

## **Slaughtering the Korban Pesach: The Act of Liberation**

### **1. *George Orwell, Animal Farm***

"Gentlemen," concluded Napoleon, "I will give you the same toast as before, but in a different form. Fill your glasses to the brim. Gentlemen, here is my toast: To the prosperity of The Manor Farm! "...

Twelve voices were shouting in anger, and they were all alike. No question, now, what had happened to the faces of the pigs. The creatures outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again; but already it was impossible to say which was which.

### **2. *Rabbi Aharon Tamarat, A Sermon of Liberty (1906)***

In actual practice, however, we discern certain differences in the means advocated by European nationalist parties for "gaining freedom" from those with which we gained our freedom. They seized their freedom at the time of the French Revolution, for example, by means of barricades and bombs aimed at one despot or another. We, on the other hand, strive to achieve our freedom through the enactment of the seder: by eating matzah, reciting hallel etc. each Jew participating in his own home, within his family circle. Which is to say that by recalling and re-enacting the liberation from Egypt we fan within our souls the divine flame of remembrance of His merciful deeds...

However, the strategy of these revolutions, the answering of evil with evil, is questionable. It may succeed, but on the other hand, it's just as likely to aggravate the original evil. And even when it does succeed, it is only a short lived palliative. This we have seen clearly in every land where freedom was seized forcibly by nationalist revolutions: In no time at all, the plague of despotism erupted in the flesh of the body politic—just as before. The only true cure for this despotism, the only remedy which removes the evil at its roots, is the revolutionary activity of the Jewish people, the enactment of the seder—rightly understood, of course, and not merely performed by rote...

### **3. *Todd McGowan, Žižek Responds, "Slavoj Žižek is Not Violent Enough"***

Violence, as Žižek sees it, is first and foremost a violence performed on oneself. Freedom depends not so much on violently breaking the external chains that hold us but on shattering our own investment in the psychic chains that hold us far more strongly. This is the act that enables us to break the external chains, which is why the political act strikes first at oneself rather than one's political opponent.

### **4. *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, The Spirit of Christianity, 189-190***

When Moses, an isolated enthusiast for the liberation of his people, came to the elders of the Israelites and spoke to them of his project, his divine calling found its legitimation not in a heartfelt hatred of oppression, not in a longing for air and freedom, but in certain tricks with which Moses baffled them and which were performed subsequently with equal skill by Egyptian conjurers. The deeds of Moses and Aaron worked on their brethren precisely as they did on the Egyptians, i.e., as a force, and we see how the latter defended themselves against subjection by just the same means.

The increased hardships consequent upon Moses discourse in Pharaoh's presence did not act as a stronger stimulus to the Jews, but only intensified their sufferings. Against no one were the Jews more enraged than against Moses, whom they cursed (Exodus v. 21, vi. 9). Moses alone takes action. Permission to depart he extorts because of the king's fear. The Jewish faith does not even allow the king to forget his fear of his own accord and rue the decision extorted from him; on the contrary, his words, expressive of his refusal to subject himself to their god, they take to be their god's doing.

For the Jews a great thing was done, but they do not inaugurate it with heroic deeds of their own; it is for them that Egypt suffers the most diverse plagues and misery. Amid general lamentation they withdraw, driven

forth by the hapless Egyptians (Exodus xii. 33-34); but they themselves have only the malice the coward feels when his enemy is brought low by someone else's act... The Jews vanquish, but they have not battled. The Egyptians are conquered, but not by their enemies; they are conquered (like men murdered in their sleep, or poisoned) by an invisible attack, and the Israelites, with the sign on their houses and the profit which all this misery brings, look like the notorious robbers during the plague at Marseilles.

The only act which Moses reserved for the Israelites was, on the evening which he knew to be the last on which they would speak to their neighbors and friends, to borrow with deceit and repay confidence with theft. . . It is no wonder that this nation, which in its emancipation bore the most slave like demeanor, regretted leaving Egypt, wished to return there again whenever difficulty or danger came upon it in the sequel, and thus showed how in its liberation it had been without the soul and the spontaneous need of freedom.

#### **אבן עזרא שמות פרק יד פסוק יג**

(יג) התיצבו וראו את ישועת ה' כי אתם לא תעשו מלחמה, רק תראו את ישועת ה' אשר יעשה לכם היום. יש לתמוה, איך יירא מחנה גדול של שש מאות אלף איש מהרודפים אחריהם, ולמה לא ילחמו על נפשם ועל בניהם? התשובה, כי המצרים היו אדונים לישראל, וזה הדור היוצא ממצרים למד מנעוריו לסבול עול מצרים ונפשו שפלה, ואיך יוכל עתה להלחם עם אדוניו, והיו ישראל נרפים ואינם מלומדים למלחמה.

#### ***5. Ibn Ezra, Shemot 14:13***

“Stand by, and witness the deliverance which God will work for you today,” for you will not make war, just see the deliverance of God that HE will do for you today. One can question how is it possible that a great encampment of six hundred thousand people would fear those pursuing them. Why would they not fight for themselves and their children? The answer, because Egyptians were the masters of Israel, and the generation which had left Egypt learned from their youth to suffer to yoke of Egypt and its spirit was lowly. How could they now fight against their masters? And Israel was weak and not trained in war.

#### **פרק כ פסוק ב**

"מבית עבדים". ארץ מצרים היתה לנו "בית עבדים", ובה היינו עבדים מלידה (עי' פי' לעיל יג, ג). שלילת חירותנו בכוח הזרוע כבר נשכחה מלב הבריות, והעבדות נחשבה כמעמדנו הטבעי.

#### ***6. 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.

#### ***7. Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit, 114***

And it is only through staking one's life that freedom is won... The individual who has not risked his life may well be recognized as a person, but he has not attained to the truth of this recognition as an independent self-consciousness.

#### **שמות רבה טז.ב**

וכן אתה מוצא לישראל פשהו במצרים היו עובדין עבודת פוכבים ולא היו עוזבין אותה, שנאמר (יחזקאל כ, ח): איש את שקווצי עיניהם לא השליכו, אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא למשה כל זמן שישאל עובדין לאלהי מצרים לא יגאלו, לה ואמר להן שיניחו מעשיהן הרעים ולקפר בעבודת פוכבים, הדיא הוא דכתיב (שמות יב, כא): משכו וקחו לכם, כלומר משכו ידיכם מעבודת פוכבים, וקחו לכם צאן, ושחטו אלהיהם של מצרים ועשו הפסח, שבבבד הקדוש ברוך הוא פוסח עליכם, הוי (ישעיה ל, טו): בשובה ונחת תושעון

#### ***8. Shemot Rabbah 16:2***

You will find that when Israel were in Egypt, they served idols, which they were reluctant to abandon, for it says: They did not every man cast away the detestable things of their eyes (Ezek. xx, 8). God then said to Moses: ‘As long as Israel worship Egyptian gods, they will not be redeemed; go and tell them to abandon their

evil ways and to reject idolatry.' This is what is meant by: DRAW OUT, AND TAKE YOU LAMBS, that is to say: Draw away your hands from idolatry and take for yourselves lambs, thereby slaying the gods of Egypt and preparing the Passover; only through this will the Lord pass over you. This is the meaning of 'In sitting still and rest shall ye be saved.

### שמות רבה טזג

דָּבַר אַחַר, מִשְׁכּוֹ וְקָחוּ לָכֶם צֹאן, הֲדָא הוּא דְקָתִיב (תהלים צז, ז): יִבְשׁוּ כָּל עֲבָדֵי פֶסֶל, בְּשַׁעָה שְׁאֲמַר הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לְמַשָּׁה לְשַׁחַט הַפֶּסֶח, אָמַר לוֹ מִשָּׁה רַבּוֹן הַעוֹלָם הַדְּבַר הַזֶּה הֵיאָף אָנִי יְכוּל לַעֲשׂוֹת, אִי אַתָּה יוֹדֵעַ שֶׁהַצֹּאן אֱלֹהֵיהֶן שֶׁל מִצְרַיִם הֵן, שְׁנֹאֲמַר (שמות ה, כב): הֵן נִזְבַּח אֶת תּוֹעֵבַת מִצְרַיִם לְעֵינֵיהֶם וְלֹא יִסְקָלְנוּ. אָמַר לוֹ הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא חֲזִיף אִין יִשְׂרָאֵל יוֹצֵאִין מִכָּאן עַד שִׁישְׁחֲטוּ אֶת אֱלֹהֵי מִצְרַיִם לְעֵינֵיהֶם, שְׁאֹדִיעַ לָהֶם שְׂאִין אֱלֹהֵיהֶם כְּלוּם. וְכֵן מְצִינּוּ שְׁעָשָׂה, שְׁבִאוּתָהּ הַלְלִיָּהּ הַכֹּהֵן בְּכוֹרֵיהֶם שֶׁל מִצְרַיִם וְבוֹ בְּלִילָה שְׁחֲטוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל פְּסָחֵיהֶן וְאָכְלוּ, וְהָיוּ הַמִּצְרַיִם רוֹאִים בְּכוֹרֵיהֶם הַרוּגִים וְאֱלֹהֵיהֶן שְׁחֻטִּין וְלֹא הָיוּ יְכוּלִין לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּלוּם, שְׁנֹאֲמַר (במדבר לג, ד): וּמִצְרַיִם מְקַבְּרִים אֶת אֲשֶׁר הִכָּה ה' בָּהֶם כָּל בְּכוֹר וּבְאֱלֹהֵיהֶם עָשָׂה ה' שְׁפָטִים, הָיוּ: יִבְשׁוּ כָּל עֲבָדֵי פֶסֶל.

### 9. *Shemot Rabbah 16:3*

DRAW OUT, AND TAKE YOU LAMBS. Another interpretation: It is written: Ashamed be all they that serve graven images (Ps. xcvi, 7). When the Holy One, blessed be He, told Moses to slay the paschal lamb, Moses answered: 'Lord of the Universe! How can I possibly do this thing? Dost Thou not know that the lamb is the Egyptian god?' As it says: Lo, if we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, will they not stone us? (Ex. ,22 זז). God replied: 'As thou livest, Israel will not depart from here before they slaughter the Egyptian gods before their very eyes, that I may teach them that their gods are really nothing at all.' This is what He actually did; for on that night He slew the Egyptian firstborn and on that night the Israelites slaughtered their paschal lamb and ate it. When the Egyptians beheld their firstborn slain and their gods slaughtered, they could do nothing; as it says: While the Egyptians were burying them that the Lord had smitten among them, even all their firstborn; upon their gods also the Lord executed judgment (Num. xxxiii, 4). Hence 'Ashamed be all they that serve graven images'

### 10. *Immanuel Kant, Metaphysics of Morals, 320 fn.*

The dethronement of a monarch can still be thought of as if he had voluntarily laid aside the crown and abdicated his authority, giving it back to the people, or as if, without any attack on the highest person, he had relinquished his authority and been reduced to the rank of a private person...

Of all the atrocities involved in overthrowing a state by rebellion, the assassination of the monarch is not itself the worst, for we can still think of the people as doing it from fear that if he remained alive he could marshal his forces and inflict on them the punishment they deserve, so that their killing him would not be an enactment of punitive justice but merely a dictate of self-preservation...

The reason for horror at the thought of the formal execution of a monarch by his people is therefore this... his execution must be regarded as a complete overturning of the principles of the relation between a sovereign and his people (in which the people, which owes its existence only to the sovereign's legislation, makes itself his master), so that violence is elevated above the most sacred rights brazenly and in accordance with principle Like a chasm that irretrievably swallows everything, the execution of a monarch seems to be a crime from which the people cannot be absolved, for it is as if the state commits suicide.

### 11. *Slavoj Žižek, Enjoy Your Symptom, p. 51*

The act differs from an active intervention (action) in that it radically transforms its bearer (agent): the act is not simply something I "accomplish"—after an act, I'm literally "not the same as before." In this sense, we could say that the subject "undergoes" the act ("passes through" it) rather than "accomplishes" it: in it, the subject is annihilated and subsequently reborn (or not), i.e., the act involves a kind of temporary eclipse, *aphanisis*, of the subject. Which is why every act worthy of this name is "mad" in the sense of radical *unaccountability*. By means of it, I put at stake everything, including myself, my symbolic identity; the act is therefore always a "crime," a "transgression," namely of the limit of the symbolic community to which I belong. The act is defined by this irreducible *risque* in its most fundamental dimension, it is always *negative*, i.e.,

an act of annihilation, of wiping out—we not only don't know what will come out of, its final outcome is ultimately even insignificant, strictly secondary in relation to the NO! of the pure act.

**יחזקאל פרק טז**

- (א) וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֵלַי לֵאמֹר:
- (ב) בְּדֹאֲדָם הוֹדַע אֶת־יְרוּשָׁלַם אֶת־תּוֹעֲבֹתֶיהָ:
- (ג) וְאָמַרְתְּ כֹה־אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה יְקוּן לִירוּשָׁלַם מִכַּרְתִּיךְ וּמִלְדוֹתֶיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ הַכְּנַעֲנִי אֲבִיךָ הָאֲמֹרִי וְאִמֶךָ חִתִּית:
- (ד) וּמִלְדוֹתֶיךָ בְּיוֹם הַוָּלְדוֹת אֶתְּךָ לֹא־כָרַת שָׂרְךָ וּבָמִים לֹא־רָחַצְתָּ לְמַשְׁעֵי וְהַמְלִיחַ לֹא הִמְלַחְתָּ וְהַחֲתַל לֹא חֲתַלְתָּ:
- (ה) לֹא־חָסָה עָלֶיךָ עֵין לַעֲשׂוֹת לָךְ אֶתֶּת מֵאֵלֶה לְחַמְלָה עָלֶיךָ וְתִשְׁלָכִי אֶל־פְּנֵי הַשָּׂדֶה בְּגִעַל נַפְשֶׁךָ בְּיוֹם הַוָּלְדוֹת אֶתְּךָ:
- (ו) וְאֶעֱבֹר עָלֶיךָ וְאָרָאךָ מִתְּבוֹסֶסֶת בְּדָמֶיךָ וְאָמַר לָךְ בְּדָמֶיךָ חַיִּי וְאָמַר לָךְ בְּדָמֶיךָ חַיִּי:

**12. Ezekiel 16:1-6**

- 1) The word of the LORD came to me:
- 2) O mortal, proclaim Jerusalem's abominations to her,
- 3) and say: Thus said the Lord GOD to Jerusalem: By origin and birth you are from the land of the Canaanites—your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite.
- 4) As for your birth, when you were born your navel cord was not cut, and you were not bathed in water to smooth you; you were not rubbed with salt, nor were you swaddled.
- 5) No one pitied you enough to do any one of these things for you out of compassion for you; on the day you were born, you were left lying, rejected, in the open field.
- 6) When I passed by you and saw you wallowing in your blood, I said to you: "Live in spite of your blood. Yea, I said to you: "Live in spite of your blood."