



Lerhaus

A New Shul

Dear everyone,

*The great **non transition** of our government continues to proceed alarmingly apace with very little let-up in sight. I am not sure how this **non transition** can possibly be construed as good for America and for what we all face together as a nation at this time. The issues outlined in our last missive regarding immediate priorities in moving forward for the good of the entire country clearly places the Covid19 crisis at the apogee of our triage considerations. And this is not the only consideration before us . . .*

To say that this administration has mishandled the crises borders on the obvious. Given the continuing climb of illness and death, a continuation of inaction could very possibly be understood as either insanity, malfeasance or very possibly criminal neglect. It certainly would not surprise me if inaction and denial continue unimpeded, and therefore calls for indictment could be heard again, although in a different court of law than that we as a nation experienced before. This is especially 'so' if the current departments of government, including any and all Executive offices continue to proceed down this rabbit hole of denial now coupled with escalating cases of illness and increases in death totals.

In our class we have studied the inability of our ancestors to recognize the places and predicaments in which they found themselves and then act accordingly. We have looked at localities for example, such as Lot's home near the Dead Sea and even places like Egypt, well known as a civilization wholeheartedly given over to Israelite slavery and a religious death worship.

Together we have thought this through before, even comparing and contrasting these places as places in which we were trapped in a quicksand of trauma and unable for whatever reason to move on to a better place. We saw this with Lot, and then with Moses, and the same with the Israelites as a whole, perhaps even moreso.

Could it be that 'being in a place of trauma' so compellingly holds us that we just cannot extricate ourselves; perhaps 'the jailor' is just altogether too powerful. The Torah suggests that at times 'the jailor' is us and reflects our own inability to extricate even ourselves. In that way, the Torah is clear that we all too often find it

difficult to realize the darkness of the cell in which we live and even less clear, we find it difficult to imagine a way out to a better place, or to a more Promised Land.

Let's hope that, for the good of us all, we now begin the process of moving forward from the darkness of denial currently enveloping the nation at this time of transition. It is well past time that we join hands, put one foot in front of the other and move forward together.

Warm regards,

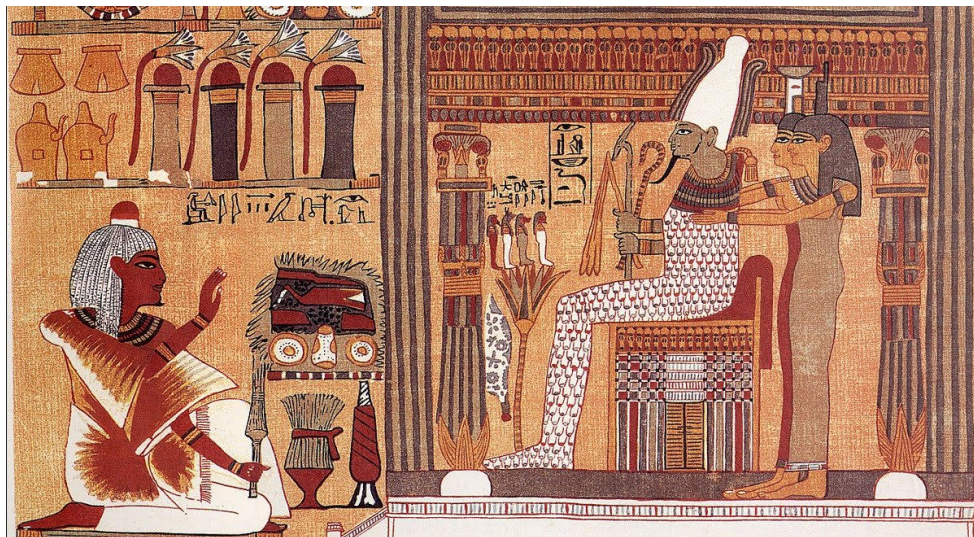
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Lerhaus: A Newshul of Jewish Thought and Learning

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Weekly Seminar Materials



From the Book of the Dead. The deceased Ani kneels before Osiris, judge of the dead. Behind Osiris stand his sisters Isis and Nephthys. (Image: British Museum/Public domain)

Let us be clear: Lot perceives himself as if he was both part of Sodom's 'ethics-life' and 'legal culture.' While he does share an ethic of 'hospitality' with Abraham, yet his ethics practically require us to place this narrative alongside that of both Abraham and

even an earlier narrative of our old friend Noah. This particular scene helps us to understand Lot -- and correspondingly it helps us to understand the way in which Lot is understood by the very same people with whom he so closely identifies.

Genesis 19:4

<p>ד טרם, ישכבו, ואנשי העיר אנשי סדם נסבו על-הבית, מנער ועד-זקן: כל-העם, מקצה.</p>	<p>Gn 19:4 But before they lay down, the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both young and old, all the people from every quarter.</p>
<p>ה ויקראו אל-לוט ויאמרו לו, איה האנשים אשר-באו אליך הלילה; הוציאם אלינו, ונדעה אתם.</p>	<p>5 And they called unto Lot, and said unto him: 'Where are the men that came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them.'</p>
<p>ו ויצא אלהם לוט, הפתחה; והדלת, סגר אחריו.</p>	<p>6 And Lot went out unto them to the door, and shut the door after him.</p>
<p>ז ויאמר: אל-נא אחי, תרעו.</p>	<p>7 And he said: 'I pray you, my brethren, do not so wickedly.</p>
<p>ח הנה-נא לי שתי בנות, אשר לא-ידעו איש--אוציאה-נא אתהן אליכם, ועשו להן כטוב בעיניכם; רק לאנשים האל, אל-תעשו דבר, כי-על-כן באו, בצל קרתי.</p>	<p>8 Behold now, I have two daughters that have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes; only unto these men do nothing; forasmuch as they are come under the shadow of my roof.'</p>
<p>ט ויאמרו גש-הלאה, ויאמרו האחד בא-לגור וישפט שפוט--עתה, נרע לך מהם; ויפצרו באיש בלוט מאד, ויגשו לשבר הדלת.</p>	<p>9 And they said: 'Stand back.' And they said: 'This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs play the judge; now will we deal worse with thee, than with them.' And they pressed sore upon the man, even Lot, and drew near to break the door.</p>
<p>י וישלחו האנשים את-ידם, ויביאו את-לוט אליהם הביתה; ואת-הדלת, סגרו.</p>	<p>10 But the men (<i>Angels/Gd</i>) put forth their hand, and brought Lot into the house and closed the door</p>

Unlike the Noah story, Lot attempts to warn others, his sons in law -- but to no avail. That being said, he himself finds it practically impossible to convince himself or to extricate himself.

<p>יד ויצא לוט וידבר אל-חֲתָנָיו לקחי בְּנֹתָיו, ויאמר קומו צאו מן-המקום הזה, כי-משחית יהוה, את-העיר; ויהי כמצחק, בעיני חֲתָנָיו.</p>	<p>19: 14 And Lot went out, and spoke unto his sons-in-law, who married his daughters, and said: '<u>Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy the city.</u>' But he seemed unto his sons-in-law as one that jested.</p>
<p>טו וכמו השחר עָלה, ויאיצו המלאכים בלוט לאמר: קום קח את-אשתך ואת-שתי בְּנֹתֶיךָ, הנמצאת--פֶּן-תִּסָּפֵה, בעון העיר.</p>	<p>15 And when the morning arose, then <u>the angels</u> hastened Lot, saying: 'Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters that are here; <u>lest thou be swept away in the iniquity of the city.</u>'</p>
<p>טז ויתמהמה--ויחזיקו האנשים בידו וביד-אשתו וביד שתי בְּנֹתָיו, בחמלת יהוה עליו; ויצאהו וינחהו, מחוץ לעיר.</p>	<p>16 <u>But he lingered; and the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two daughters; the LORD being merciful unto him. And they brought him forth, and set him without the city.</u></p>
<p>יז ויהי כהוציאם אתם החוצה, ויאמר המלט על-נפשך--אל-תביט אחריך, ואל-תעמד בכל-הכפר: הקרה המלט, פֶּן-תִּסָּפֵה.</p>	<p>17 And it came to pass, when they had brought them forth abroad, that he said: '<u>Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the Plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be swept away.</u>'</p>

As a bonus and hidden verse, here below we see that Abraham's initial conversation with Gd was not in vain . . .

<p>כט ויהי, בשחת אלהים את-ערי הכפר, ויזכר אלהים, את-אברהם; וישלח את-לוט, מתוך ההפכה, בהפך את-הערים, אשר-ישב בהן לוט.</p>	<p>19:29 And it came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the Plain, <u>that God remembered Abraham</u>, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when He overthrew the cities in which Lot dwelt</p>
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Let us also be clear: We also understand the way in which the Exodus documents expose a similar hesitation on the part of Moses to see himself as apart from that of an Egyptian and equally difficult in seeing himself as a part of the Israelite nation. We see his reluctance to return from a place of peace and stability (from his new found home in

Midian) to return to a place of slavery and evil (i.e. Egypt), the exact same place in which he was born and raised.

That being said, he never feels wholly a part of either of the two households/nations in which he was raised. Here below this scene best illustrates the predicament in which he found his two identities in conflict and one from which he flees upon realizing that he neither finds a home in either 'place' or 'people.'

Please bear in mind, it is a Hebrew who parallels one of the townspeople of Sodom when this Israelite he says/accuses Moses with these words: **Exodus 2:14** And he said: **'Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?** He is essentially saying: You are not one of us. Some would even say" "Leave us, as you are not one of us."

Exodus Chapter 2:11

<p>יא ויהי בימים ההם, ויגדל משה ויצא אל-אחיו, וירא, בסבלתם; וירא איש מצרי, מכה איש-עברי מאחיו.</p>	<p>Ex 2:11 And it came to pass <u>in those days</u>, when Moses was grown up, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens; and he saw an <u>Egyptian smiting a Hebrew</u>, one of his brethren.</p>
<p>יב ויפן כה וכה, וירא כי אין איש; ויד, את-המצרי, ויטמנהו, בחול.</p>	<p>12 And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he smote the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand.</p>
<p>יג ויצא ביום השני, והנה שני-אנשים עברים נצים; ויאמר, לרשע, למה תכה, רעך.</p>	<p>13 And he went out <u>the second day</u>, and, behold, two men of <u>the Hebrews were striving together</u>; and he said to him that did the wrong: 'Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow?'</p>
<p>יד ויאמר מי שמך לאיש שר ושפט, עלינו--הלהרגני אתה אמר, באשר הרגת את-המצרי; ויירא משה ויאמר, אכן נודע הדבר.</p>	<p>14 And he said: '<u>Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?</u> thinkest thou to kill me, as thou didst kill the Egyptian?' And Moses feared, and said: 'Surely the thing is known.'</p>
<p>טו וישמע פרעה את-הדבר הזה, ויבקש להרג את-משה; ויברח משה מפני פרעה, . . .</p>	<p>15 Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian</p>

Beginning this Wednesday, we will continue our contrast with Egypt and our consideration of Daniel's version of *the Babylonian Exile*. For this 'contrast' please refer to our worksheets of Balzshazzar's feast and the strange *handwriting on the wall* which mystified everyone of the Babylonian Court, but not mystifying to *Daniel*, for whom the Book, his book, is *eponymously named (only the Gd of Daniel is Judge)*.

Stay tuned, it only gets better

R' Seth

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