



The Power of Propaganda

RABBI BINYAMIN TEITELBAUM

TO US, THE POWER OF THE MEDIA IS AN ALL-too-familiar concept. Many people have written and spoken about the Nazi propaganda machine of 80 years ago. Mass deception and misinformation are important techniques of many defunct and current Communist regimes worldwide.

The concept of using biased or misleading information to promote a particular political cause or point of view is indeed an old one. However, its roots can be traced back to what was possibly the first superpower in world history, Egypt.

The Izhbitzer Rebbe explains that when our Sages tell us that no slave was ever able to leave Egypt, it was not due solely to the strong fortifications and defenses surrounding the country. Rather, it was because no slave even wanted to leave in the first place! The slaves in Egypt believed that they lived quite satisfying lives, and had no interest in abandoning the perceived comforts of living in Egypt. "No slave was able to leave Egypt" was a direct result of Egyptian propaganda saying that all good things in the world were to be found in Egypt, and that there was no place else that even came close.

I am Hashem. I will take you out from beneath *sivlos*, the burdens, of Egypt... (6:6)

Chiddushei HaRim says that the starting point of the redemption of the Jews from Egypt was when they could no longer "be *sovel*"—tolerate—the Egyptians. Initially, the Jewish people

were taken in by the Egyptian media, and they believed that indeed there was no better place in the world to live than in the land of Egypt, even if it meant remaining enslaved. Only when they were able to shift their own mindset, and they no longer wanted to be like the Egyptians, did it become possible for the Redemption to begin.

There is a fascinating comment that relates to this in *Ohr Hachayim*:

I will take out *ess tziv'osai*, My legions, *ess ami*, My people, the Children of Israel, from the land of Egypt... (7:4)

The Torah here repeats the Hebrew word *ess** twice, for no apparent reason. *Ohr Hachayim* explains that the Torah wants us to read this verse in two parts, with the second half clarifying the first. "I will take out My legions." Who are the legions of Hashem? "My nation, the Children of Israel." It is here that the Torah reveals to us our unique stature as soldiers in Hashem's army. *Ohr Hachayim* states further, that all of Hashem's "behavior" towards the Jews in Egypt was in order to establish this title and status for the Jewish People, Hashem's army.

Rabbi Gedaliah Schorr, in *Ohr Gedalyahu*, takes this one step further. He says that this lofty status is not only

* There is no word in English equivalent to the Hebrew *ess*, which is used to identify the object of a verb. (The Yiddish word *ess* is completely unrelated.)

a privilege but also a responsibility. The way an army of Hashem behaves is entirely different than the behaviors of everyone else. We are under the jurisdiction of a higher authority at every moment, just like soldiers under their commander in a physical army.

Our unique relationship with Hashem also requires that we not be influenced by the propaganda in our own times. It is too often that we are fed the wrong messages about life and how to go about living it. Rabbi Schorr writes that the final Redemption can also only begin when we recognize our true identity—not as citizens of the Western world, but as soldiers in the Highest army.

At the Seder, we are obligated to fulfill the Rabbinic mitzvah to drink the Four Cups of wine. Why did our Sages choose the number four?

The *Rishonim* (Medieval commentaries) quote a well-known passage in the Talmud Yerushalmi, which explains that this was based on the Four Expressions of Redemption expressed in this week's Torah reading:

I will bring out... I will save... I will redeem... I will take... (6:6–7)

However, another question can be raised: Why did our Sages require that this mitzvah be fulfilled only with wine, to the exclusion of any other drink?

Rabbi Meir Simcha HaKohen of Dvinsk, in his work on Chumash, *Meshech Chochmah*, brings a foundational point to our attention in answer—

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Chavrusos are available noon–1 PM on weekdays, and 8–9:45 PM Sun.–Thurs.

Sunday *Free brunch!*

🖐️ 🖐️ **America Runs on Torah**
(Jewish Law & Parasha)
Rabbis Dani Schon
and Yisroel Kaufman.....10 AM
Grand Deluxe breakfast served

Tuesday

🚺 🖐️ **Partners in Torah**
at the Mayerson JCC
Rabbi Binyamin Teitelbaum.....8 PM

Wednesday

🚺 🖐️ **Torah Treasures for**
Seniors at the Mayerson JCC
Rabbi Yitzchok Preis.....10:30–11:15 AM
🚺 🖐️ **Downtown Lunch-n-Learn**
at Strauss & Troy
Rabbi Yitzchok Preis.....12–1 PM

Thursday

🖐️ 🖐️ **Halacha** (based on the parasha)
Rabbi Chaim Heinemann.....9:10–10 PM
Homemade refreshments served.

Minyanim for Standard Time

Shacharis
Sunday8:15 AM
Monday–Friday7:20 AM

Mincha
Sunday1:15 PM
Mon.–Thurs. thru January2:35 PM
Sun.–Thurs., Feb.–Mar.5:45 PM
Shabbos2:40 PM

Ma'ariv
In the Beis Midrash:
Sunday–Wednesday9:45 PM
Thursday10 PM

Every Day

🖐️ **“Dirshu” Gemara Shiur**
(Maseches Sota)
Rabbi Yitzchok Preis.....
Sunday 7:15–8:15 AM
Monday–Friday 5:50–6:45 AM

🖐️ 🖐️ **Kollel Yisgaber K’ari**
(amud-a-day of Mishnah B’rurah)
Rabbi Chaim Heinemann.....
Monday–Friday 6:55–7:20 AM

🖐️ 🖐️ **Kitzur Shuchan Aruch**
Live video conference!
Rabbi Dani Schon.....
Monday–Friday 12:05–12:20 PM

🖐️ **Daf Yomi**
Rabbi Meir Minster.....
Sunday–Thursday 8–8:45 PM
Shabbos (at CZE) 1:00 pre-mincha

🖐️ 🖐️ **Nightly Halacha Chabura**
Rabbis Dani Schon
& Binyamin Teitelbaum
Monday–Thursday 9–9:45 PM

Chavrusa Learning
(private & small groups).....times vary



WINTER BREAK The Kolllel will be on recess from Monday, January 19 till Monday afternoon, January 26.

The Power of Propaganda CONTINUED

ing this question. Wine is considered to be the symbol of separation between the nations of the world and ourselves. When Haman wanted to convince Achashveirosh to wipe out the Jews, he told him that, when it comes to wine, we disrespect the king (Talmud, Megillah 13). If a fly were to fall into our own cup of wine, we would remove the fly and drink the wine. But if Achashveirosh were to so much as lift the cup, we would spill out the whole thing! Similarly, our Sages explain (Shabbos 17b) that we are indeed prohibited from drinking the wine of a non-Jew, in order to prevent us from dissolving into the nations of the world through intermarriage.

In fact, there are those who homiletically insert this concept into part of

the Passover Seder, and give it a deeper meaning. At one point, we raise our cups of wine and recite “V’hee She’amdah, this is what has remained...” declaring that this (commitment from Hashem) is what has saved us from being destroyed by the nations of the world throughout history. On another level, we are saying that “this,” the cup of wine that we are lifting, has saved us from disappearing into the abyss of assimilation, through our maintaining Jewish familial boundaries and priorities.

Since it was the merit of the Jews separating themselves from the Egyptians that enabled them to be redeemed from Egypt, our Sages thought it appropriate that the Four Cups of the Seder should consist specifically of wine.

Meshech Chochmah then says that it is the same merit, of our ability to see ourselves as separate from the rest of the world, that will enable us to see the Final Redemption from our current exile.

It is up to us to ensure that the unbroken chain of Torah from Mount Sinai, through our ancestors, continues on to future generations. It is the firm commitment to our identity as soldiers in Hashem’s army, and our unwavering understanding that we are indeed different than any other nation or people, that has carried us to this point in our history. May we merit see this requirement fulfilled in its fullest state, and to see the subsequent rebuilding of Jerusalem, as the culmination of our own Redemption. 🚺