

# Messianic Rabbi: God Is Bringing Us Out of Our 'Egypt' to Thrive

I don't know about you, but I like normal. It's not that I am not flexible; I just prefer to be flexible within the limits of normal.

But, as with most of the world, normal has changed and we have all been driven out of our comfort zones, like the proverbial bird being pushed out of its nest. Almost everything we do now is done differently than it was done only a few weeks ago.

Many of us are working from home and if we are not doing so ourselves, then people we are working with are. Weddings and birthdays are being done virtually. Shopping is being done on our computers. Our children are doing their school work on devices. We are even gathering for worship while sitting on our couches watching on our tablets, phones or laptops.

This sudden dramatic and nearly universal upheaval of our normal made me think about the children of Israel after they left Egypt. The Israelites, who complained about the slavery that was their normal before the Exodus, now had a new normal.

Instead of building Egyptian palaces, they were now building the Mishkan. Their diet went from eating leeks and garlic to eating manna. They went from being slaves to being free. They were no longer living according to Egyptian law; they were living according to Torah. They had exchanged the leadership of Pharaoh for the leadership of Moses. They had also exchanged the gods of Egypt for the One True G-D of Israel.

This list can go on and on.

In His wisdom, G-D knew that sudden and dramatic change, while

sometimes necessary, can also be traumatic. Just think for a moment about a baby who has been living inside its mother's womb for nine months. That child is warm, comfortable and well fed. Suddenly, it is forcefully expelled from its home with what can only be described as violent force.

The baby then finds itself out of the darkness and in bright light, no longer surrounded by warm, comfortable fluid. Instead, it is suddenly subjected to the elements. He or she is no longer being fed through the umbilical cord, but now has to find his or her own food, even if finding it only means finding mom. But, if the child was not born, it would not only die, but also cause the death of its mother.

As with the example of the birth of the baby in the last paragraph and the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, there are times when G-D brings sudden and even traumatic change into the lives of believers in order to save them from spiritual slavery or even spiritual death. I believe that what the worldwide body of Messiah is going through right now is one of those times.

We have certainly had our lives forcefully and traumatically changed in what seems like a moment. But it isn't those dramatic changes that I want to focus on. It is our response.

In the book of Exodus, when the children of Israel left Egypt and were being pursued by Pharaoh's army, G-D placed a cloud between them. This cloud kept the Egyptians from the Israelites and the Israelites from the Egyptians. The text says the purpose of the cloud was to keep them from being near each other.

"Then the angel of God, who went before the camp of Israel, moved and went behind them. Also the pillar of cloud moved from in front and stood behind them, and so came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel—there was the cloud and the darkness over here, yet it gave light by night over

there—neither one came near the other all night long” (Ex. 14:19-20, TLV).

G-D did this because He knew that while sudden change is sometimes necessary, it is difficult. But it wasn't the difficult part that G-D was trying to protect the Israelites from. Sudden change also caused “new.” Let me explain.

The Israelite's lives were already difficult in Egypt. Remember, it was their oppression and slavery that caused them to cry out to G-D for deliverance in the first place. Yet, once they had entered their “new” (new in the wilderness), they began to long for their bondage in Egypt.

I believe that this temptation to return to the comforts of Egypt is why Paul wrote these words in 1 Corinthians 10:13:

“No temptation has taken hold of you except what is common to mankind. But God is faithful—He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you can handle. But with the temptation He will also provide a way of escape, so you will be able to endure it.”

The word translated “take hold” in the verse above carries with it the connotation of having been caught after being chased or pursued. I believe that just as the children of Israel were redeemed from Egypt, G-D has suddenly and dramatically brought us out of our Egypt: our normal, comfortable and too often complacent life.

I believe this near complete adjustment of every aspect of our lives was to provide us an opportunity for us to once again be delivered from our Egypt: this world. I also believe that just as with the Exodus, the armies of our Egypt are hounding after us because G-D knows that sudden “new” can cause us to long for the comfort of our “old,” even if our “old” was bondage and slavery. He has allowed things to separate us from the “old normal” so that we won't be tempted to return.

In other words, some of the things we feel are so difficult right now are really our “cloud” standing between us and the armies of the enemy of our souls. Or to put it another way: Our “new” is the “way of escape” provided so that we can endure. {eoa}

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