

Sermon by Rabbi Eliezer Hirsch

Shemot 21

Gut Shabbos. Shabbat shalom.

First I'd like to acknowledge that this week's sermon is sponsored by the Glyn family, in commemoration of the first yahrtzeit of David Glyn, Dovid Yerachmiel Ben Esther z'l. May his memory be a blessing.

It's hard to believe that it's been a year since David's passing. In keeping with her outlook on life, Rachel has put a positive spin on the timing, by acknowledging how difficult it has been for those whose relatives passed away during Covid, and her appreciation that she and family did not have to endure that additional hardship.

The need to search for the positive is paramount when we consider this week's parsha. It tells the story of an exodus that never gets off the ground. Moses' entreaties to Pharaoh are rebuffed, and the Jewish people become exasperated and depressed. Then Moses complains about God's failure to save them. Their salvation does not begin until next week's parsha, so what inspirational message are we to find in this week's narrative?

In answer to this question, I usually offer the perspective we discussed last week – that redemption is a process, not an instantaneous event. That process can have ups and downs, so it's vital to stay optimistic even when the outlook appears grim. Of course it's one thing to read this lesson in theory but much more compelling when you see it modeled in real life, and that was the special impact I experienced with David and Rachel. I merited to meet with them many times prior to David's passing, when they knew he had limited time left. Although the conversations were somber, Rachel and David maintained a positive perspective. They both believed that everything is part of God's plan, and David emphasized that no matter how negative the circumstances, you have a choice – sink into your negativity, or accept the situation and try to turn to the positive.

The best way to honor David's memory is to take his advice to heart. We're all going through a troubling time, but we should make an extra effort to be optimistically patient, to strengthen our confidence that we do indeed have a God who cares. Shabbat shalom.