

Erev Shabbos Parshas Vayakhel-Pikudei/Hachodesh, 5780

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It is funny. Everyone is talking about how much more time they have to fill, now that there is no place to go and nothing to do. I don't know. I am busier than ever with so many new things to do ... such as writing out this speech well in advance of Shabbos. Now, that is something truly unprecedented. But, if that is what needs to be done, it will happen. So, here we are:

### Winter is the Anticipation of Spring

Good Shabbos!

This week we read a very long double Parsha, Vayakhel-Pikudei, and topped it off with Parshas Hachodesh, which contains the instructions to the Jewish people to prepare for the very first Pesach, after which they left Egypt. That can be translated rather literally as the Parsha of "the month." Which month, the Torah doesn't say, though it goes on to tell us that from now on that mysterious month will be the first month of the year. Fortunately, later on in the Torah, after Parshas Hachodesh in Parshas Bo, we are told that is Chodesh HaAviv, the month of spring.

But, why? Why is it important that the month of Pesach be in the spring? And, important it is. The whole complicated Jewish calendar with years of 12 months and 13 months, ranging in length from 253 days to 385, is all designed with a single purpose: to keep Pesach in the spring even though the months of the calendar are based on the moon. (moon – month, get it?)

Rashi there (Shmos 13:4) notes that this is a sign of the kindness that Hashem showed us, that he took us out of Egypt at a time when travel is easy; not hot, not cold, not rainy. But, really, when being taken out of 200 years of slavery, does anyone really care what month it is? Did anyone complain about being liberated from Auschwitz in January?

The Rebbe, in a letter written in 1951 (Igros Kodesh IV, p. 267) gives a fascinating insight into spring, and the lesson it teaches us about how to view the hardships which we experience in our everyday lives:

During the winter, nature seems dead. The grass, if we can see it under the snow and ice, is all brown. The trees are desolate and bare, having lost all their leaves in the fall. The whole seems gray and dark and cold. Then, one day everything seems to change. The birds are chirping again, the sun is shining, the grass is green once again, and the flowers are blooming. Everything comes back to life, in stark contrast to the cold deadness of winter.

But what just happened. Was everything dead before and now new life has come into being? No! The trees and grass had just gone dormant in order to survive the cold and dark of winter, conserving their energy until the season would change. And, then all that pent up potential burst into life. Had the trees and vegetation not gone through that dormant stage of life, the spring would look like the Sahara, not

the verdant foliage that we expect and find such delight in. The vitality which we associate with spring is really the result of the building up of energy during the winter. It is common to think of spring as the celebration of life. That is only partially true. It is the celebration of the life which was there all winter and is now being expressed in the open.

What Hashem was telling our ancestors when He emphasizes that He took us out in the spring, is to say, Don't look back at the past years of slavery as wasted, dead years, until we came to life with going out of Egypt. It is the opposite. The life and vitality which we feel now, is in truth the result of the dark, cold years of hardship which came before.

And, this is a relevant lesson for us: Even as we go through times of intense hardship and uncertainty and isolation, of one thing we can be sure. There will be a spring in the future, and that spring is coming into being because of the challenging situation which we are in now.

Did you hear about the employee who asks his boss for a raise? "I've been working here for fifteen years and I haven't had a raise in five years. Four other companies are pursuing me, but you have been good to me, and I would like to stay here. But, I really need a raise."

The boss replies, "Times are really tough, but we value your service to the company and would hate to see you go, so how about a \$5,000 one time bonus and an 11% raise?"

"Great, that is really considerate and makes me feel much better about staying on. "

"Oh, and by the way, just out of curiosity, who were the other four companies who were after you?"

"My mortgage holder, the telephone company, and two credit cards."

Hashem is with us. Hashem is good. What we are going through is for the good. Either we will figure out ourselves how to make it good, by using the downtime well, to connect with family, catch up on all the Torah learning we have been promising ourselves (and the "Honey Do" list), or we can just trust in Hashem and leave it to Him to show us. Either way, stay at home, stay safe, and stay happy! Because Hashem is giving us a winter which is laying the groundwork for the coming spring, a spring of life and growth, and even greater joy, as we experience the end of Galus and the miracle of Geulah with the coming of Moshiach immediately.