

# BRINGING SEDER to CHAOS



## Freedom in Quarantine

### DAY 9 - AVADIM HAYINU

This is the first year in many that the concept of slavery feels relevant to our lives. Granted, no slave in history has had Netflix or free delivery for dinner. At the same time, the feeling of physical constraint and social distancing can feel similar to slavery. Slavery though is not only a physical constraint - it is also a mentality.

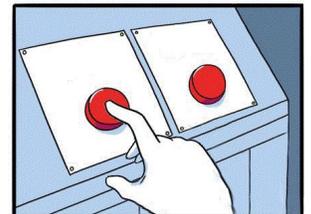
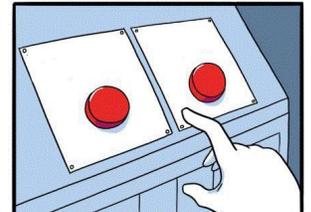
When the Jews were fleeing the Egyptians, the Torah explains that the Jewish people were terrified (Shemos 14:13). Why were they so scared? The Jews outnumbered the Egyptians pursuing them by several thousand. Rabbi Ovadia Seforno (1475-1550) explains that they were scared because they had a slave mentality. The Jews had grown up under slavery and became accustomed to being subjugated. The years of slavery made them downtrodden and the Jewish people did not have the confidence or resolve to stand up to the Egyptians.

Rav Soloveitchik (1903-1993) eloquently describes the pain of a slave mentality:

*The greatness of man - his dignity and his creativity - is expressed in his freedom of will and in his ability to choose. A slave is never confronted with two alternatives. He makes no decisions; someone always does it for him. He has no faith in himself, and he is psychologically unable to cope with situations. A slave is unable to seize initiative; he lacks the urge and the drive to do things, and he cannot intervene in certain situations in order to improve his lot and better himself.*

While some of the day to day frustrations of isolation and quarantine might feel slave-like, **in reality our collective decision to choose this lifestyle as a cautionary response to the pandemic is a reflection of true freedom.** Communities and individuals 'seized initiative' and shut down shuls, schools, and declared social distancing because they had the 'ability to choose.' We are officially free to leave our homes to congregate, but we actively choose to stay away to save other people's lives. We have made the toughest choice to collectively react, not only for our own benefit, but for the benefit of society around us.

Difficulty and challenge are not signs of slavery, in fact, if we react correctly they can actually be the source of our freedom.



### Join the Conversation

**What has been the most liberating part about the choice to be social distancing?**

**Submit Your Answers**

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