

Rav Kook Torah



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Private and Public Redemption

Summary: The initial redemption at night was an inner freedom, while the departure during the day symbolized the full, public realization of their liberation.

When Did the Exodus Occur?

At what time of day did the Jewish people leave Egypt? The Torah appears to contradict itself regarding the hour of the Exodus. In D'varim 16:1 (Parshat R'ei) we read, "It was in the month of spring that the HaShem your God brought you out of Egypt at night." Clearly, the verse states that the Israelites departed in the night.

However, the Torah previously stated in Bamidbar 33:3 that they left during the daytime: "On the day after the Pesach sacrifice, the Israelites left triumphantly before the eyes of the Egyptians."

So when did they leave – during the night, or in broad daylight, "before the eyes of the Egyptians"?

Two Stages of Redemption

The Talmud in B'rachot 9a resolves this apparent contradiction by

explaining that both verses are correct. The redemption began at night, but it was only completed the following morning.

After the plague of the first-born struck at midnight, Pharaoh went to Moshe, pleading that the Israelites should immediately leave Egypt. At that point, the Hebrew slaves were free to depart. Officially, then, their servitude ended during the night.

However, God did not want His people to sneak away "like thieves in the night". The Israelites were commanded to wait until daybreak, before proudly quitting their Egyptian slavery. Thus, the de facto redemption occurred during the day.

Night and Day

Rav Kook explained that there is an intrinsic correlation between these two time periods – night and day – and the two stages of redemption.

The initial redemption at night was an inner freedom. Egyptian slavery was officially over, but their freedom was not yet realized in practical terms. The joy of independence, while great, was an inner joy. Their delight was not visible to others, and thus corresponded to the hidden part of the day – nighttime.

The second stage of redemption was the actual procession of the Jewish people out of Egypt. This was a public event, before the eyes of Egypt and

the entire world. The consummation of their freedom took place at day-break, emphasizing the public nature of their liberation from Egyptian bondage. As the sun shone, “the Israelites marched out triumphantly” (Sh'mot 14:18).

Gold from the Land of Israel, pp. 316-317.

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