



PASSOVER:

The Road to Personal

Freedom

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THE ROAD TO PERSONAL FREEDOM

None are more hopelessly enslaved than those who falsely believe they are free.

-Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

THE FREEDOM GAME

BY RABBI STEPHEN BAARS, AISH HATORAH

WHO IS THE MOST ENSLAVED PERSON AND WHO IS THE MOST FREE?

- ❖ "Three years ago I was taken by the KGB and put in a labor camp in Siberia, I am told when to get up, when to go to bed and everything between."
- ❖ "I was ship-wrecked on a desert island. I can do anything I want, but there's nothing to do here."
- ❖ "I'm a heavy heroine addict. I live my days just to get the next high. Luckily I inherited a large fortune that allows me to support my habit."
- ❖ "In the country I live in, cigarettes are banned. I used to smoke two packs a day. Now I can't get them and I'm very depressed."
- ❖ "I used to be a top college athlete and was headed for a pro career. Then last year I dove into a pool that was too shallow and broke my neck. I'm now completely paralyzed from my chin down. All I think about all day long is what I used to be able to do."
- ❖ "Last year I tried to commit suicide but a policeman caught me just before I jumped. I was institutionalized. There's no possibility here for me to do what I really want to do - kill myself."

PERSONAL FREEDOM WITH A PERSONAL GOD



What do you think God's greatest accomplishment is?
If you were God what would you choose to introduce yourself
with to your people?

SHEMOS CHAPTER 19

(ב) אֲנִי יְקֹנֶה יְקֹנֶה אֵלֹהֵיךָ אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עֲבָדִים ...

I am Hashem your God who has taken you out of Egypt from the house of slavery

WHY DID GOD CHOOSE TO INTRODUCE HIMSELF THIS WAY?

MAHARAL, TIFERES YISROEL CHAPTER 37

ולמה לא אמר 'אנכי ה' אלקיך אשר בראתי שמים וארץ'...מה שאמר הכתוב "אנכי ה' אלקיך", רוצה לומר שאני אלקיך בפרט, שהוא יתברך שמו חל על האומה הנבחרת בפרט.

**AND THE REASON WHY GOD DID NOT INTRODUCE HIMSELF AS THE
GOD WHO CREATED THE WORLD WAS BECAUSE HE WANTED TO
EMPHASIZE THAT HE IS YOUR GOD, A PERSONAL GOD WHO IS
UNIQUELY CONNECTED TO THE JEWISH PEOPLE.**

A Personal God means we each have a personal connection with Him and a personal mission to bring God's message to the world.

**WE NEED TO CREATE OUR PERSONAL CONNECTION TO GOD IN
ORDER TO FIND PERSONAL REDEEMPTION**

בכל דור ודור חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאילו הוא יצא ממצרים,
שנאמר (שמות יג) והגדת לבנך ביום ההוא לאמר בעבור זה עשה ה' לי בצאתי ממצרים.

In each and every generation we are required to envision ourselves as if we left Egypt...

ARE WE TRULY FREE? MAD MEN AND THE AGE OF ADVERTISING

"Advertising might properly be defined as the art of determining the will of possible customers. . . . Our acts are the resultants of our motives, and it is your function in commercial life to create the motives that will effect the sale of the producer's wares."

-Walter Scott, The Psychology of Advertising, The Atlantic, January 1904



EXPERIMENTS IN THE LABORATORY OF CONSUMERISM BY: ADAM CURTIS, DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKER

The widespread fascination with the Mad Men series is far more than just simple nostalgia. It is about how we feel about ourselves and our society today.

In Mad Men we watch a group of people who live in a prosperous society that offers happiness and order like never before in history and yet are full of anxiety and unease. They feel there is something more, something beyond. And they feel stuck.



The central idea of advertising was to encourage people to be "different" - and what that led to was a new dynamic in society. If you want to be different you are always running away from the others who are also trying to be different - and thus become like you. So you are continually searching for something newly different, something Hip.

And that required an endless stream of new - different - products. As Thomas Frank puts it very eloquently in *The Conquest of Cool*:

"The idea of 'difference' became the magic cultural formula by which the life of consumerism could be extended indefinitely, running forever on the discontent that it itself had produced..."

But one could argue that it is precisely that continual search for difference that has led us into the static world of today. If consumerism continually scours the margins of society for rebellious or contrary notions and then immediately turns them into stuff to sell - it ironically becomes very difficult for new ideas to change society. Instead they tend to end up reinforcing it.

FINDING OUR TRUE PERSONAL FREEDOM

RAV KOOK ON FREEDOM

The difference between a slave and a free person is not merely a matter of social position. We can find an enlightened slave whose spirit is free, and a free man with the mentality of a slave.



True freedom is that uplifted spirit by which the individual — as well as the nation as a whole — is inspired to remain faithful to his inner essence, to the spiritual attribute of the Divine image within him. It is that quality which enables us to feel that our life has value and meaning.

A person with a slave mentality lives his life and harbors emotions that are rooted, not in his own essential spiritual nature, but in that which is attractive and good in the eyes of others. In this way, he is ruled by others, whether physically or by social conventions.

Vanquished in exile, we were oppressed for hundreds of years by cruel masters. But our inner soul is imbued with the spirit of freedom. Were it not for the wondrous gift of the Torah, bestowed upon us when we left Egypt to eternal freedom, the long exile would have reduced our spirits to the mindset of a slave. But on the festival of freedom, we openly demonstrate that we feel ourselves to be free in our very essence. Our lofty yearnings for that which is good and holy are a genuine reflection of our essential nature.



WHAT ARE YOU ADVERTISING?

- ❖ WE LIVE IN AN AGE OF UNPRECEDENTED MARKETING AND ADVERTISING. MOST OF OUR LIVES WE ARE BEING SOLD PRODUCTS. WE ARE THE PASSIVE CONSUMER LISTENING TO THE SELLER.
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❖ ON PASSOVER WE NEED TO THINK WHAT IS OUR MESSAGE?

- ❖ WE HAVE THE FREEDOM AND THE WILL TO HAVE A VOICE, SO WHAT ARE WE SELLING? IF YOU HAD TO THINK OF A SLOGAN FOR YOUR SPIRITUAL MESSAGE OR THE SPIRITUAL MESSAGE OF TORAH, WHAT WOULD IT BE?
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