

And I will make a distinction (**f'dut**) between My people and your people (i.e., between the Israelites and Egyptians). Tomorrow this sign shall come to pass. --- Exodus 8:19

A distinction: a marker to separate between My people and your people. --- Rashi

The swarms of insects (i.e., this particular plague which God declares through Moses) will distinguish between My people and your people. This applies to the Israelites who were living among the Egyptians, and not only to those who lived in Goshen, which was set apart. --- Ibn Ezra

But also it applied to Goshen, because some Egyptians lived there too. --- Gersonides

God hereby promised that if any Egyptian removed himself from Pharaoh's nation and came to join the Israelites, he would be saved from attack by the swarms. --- Bekhor Shor

The separation that God mentions here represents an eternal distinction between Israel and the nations. For just as God was separating His people now to protect them from the swarms, so in the future will the Israelite people *dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations* (Numb. 23:9). --- **Ha-k'tav v'ha-Kabbalah**, Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg, 19th c. Germany

"**F'dut**" can also be related to the word "**fodeh**", meaning redemption. (Also noted in Ramban.) The sign is only the means for bringing about the redemption of the Israelites, which will distinguish between the two peoples. So in our time, when Israel lives a distinct life, separate from the other nations according to our roots, this in itself will be redemption for them. --- Rabbi Meir ben Aharon, 19th c. Hasidic master

When Israel is especially beloved to God (i.e., keep His commandments), He calls them *My people*; when they are not, He calls them "your people." Here the Torah says: *I will distinguish between My people and your people* — that is, between those who keep the commandments and those who do not. I will redeem them

either way, as it says (Isaiah 60:22): *I the Lord will speed it in due time*, but for those who are truly "My people", "I will speed it"; otherwise, it will be "in due time". --- Rabbi Meir Shapira, Poland, d. 1934

The word "**f'dut**" is mentioned three times in Scripture. Why so? Because there are three kinds of redemption corresponding to three kinds of exile we suffer. The first is the exile of Israel among the nations; our verse addresses this. The second, yet more difficult, is that of Jews from other Jews: when our own leaders rule over us with harshness. The second verse, *He sent redemption to His people* (Ps. 111:9), addresses this. The third and most difficult form of exile is of a person from himself, when his inclinations rule over him and it requires the most intense strength to overcome them. The third verse, *...with the Lord is steadfast love and great power to redeem* (Ps. 130:7), addresses this, for it takes the greatest power to be freed from this. --- Based on Rabbi Shalom Rokeach of Belz, 19th c.

The etymology of the word, from "redeem," implies that from this moment the Israelites ceased to serve the Egyptians as slaves. It was now that Pharaoh would acknowledge the distinction between his nation and the Hebrews, and agree to honor that difference by accepting that these were God's people. --- Abarbanel