“This is how you must eat [the Passover offering]: with your waist belted, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand. You must eat it with *chipazon* — in haste.”

The word *chipazon* is uncommon. It appears only three times in the entire Bible. Twice it is used to describe the Israelites’ haste when they fled Egypt. Why did they need to be ready to depart at a moment’s notice?

According to the Midrash, there were in fact three parties in a rush for the Israelites to leave Egypt. The Egyptians, afraid of further plagues and catastrophes, wanted the Hebrew slaves to clear out as quickly as possible. The Israelites were in a hurry lest Pharaoh change his mind yet again, and there was a third party in a state of urgency. The Midrash speaks of the *chipazon* of the Shechina. Why was G-d in a hurry?

A HASTY REDEMPTION

The redemption from Egypt needed to be fast, like the swift release of an arrow from a bow. Here was a group of slaves who had almost completely forgotten the greatness of their souls, a treasured inheritance from their ancestors who were widely respected as holy princes. With a decisive wave of G-d’s hand, a nation brimming with courage and nobility of spirit, unlike any people the world had ever seen, was formed. This was the dramatic birth “of a nation from the midst of another nation” on the stage of human history.

A meteoric Exodus from Egypt with wonders and miracles was critical to protect this fledgling nation from the dark confusion of universal paganism. The Jewish people needed to be quickly extracted from the idolatrous Egyptian milieu in which they had lived for centuries so they would be free to raise the banner of pure faith and enlightened ideals.

THE FUTURE REDEMPTION

The third time the word *chipazon* appears in the Bible is in Isaiah’s breathtaking description of the future redemption. Unlike the Exodus from Egypt, “You will not leave with haste — *chipazon* — or go in flight. For the Eternal will go before you, and your rear guard will be the G-d of Israel.”

Unlike the miraculous upheaval that brought about the dramatic launch of the Jewish people, the future redemption will be a gradual process, advancing step by step. Why will the future redemption be so different from the redemption from Egypt?

In Egypt, the Hebrew slaves had adopted their neighbors’ idolatrous culture. Their redemption required supernatural intervention, a Divine rescue from above. But the future redemption will take place within the laws of nature. It will emanate from the stirring of the human heart, *itaruta deletata* — an awakening from below. The Jewish people will rise from their exilic slumber, return to their homeland, regain their independence, reclaim their forests and cities, defend themselves from enemies who seek to destroy them, recreate their academies of Torah, and reestablish their spiritual center in Jerusalem. Step by step, without overriding the laws of nature, so that even the Ba’al HaNess, the beneficiary of the miracle, is unaware of the great miracle unfolding.

Unlike the dramatic Exodus from Egypt, the future redemption is not an escape from the world and its influences. Over the centuries, the Jewish people have succeeded in illuminating many dark aspects of the world. Our influence has refined the world on many levels. The impact of our Torah and lifestyle, which we observed with dedication and self-sacrifice throughout the exile, served as a beacon of light for many nations.

We must draw upon the heritage of our redemption from Egypt and our miraculous birth as the people of Israel. The current process of redemption, manifest in the revitalization of the Jewish people in the Land of Israel, must not be detached from our national mission as a light unto the nations. Then our future redemption will be not in haste, but will advance steadily, like the ever-spreading light of daybreak.

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2. Isaiah 52:12.

*Adapted from Sapphire from the Land of Israel*

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