק ג (פרשת שמות)

- (א) ומֹשֶׁה הָיָה רֹעֵה אֶת צֹאן יִתְרוֹ חֹתְנוֹ כִּהֵן מִדִּין וַיִּנְהַג אֶת הַצֹּאן אַחֲרֵי הַמִּדְבָּר וַיָּבֵא אֶל הַר הָאֱלֹהִים חֹרֵבָה:
(ב) וַיֵּרָא מִלְּאֵךְ יִקְוֶה אֵלָיו בְּלִבַּת אִשׁ מִתּוֹךְ הַסִּינָה וַיֵּרָא וְהִנֵּה הַסִּינָה בַעַר בְּאֵשׁ וְהַסִּינָה אֵינָנוּ אֹכֵל:
(ג) וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶסְרָה נָא וְאֶרְאֶה אֶת הַמַּרְאֶה אֲשֶׁר הִגְדַּלְתָּ לַמִּדְּוָע לֹא יִבְעַר הַסִּינָה:
(ד) וַיֵּרָא יִקְוֶה כִּי סָר לְרֵאוֹת וַיִּקְרָא אֵלָיו אֱלֹהִים מִתּוֹךְ הַסִּינָה וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר הִנְנִי:

- (1) Now Moses, tending the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian, drove the flock into the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.
(2) A messenger of God appeared to him in a blazing fire out of a bush. He gazed, and there was a bush all aflame, yet the bush was not consumed.
(3) Moses said, "I must turn aside to look at this marvelous sight; why doesn't the bush burn up
(4) When God saw that he **had turned aside to look**, God called to him out of the bush: "Moses! Moses!" He answered, "Here I am."

8. אברבנאל שמות פרק ג:א

וכאלו אמר ומדוע לא יבער הסנה כי היה מר"עה חושב שאותה הצורה הנוראה אשר ראה מהמלאך היתה מסבב' שלא יבער הסנה ולכן על צורת המלאך ההוא שראה אמר אסורה נא ואראה את המראה הגדול הזה ועל פליאת הסנה שהיה בלתי נאכל אמר מדוע לא יבער הסנה ויהיה מלת ואראה מושך עצמו ואחר עמו

רוצה לומר אסורה נא ואראה את המראה הגדול הזה מהמלאך ואראה עם זה מדוע לא יבער הסנה. ועם מה שפירשתי בזה הותרה השאלה הא'. ואמרו מדוע לא יבער הסנה אין ראוי שיפרש על שאלת סבה כי מלת מדוע אינו נמשך ודבק עם לא יבער הסנה והמורה עליו הוא שבעל הטעמי' שם במלת מדוע טרחא להורות שאינו נסמך עם לא יבער הסנה ויהיה אם כן ענין המאמר וכוונתו שפעמי' רבות יגזור החוש דבר א' ויכחישהו השכל כי האדם ההולך באניה בים יראה בעיניו כאלו תתנועע הארץ והבתיים יתנועעו ממקומם סביב סביב והשכל יכחישהו ויאמר לו שהארץ לעולם עומדת ושהחוש טועה במוחושו זה ולא אשר יראה האדם הוא האמת כי השכל יגזור שאי אפשר שתתנועע הארץ. וכבר ביאר הפילוסוף שהחוש עם היות שלא יכזב במוחשים הראשונים הנה במוחשים השניים כבר יטעה ויכזב כי פעמים רבות יראה אדם דבר א' כאלו הם ב' דברים לחולי נפל בעיניו ופעמים יחשוב הדבר הא' וירגיש כאלו הם ב' דברים מתחלפים בהרכיבו אצבעותיו זה על זה ויגזור פעמים הרבה בשומעו איש מדבר שהוא פלו' ואינו כן לפי שהדברים האלה כלם הם מוחשים שניים שיפול הכזב והטעות בהם ולכן מרע"ה בראותו ענין הסנה אמר מדוע רוצה לומר מדוע הדבר הזה אשר ראיתי רוצה לומר שלא אוכל הסנה וגזר אומר שהיה החוש כוזב והוא אומר לא יבער הסנה רוצה לומר באמת ראוי להאמין שלא יבער הסנה כמו שהיה נראה בעיני כי טעו' הוא

9. רמב"ן שמות פרשת שמות פרק ב

ותבאנה ותדלנה - כי היו הרועים בכל הימים באים וממלאים הרהטים ומשקים צאנם בתחלה, ואחרי כן היו הנשים האלה משקות שלהן, ואירע כי היום הזה קדמו הנשים ותבאנה ותדלנה, כי היו חושבות להשקות צאנם בתחילה טרם בא הרועים, והנה באו הרועים ויגרשום מן הרהטים להשקות הם תחלה כמנהגם בכל הימים, ומשה חרה לו על החמס והצילן כי כיון שהן מלאו הרהטים הרי המים שלהן, וגם דלה דלה להם כי לא הספיקו הרהטים לכל צאנן. וזה טעם מדוע מהרתן בא היום. ואמרו איש מצרי הצילנו מיד הרועים, שמגרשים אותנו בכל יום תמיד בבאנו לרהטים בתחלה:

AND THEY CAME AND DREW WATER. Every day, the practice was that the shepherds drew water, filled the troughs and watered their flocks first, and then these women watered their flocks. It happened that on this day, the women preceded the men *and they came and drew water*, thinking to water their flocks before the shepherds came. But then *came the shepherds and drove them away* from the troughs, insisting on watering their own flocks first as they had always done. Moses' anger was aroused because of this injustice, and he saved them, for since they had filled the troughs, the water belonged to . Moreover, he drew water for them as the troughs did not suffice for all their flocks. This is the purport of the question, *How is it that ye are come so soon today?* [which Reuel their grandfather asked them]. And they answered, *An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds*, meaning that "they had always driven us away when we came to the troughs first."

10. Guide for the Perplexed- Maimonides, Section 2 Chapter 45

The first level of prophecy consists in the fact that an individual receives a divine help that moves and activates him to a great, righteous, and important action- such as the deliverance of a community of virtuous people from a community of wicked people, or the deliverance of a great man, or doing good for numerous people. The individual in question finds in himself something that moves and incites him to action at that is called the spirit of the Lord (רוח השם)...

Know that such a force did not abandon Moshe our Master from the moment he reached adulthood. It was because of this that he was moved to slay the Egyptian and reprove the one who was in the wrong among the two men who struggled. The strength of this force in him shows in the fact that when- after having been filled with fear and having fled- he came to Midian as a stranger full of fear and saw some wrong that was done, he could not refrain from putting an end to it and was incapable of patience with regard to it, as it says: "But Moshe stood up and helped them" (Shemot 2:17)...

11. Freud, Beyond the Pleasure Principle

The child was not at all precocious in his intellectual development. At the age of one and a half he could say only a few comprehensible words; he could also make use of a number of sounds which expressed a meaning intelligible to those around him... He did not disturb his parents at night, he conscientiously obeyed orders not to touch certain things or go into certain rooms, and above all he never cried when his mother left him for a few hours.

At the same time, he was greatly attached to his mother, who had not only fed him herself but had also looked after him without any outside help. This good little boy, however, had an occasional disturbing habit of taking any small objects he could get hold of and throwing them away from him into a corner, under the bed, and so on, so that hunting for his toys and picking them up was often quite a business. As he did this he gave vent to a loud, long-drawn-out 'o-o-o-o', accompanied by an expression of interest and satisfaction. His mother and the writer of the present account were agreed in thinking that this was not a mere interjection but represented the German word *fort*['gone']. I eventually realized that it was a game and that the only use he made of any of his toys was to play 'gone' with them.

One day I made an observation which confirmed my view. The child had a wooden reel with a piece of string tied round it. It never occurred to him to pull it along the floor behind him, for instance, and play at its being a carriage. What he did was to hold the reel by the string and very skilfully throw it over the edge of his curtained cot, so that it disappeared into it, at the same time uttering his expressive 'oo-o-o'. He then pulled the reel out of the cot again by the string and hailed its reappearance with a joyful *da* ['there']. This, then, was the complete game—disappearance and return...

The interpretation of the game then became obvious. It was related to the child's great cultural achievement... which he had made in allowing his mother to go away without protesting. He compensated himself for this, as it were, by himself staging the disappearance and return of the objects within his reach...

The child cannot possibly have felt his mother's departure as something agreeable or even indifferent. How then does his repetition of this distressing experience as a game fit in with the pleasure principle? It may perhaps be said in reply that her departure had to be enacted as a necessary preliminary to her joyful return, and that it was in the latter that lay the true purpose of the game. But against this must be counted the observed fact that the first act, that of departure, was staged as a game in itself and far more frequently than the episode in its entirety, with its pleasurable ending.

12. רש"ר הירש שמות פרק ב (פרשת שמות)

(יז) ויגרשום - ויושיען - צאנם. פעמים נקראות הבנות בלשון זכר, ופעם - בלשון נקבה. חילופי - מין בלשון לעולם אינם בלא סיבה. וכאן הכוונה ברורה למדי: רועים אלה, שבאו וגירשון, - בגסות נהגו בהן, כמו משלהם היו, ולא - עלמות, בו בזמן שאף פריצי גסי הרוח יעניקו חסות למין החלש. ובכן, משה עזר להן, משום שחסרי אונים היו, ולא בגלל היותן צודקות - על זאת זר לא יוכל לדון -; אלא בנות היו, שהופקרו לפראות. ואילו השקאת הצאן, זאת עשה משה - לא כהצלה, ולא מתוך נימוס כלפי נשים, אלא משום שבני אדם היו, שזה עתה שרויים היו בסכנה ועייפו; ולו היו גברים, לא היה נוהג אחרת. לכן נאמר בלשון זכר: וישק את - צאנם. הוא עמד לימינן משום שנשים היו, והוא השקה את צאנן מתוך חמלה לבני אדם שנרדפו עד לעייפה (השווה פי' בראשית כט, י).

Sometimes, the women are described in masculine language, and sometimes in feminine language. The switching of gender is never without reason and here, the intention is clear. These shepherds, who came and drove them away, treated them rudely, as if they were their own, and not theirs, while even the most rude of men would give shelter to the weaker sex. So, Moses helped them because they were helpless, and not because they were right - a stranger cannot judge about that - but they were girls, who had been abandoned to wildness. As for watering the flock, Moses did this - not as a rescue, nor out of politeness towards women, but because they were human beings, who had just been in danger and were tired; and if they had been men, he would not have acted differently. Therefore, it is said in the masculine: and watered their flock. He stood at their right hand because they were women, and he watered their flock out of compassion for human beings who were being persecuted to the point of exhaustion (compare Genesis 29:10).