

Haggadah Insights

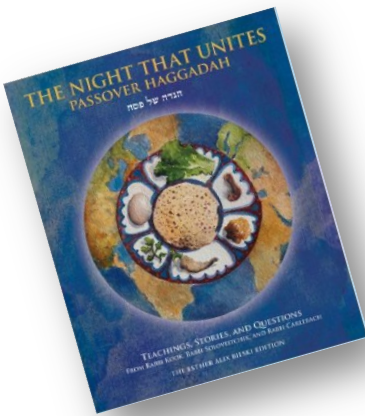
5775/2015



Rabbi Efrem Goldberg
Boca Raton Synagogue



*The Night That Unites
Haggadah*



I. BREAKING THE MATZAH AS A SYMBOL OF SHARING

We break the matzah as a symbol of the poor man's bread that the Jewish slaves ate in Egypt. One way of understanding this is that a poor person, who can never know where his next meal is coming from, breaks off a piece and saves it for later.

Rabbi Soloveitchik offered a different interpretation of the "poor man's bread" that was eaten by the Jews in Egypt.

Although when we think of the enslavement of the Jewish people in Egypt, we usually think that all the Jews must have been equally burdened by it, but in truth that was not so. There were various degrees of slavery. Some Jews lived under better conditions, some worse. According to our Sages, one of the tribes, the tribe of Levi, was never enslaved. What this means is that some had access to food and some did not.

Those that did, claims Rabbi Soloveitchik, broke their bread and shared it with other Jews who had less. The Jews who were enslaved in Egypt would split their piece of matzah and share it with the poor who needed it; hence the term "poor man's bread." This is symbolized by the act of breaking the matzah in half: *Yachatz*. When we break the matzah as our forefathers did, it is a symbol of the *hesed*, the loving-kindness, and the solidarity of Jews toward their fellow Jews, their brothers and sisters, even under the harshest conditions.

III. BREAKING THE MATZAH – OUR CHILDREN WILL FIX THE WORLD

Reb Shlomo Carlebach has an insight to offer us:

Why do we break the matzah at the beginning of the Seder?

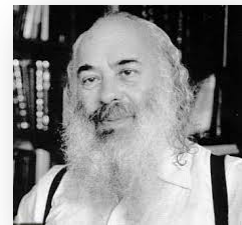
Why do the children bring back the broken piece of matzah at the end of the Seder?

The *afikomen*, the broken matzah represents the brokenness in the world.

There are so many broken hearts . . . broken lives . . . so many tears. We live in a world of *yachatz*, of brokenness. The world is fractured and we need to know that in order to repair it.

But do you know who will fix the world? Do you know who will bring wholeness to the world again?

Our children. Our children will bring back the broken piece to make the world whole again.





Shirat Miriam Haggadah
R' Yosef Zvi Rimon



בְּרַחֲמֵי
הַמָּקוֹם, בְּרוּךְ הוּא. בְּרוּךְ שְׁנַתֵּן תּוֹרָה
לְעַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל. בְּרוּךְ הוּא.

Blessed is God, blessed be He! Blessed is He who gave the Torah to His people Israel, blessed be He!

The Source of the Haggadah

This section is found between that of “Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah” and that of “the Four Sons.” It only appears in some of the ancient *haggadot*, such as that of Rav Amram Gaon. It is possible that

this section is an introduction to the Four Sons (although it does not appear in the ancient sources of the Four Sons, such as the *Mechilta*, *Parashat Bo*, *Parashah* 18, and the *Jerusalem Talmud* 10:4), or it might be the concluding section of the previous one.

Food for Thought

The main element of the story – to be thankful!

What is the aim of telling the story of the Exodus from Egypt? Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik (*Shiurim LeZecher Abba Mari*, Vol. 1, new edition, p. 14) explains that our primary duty on the *seder* night is to have the story motivate us to thank God:

The duty of remembering does not impose on a person an obligation to recite praise and thanks, whereas the commandment to tell the story obligates one not only to relate the wonders and miracles that God did for us, but also to praise and thank Him, “Therefore, it is our duty to thank, praise, hail, glorify, exalt, honor, bless...” and that is the basis for the obligation of *hallel* on Pesach night.

We begin *maggid* with *Mah Nishtanah*, which

is meant to excite the children – and us as well – **to make a change, and to change ourselves.** Afterwards, we tell the story of the Exodus from Egypt (according to Shmuel’s view in the Talmud): “We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and the Lord, our God, took us out from there.” We then explain the dimensions of the obligation: who is obligated (everyone, including Torah scholars), how much one must say (“everyone who discusses the Exodus from Egypt at length is praiseworthy”), and we also tell of the Sages who spent the *seder* night together and spoke about the Exodus from Egypt the entire night.

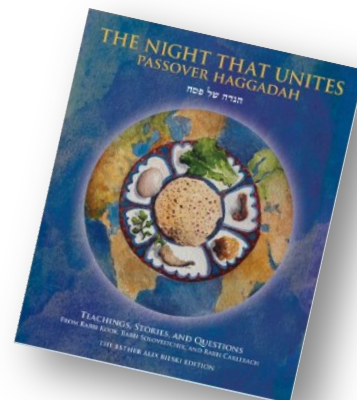
Now, the time has come to thank God: “Blessed is God, blessed be He! Blessed is He who gave the Torah to His people Israel, blessed be He!”

This is the first stage in the structure of the story of the Exodus from Egypt and our expression of thanks. Over the course of the haggadah, this cycle will repeat itself three times, as we will see below (see, the chapter on the structure of the haggadah, p. 28).

WHY IS GOD REFERRED TO AS HAMAKOM?

“Blessed is God, HaMakom, blessed be He!”

The Night That Unites
Haggadah



One traditional interpretation as to why one of God’s names is HaMakom is the idea that God is the *Makom Shel Olam*, “the place of the world” (Genesis Rabbah 68:9). The interpretation of this is that God embraces the universe or that the universe is within God.

Rabbi Soloveitchik says that there is another way to look at this. God is called “place,” or “home.” To be homeless does not mean that a person does not have a roof over his head. Someone can have a strong roof and feel secure in his home, but can still remain exposed, insecure, and vulnerable. The only home where man can find security is within God, which is why a person who is close to God and feels that he is protected by His guiding hand, is a person who is truly “at home.” This is the experience of knowing God as HaMakom.

Shemen Ha’Tov Haggadah
R’ Bernard Weinberger

Why do we refer to Hashem as HaMakom?

First time it is used is in context of the Akeida. Name for Hashem when we feel distanced from Him. In Egypt we felt far. We tell mourner Ha’Makom. Introduces four sons who all have element of feeling distant.

בין ביים ובין ביבשה 'המקום' ירחם עליהם ויוציאם מצרה לרוחה' וגו'. גם כאן בא כינוי 'המקום' לרמז וללמד על ההרחקה מאתו יתברך דע"י אותו הרחק יעזור לו השם שיתקרב לו ויכיר דהצרה באה לו משום שהשם יתברך רוצה שיתעלה, ויבוא להרחקה כדי שאחרי כך יבוא לקירוב.

ומה שהוסיף הבעל ההגדה השבח 'ברוך שנתן תורה לעמו ישראל'. היינו משום דכל הד' בניים הם מרוחקים מהשם יתברך ואפילו החכם מרוחק קצת ואף שהוא רק שואל, מה יאמרו ומה יתרוצו 'לדור הבא' לאחר המופתים, והיינו 'היה כי ישאלך בנך 'מחר' לאמר מה העדות והחוקים' וגו' (דברים ו, כ) דהיינו דעל הדור של מחר הוא שואל (ענין במאמר חסם מה הוא אומן). אבל הוא ג"כ מרוחק קצת כיון דשואל אף על החוקים, והלא הוא חכם ויודע דאין לשאול על חוקים דאין להם טעם גלוי. ולכן מוסיף השבח 'ברוך שנתן תורה לעמו ישראל', דע"י התורה יבואו כל הד' בניים להתקרב ולקיים מצותיה חוקיו ומשפטיו ושלוש שלום לרחוק ולקרוב אמר ה'.

ברוך המקום ברוך הוא ברוך שנתן תורה לעמו ישראל

מלת 'המקום' הוא כינוי להשם יתברך שהוא מקומו של עולם ולית אתר דפנוי מיניה. ולא מצאנו הכינוי הזה בתורה שבכתב, והפעם הראשונה שאנו מוצאים שנרמז בפסוק שם הקב"ה בכינוי זה, הוא במעשה העקידה שנאמר (בראשית כב, ד) 'ביום השלישי וישא אברהם את עינו וירא את המקום מרוחק'. ופירש הוזה"ק (ח"א קכ). דקאי על השם יתברך שמו, דנראה לאברהם דהקב"ה כמרוחק ממנו. דהיינו בדוקא בזמן שהיה סבא דהקב"ה יתקרב לאברהם, שעושה רצונו להקריב על המזבח בנו יחידו שנולד לו לאחר ניסים ונפלאות, דוקא אז נראה לו השם כרחוק ממנו.

ופירש החידושי הרי"ם דזה בא להגדיל הנסיון של העקידה אלף פעמים, שאברהם אבינו אבד כל המדרגות שזכה בהם כבר ע"י עמידתו בט' הנסיונות, ומ"מ הלך לקיים רצונו של השם אע"פ שאין לתאר עד היכן הגיע הנסיון באמת, לילך ולקיים מצות השם ואף שאין לו שום טעם בזה ולהיפך, הוא אף מרגיש חלישות. ומ"מ רצון השם הוא העיקר ואף שהשטן מקטרג ואומר לו שמעתי 'השה לעולה ולא יצחק' וילקוט שמעוני בראשית כב רמז צח), אלא דהיא הנותנת דדוקא משום שהיה מרוחק כל כך לכן כששמע אח"כ 'עתה ידעתי' (בראשית כב, יט) זכה לברכות פי כמה, 'ברך אברכך' 'והרבה ארבה' 'וירש ורעך' 'והתברכו בזרעך' וכו' (שם יב, יז-יח).

ולפי הנ"ל גם כאן י"ל דלכן בא כאן כסיפור יציאת מצרים דוקא הכינוי 'המקום' משום דבמצרים היה הרחקת השם עד כדי כך ש'ולא שמעו אל משה' (שמות ו, ט) כשהביא לשונות של גאולה, ומ"מ אותו הריחוק הביא אותם עד מדרגת 'הללו עבדי השם ולא עבדי פרעה' (מגילה יד.).

ומצאנו שני פעמים שאנו משתמשים בכינוי 'המקום'. ראשית בניחום אבלים שאומרים לאבל 'המקום' ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבילי ציון וירושלים. והיינו ג"כ כנ"ל דבא לרמז דכשמת הקרוב של האבל והוא חושב שהשם יתברך עשה לו אסון ונתרחק ממנו. ידע דגם זה ההרחקה יש לו להאמין כי יבוא עי"ז לקרבות ויבין למפרע דעשה לו הקב"ה הרחקה כדי שיתקרב. והפעם השנית הוא, ביום שני וחמישי כשקוראים את התורה אומרים אחרי זה, 'אחינו כל בית ישראל הנתונים בצרה ובשביה העומדים

Yisa Beracha Haggadah
R' Yosef Shalom Elyashiv



Four sons represent four successive spiritually diminishing generations

כְּנֵגֵד אַרְבַּעַת בְּנֵי דְבָרָה תוֹרָה

לפני שני דורות רבקה העזיבה בחנוך, ורבים מבני הנער נטשו מסרת אבות במדה כזו או אחרת. רבנו, בשעורו ב"תפארת בחורים", נשא קינה על מצב הדור ואמר (דברי אגדה, חפט): "כְּנֵגֵד אַרְבַּעַת בְּנֵי דְבָרָה תוֹרָה", ארבעה דורות המה, המתרחקים והולכים –

האב הזקן שומר תורה ומצוות ונדבק במורשת האבות, זהיר בקלה וחסירה. והבן כבר "חכם". אינו הולך בדרך אביו כמוהו מאליהו, אלא מציג שאלות: "מה העדות והחקים והמשפטים", חוקר ותוהה, ואינו בטוח שיתפסק בהסברו של האב...

צביון ביתו של ה"חכם" הזה כבר שונה משל אביו, ובנו קולט את רוח ההתרחקות וריח הזלזול, והוא כבר "רשע". בוטה יותר, ושואל: "מה העבדה הזאת לכם". אם לנטש, אז עד הסוף. וכך אמנם עושה הוא, ובונה בית חף מקל סממן יהדות.

כאשר בנו מגיע פעם אל הסב הזקן, תמה הוא ושאל שאלת "תם": "מה זאת?! מעולם לא ראיתי מנהגים משונים אלו, ולב הסבא מתפלץ.

והזמן עושה את שלו, הסב הזקן נפטר מן העולם. וכשנולד לבן ה"תם" ילד, כבר אין לו מה לראות שיעוררו לשאל. הנה פי כן, הגיע דור "שאינו יודע לשאל"...



Kol Menachem Haggadah
R' Menachem Mendel Schneerson



צֵא וּלְמַד מִה בְּקֶשׁ לְבֶן הָאֲרָמִי לַעֲשׂוֹת לִיעֶקֶב אָבִינוּ — *Go out and learn what Lavan the Aramean sought to do to Ya'akov our Patriarch.*

Like every Torah text, the precise choice of phrase here hints to powerful lessons in our daily lives. A problem that affects some people is an inability to absorb new ideas because their current outlook is too rigid. Having "lived life" and gone through a variety of experiences, it is only natural for a person to make certain presumptions about human nature and morality, about what is "normal" and acceptable.

Any new insight which challenges this firmly established outlook is intuitively rejected. The person finds it difficult to relate to ideas that do not sit well with his preconceived notions, which, as years pass by, are gradually carved in stone.

So the Haggadah teaches us: "Go out and learn." If you want to learn and be open to new ideas you first need to "go out" of your limited viewpoint of life. Cast away your preconceptions and you will find that your mind becomes greatly enriched.

(Based on Sefer ha-Sichos 5704, p. 91)

וְאִפְּלוּ כָּלֵנוּ חֲכָמִים — Even if we were all men of wisdom, etc.

At first glance, this statement is hard to comprehend. The requirement to discuss the Exodus on the night of the 15th of Nissan is a Biblical commandment, so why would one imagine that scholars would be exempt? Even if they *know* the story already, Biblical law requires them to *relate* it verbally on that night.

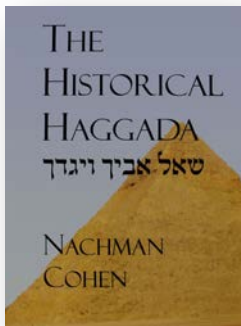
Most of us are willing, at some point or another, to engage in behavior that violates our beliefs and convictions. This weakness, of course, is the cause of all sinful behavior. We *know* what the upright and moral thing is, but *doing it* is another story. The Sages referred to this general phenomenon of cognitive dissonance as “Egypt,” *Mitzrayim*, since it represents a constriction (*maytzar*) or blockage between the mind (what we ought to do) and the heart (what we are excited and motivated to do).

How do we “leave Egypt” and ensure a consistency between mind and heart? Perhaps the answer is to have a crystal-clear understanding of our principles. Maybe our hearts sway from what is right because we do not fully appreciate *why* it is right?

In response, the Haggadah says: “Even if we were all men of wisdom, people of understanding, and knowledgeable in the Torah, we would still be obligated to tell the story of the Exodus from Egypt.” Even if our minds appreciated the ethics of the Torah perfectly, a certain blockage (*maytzar*) between the mind and heart would remain. Even if we were so wise that we were careful never to sin, our *Mitzvos* would still be somewhat half-hearted, because *understanding* does not necessarily engender *excitement*.

The only way to truly “leave Egypt,” to bridge the chasm between mind and heart, is through a *suprarational* commitment to the Torah. So long as observance is contingent on our own intellectual appreciation of Judaism, only so much enthusiasm will percolate through into the heart. But when we act out of dedication to a Higher Authority, then our passion to do the right thing will be insatiable.

(Based on *Sichah* of 2nd night of Pesach 5721; *Ma'amar* s.v. *Kimay Tzayscha* 5719)



The Historical Haggadah
R' Nachman Cohen

The Ten Plagues

Tanna'im divide the plagues into groupings. An anonymous *tanna* separates the plagues into pairs:

- Two *makkot* were performed through יד חזקה (mighty hand).
- Two *makkot* through זרוע נטויה (outstretched arm).
- Two *makkot* were performed through מורא גדול (awe).
- Two *makkot* were performed through אותות (signs).
- Two *makkot* were performed through מופתים (wonders).

R. Yehuda divides the plagues into triplets:

Blood, frogs, and lice	דם, צפרדע, כינים.
Wild beasts, plague, and boils	ערוב, דבר, שחין.
Hail, locusts, darkness, and first-born	ברד, ארבה, חושך, מכת בכורות.

Why divide the *makkot*?

What is the point of grouping the *makkot* at all, and what is the difference in the vantage points of the *tanna'im* which impels each *tanna* to insist on his division?

The identity of the anonymous *tanna* who disagrees with R. Yehuda is not revealed in the *Haggada*. I suspect it is R. Nechemia. To begin with, R. Yehuda and R. Nechemia, both of whom are among the seven disciples of R. Akiva whom he cultivated after the loss of his 24,000 students, argue in *aggadic* matters more than two hundred times. (It is interesting to note that while the other seven disciples — R.

Yehuda, R. Meir, R. Yosi, R. Shimon, R. Eliezer b. R. Shimon, R. Yosi haGalili, and R. Yochanan haSandlar — dispute with many of the others, R. Nechemia argues only with R. Yehuda.⁴⁶⁾

A second reason for my belief that the anonymous *tanna* is R. Nechemia is that his interpretation of *a'rov* lends itself to dividing the *makkot* into couplets. He and R. Yehuda dispute the meaning of *a'rov*. R. Yehuda maintains that *a'rov* are wild beasts. R. Nechemia maintains that they are hornets and gnats. According to R. Yehuda's interpretation there is no connection between the third and fourth *makkot*, that is, between lice and wild animals. According to R. Nechemia, there is a very definite connection between lice, hornets and gnats — they are all insects.

Thus, according to R. Nechemia there is a connection between the couplets: blood and frogs, lice and hornets, pestilence and boils, hail and locusts, darkness and the killing of the first-born. According to R. Yehuda, there is a connection between the triplets: blood, frogs and lice; wild animals, pestilence and boils; hail, locusts, darkness and the killing of the first born. To understand the basis of the dispute, it is necessary to explain the perspectives of R. Yehuda and R. Nechemia towards the servitude of the Jews in Egypt and the philosophy of the *makkot*.

R. Yehuda maintains that Adam was created quasi-angelic. The dictates of the Torah were revealed to him. Adam transmitted the Torah to his children and subsequently it was passed on to the leaders of each generation. Thus, religion played a very great and serious role in the society.

Nimrod of Babylon and Pharaoh of Egypt, each corrupted the true belief and proclaimed themselves as gods or the “chosen one” of the gods. Thus, when Pharaoh rejected God by saying, “I do not know *HaShem*,” he was saying this as a person steeped in his religious belief. Given this model of Pharaoh and his belief system, **the most important element of each plague was that it served to illustrate to Pharaoh and the Egyptians the supremacy of *HaShem* over their “gods.”**

According to R. Nechemia, on the other hand, mankind was not preoccupied by religious concerns. **Pharaoh's concern was political.** He did not want to free the Jewish slaves because they were important for the running of his economy. **The reason for the plagues was simply to wear down the political will of Pharaoh and the Egyptians.**

Differences between the two perspectives

Length of the *makkot*

It was known by tradition that there was a 30-day interval between the onset of each plague. The *tanna im* argue about the breakdown of this interval.

R. Yehuda maintains that each plague lasted for 7 days and the respite between plagues was 24 days. The plague lasted for seven days to make the religiously significant point that it was *HaShem*, who created the world in seven days,⁴⁷⁾ who initiated the plague. The gods of Egypt were naught.

R. Nechemia maintains that each plague lasted for 24 days with only 7 days of respite. This follows from his supposition that the plagues were meant to wear down the political will of the Egyptians to retain the Jews as slaves.

Blood

R. Yehuda maintains that it was only the water in the Nile which Moshe turned to blood. The purpose of this plague was to specifically target the Nile because the Egyptians believed that this river was a deity. To prove them wrong, it was sufficient to transform *solely* the waters of the Nile into blood.

R. Nechemia maintains that *all of the waters* of Egypt were smitten because the function of the plague was to cause the Egyptians great inconvenience. This could be accomplished maximally only if the entire water supply of Egypt was contaminated.

Darkness

R. Yehuda maintains that the darkness emanated from Above. It was a natural precursor to the revelation of *HaShem* during the plague of the first-born. The “gravitational” pull of the *Shekhina* is so great that it creates a “black hole” about it. R. Nechemia maintains that the Egyptians were smitten with the “darkness of Gehinom.” They were being warned that if they did not free Israel they would suffer the consequences.

The significance of grouping the *makkot*

With this background we can understand the difference in approach between R. Nechemia and R. Yehuda with regard to the division of the *makkot*.

R. Yehuda maintains that the function of the *makkot* was to demonstrate that the “gods” of Egypt were false and irrelevant and that *HaShem* rules the world. To demonstrate that He is the Supreme Ruler, ***HaShem* generated three sets of *makkot* to correspond to the three levels of the physical world. The first set of *makkot* was aimed at items below the surface of the earth. The**

Yisa Beracha Haggadah
R' Yosef Shalom Elyashiv

There are some who live by the philosophy of Dayeinu needing very little but Hashem always goes above and beyond for us.



דַּיְעִינוּ
לֹא יְהוּדִים, אִמֵּר רַבֵּנוּ (דַּבְּרֵי אֲנֹהִי, רַחֵם, יְהוּדִים שֶׁל יִדְעִינוּ".
דַּיְעִנוּ, אֲנֹכִים הֵם: "אֵלֹהֵי קְרַבְנוּ לִפְנֵי הַר סִינַי וְלֹא נָתַן לָנוּ אֶת
הַתּוֹרָה, דַּיְעִנוּ". "אֵלֹהֵי הָאֲכִילֵנוּ אֶת הַמֶּן וְלֹא נָתַן לָנוּ אֶת הַשֶּׁבֶת,
דַּיְעִנוּ". "אֵלֹהֵי הַכִּיָּסוּנוֹ לְאַרְצֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא בָּנָה לָנוּ אֶת בַּיִת הַבְּחִירָה,
דַּיְעִנוּ..."

וְהוֹסִיף (דַּבְּרֵי אֲנֹהִי, תַּח): יְהוּדִים אֵלֶי מִסְתַּפְּקִים בְּמוֹעֵט. "אֵלֹהֵי הוֹצִיאֵנוּ
מִמִּצְרַיִם" לֹאן שְׁלֹא יְהִי, אִם נִקְבַּל אֲשֶׁר תִּפְתָּח לְאַרְצוֹת הַבְּרִיית
אוּ נְחִישָׁב בְּאִיגֻנְדָה, "דַּיְעִנוּ".
"וְלֹא עָשָׂה בָּהֶם שְׁפָטִים", וְלֹא הָיָה קְדוֹשׁ שֶׁם שְׁמִים בְּעוֹלָם
לְדַעַת שְׁשֵׁי מְנוּחָה לְעוֹלָם וּמְשָׁלֵם גְּמוּלָה לְעוֹשֵׁי רָשָׁעָה. "וְלֹא עָשָׂה
בְּאֵלֵי־הֵם" לְהוֹרֹת אִפְסוּתָם לְעֵין כֹּל. "וְלֹא הִרְגֵּ אֶת גְּבוּרֵי־הֵם"
לְהוֹרֹת הַנְּהַגְתָּ מִדָּה כְּגֹדֶר מִדָּה שֶׁהוֹשֵׁפְעִבְדוּ בִּיבְנֵי גְבוּרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל"
(שְׁמוֹת ה', כב), "וְלֹא נָתַן לָנוּ אֶת מְמוֹנָם" לְמַלְא תְּבַטְחֹתוֹ לְאַבְרָהָם
אֲבִינוּ, מַה לָּנוּ לָלוּ - "דַּיְעִנוּ"...

אֲבָל הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא אֵינוֹ אוֹמֵר "דַּיְעִנוּ", אֲלֵא "סוֹכְחָה פְּפוּלָה
וּמְכַפְּלָת לְמַקּוֹם עֲלֵינוּ!"
אֵינוֹ מוֹחֵר עֲבוּרֵנוּ עַל שׁוֹם פָּרַט וְשָׁלֵב, וְכָל אֶחָד מֵהֶם הוּא אֲבוֹן
בּוֹנֵן בִּיְהוּדִיּוּתֵנוּ לְאַרְצֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שֶׁנוֹכַח לְהוֹשִׁיבָנוּ בָּהֶם, וּנְכַבְּהָ לָנוּ
אֶת בַּיִת הַבְּחִירָה לְכַפֵּר עַל כָּל עוֹוֹנוֹתֵינוּ!"

plague of blood attacked the waters of the Nile. Frogs came from the water. Lice emerged from the earth. **The second set of makkot was meant to show HaShem's supremacy over those who walked the earth:** animals (wild beasts and plague) and human beings (boils). **The last set of makkot demonstrated the dominion of HaShem over forces above the earth:** hail, swarms of locusts, and darkness [darkening the atmosphere]. Finally, by smiting the Egyptian first-born, He showed His ultimate dominion over life and death.

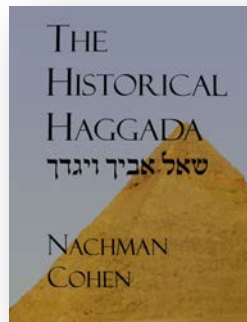
R. Nechemia posits that the purpose of the makkot was to wear down the Egyptians to the point where they would realize that the loss of the Jewish labor force paled in comparison to the difficulties created by their presence. To accomplish this, God brought pairs of makkot, the second more far-reaching than the first, which began as mere nuisances but eventually escalated to severe levels.

The first two makkot — blood and frogs — were mere nuisances. While it is inconvenient to have the water supply contaminated for several weeks, this is not insurmountable. There are many societies which have survived for long periods with tainted water supplies. Frogs are not life-threatening. Yet, their noise pollution is more bothersome than the first plague in that they are an active disturbance, whereas blood is passive. The second set of plagues — **lice and hornets** — while not life-threatening involves bodily attacks. The third set of plagues — pestilence and boils — is more severe because the first involves animal death and the second is progressive in that it compromises the bodily health of the Egyptians. The fourth set of plagues — hail and locusts — create serious challenges to the food supply and the economic life of the land. The fifth set of plagues — darkness [of Gehinom] and death — is the most severe.

This then is what is meant by —

- Two makkot were performed through *yad chazaka* — blood and frogs
- Two makkot through *zero ah netuyah* — lice and hornets
- Two makkot were performed through *moreh gadol* — darkness and death (pestilence and boils)
- Two makkot were performed through *o' tot* — hail and locusts
- Two makkot were performed through *moftim* — darkness and death.

The Historical Haggadah
R' Nachman Cohen



**Asher Ge'alanu: You have redeemed us
and You have redeemed our parents**

The order of praise is puzzling. It should have first said "You have redeemed our parents" and then "You have redeemed us." The same enigma arises with regard to the first blessing of *Shemoneh Esreh* where we first say "*HaShem* is our God" and thereafter we say "and [He was] the God of our forefathers."

Chazal intentionally chose this order in their formulation to emphasize to us our importance. While we owe our being chosen to perform the *avoda* to our forebears, **today we, and not our parents, are the only ones who have the ability to choose to worship *HaShem* and further His purposes.**

This is also the reason that "You redeemed us" precedes "You redeemed our fathers." The redemption of our forefathers is of theoretical significance. Our redemption is of current importance.

The *berakha* thus goes beyond the *ma'amar* which mandates that one must say "even we were redeemed from Egypt." The *berakha* underscores that at present our redemption takes precedence over that of our forefathers.



Shirat Miriam Haggadah
R' Yosef Zvi Rimon



"Hillel... would combine matzah and *maror* in a sandwich and eat them together." Before acting as Hillel did, wrapping matzah and *maror* together, we first ate them separately. Why? Matzah symbolizes freedom while *maror* symbolizes slavery. We reflect separately on the greatness of freedom and the troubles of slavery, and only then can we try to combine the two ideas, wrapping matzah and *maror* together.

Freedom and slavery together brought us to our redemption. We gained certain characteristics because we had been slaves. Slavery in its essence is of course something terrible. However, through our slavery, we received the strength to **accept authority and to be obedient**. This is an important quality to have in our struggle against our passions and lowest urges. A person must know how to accept the authority of wisdom and knowledge, and how to suppress his animalistic urges. The power of slavery and the acceptance of authority is only useful to a person if he combines them with the feeling of freedom and liberty, as symbolized in wrapping matzah and *maror* together.

This principle was clarified by **Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook** (*Olat Re'iyah* on the haggadah, *Korech*, p. 49):

The highest form of freedom, whose glory and beauty is only revealed by wearing the **crown of uplifting slavery**... Therefore, the fullest manifestation of freedom comes when it is **bound together with** (lit.: sandwiched with) **slavery**, for this will enable the person to elicit the self-control befitting a truly free person – **controlling the greatest of forces, freedom**.

Freedom is important, but it can be a gift or a curse. **One must know how to live as a free person**. A person who is free of all constraints, and who can do whatever he wants, is not a truly free person. A free person is one **who can do whatever he wants to, but does only that which his pure soul instructs him to do**. A free person is one who **knows how to control his freedom**.

There is terrible slavery, but there is also "uplifting slavery." The latter refers to **using the strengths of one's body to further the development of one's soul** (see what I wrote on this on pages 453 and 459). The aim of the uplifting slavery is to enable the person to control all his powers and to channel them into the proper path, and primarily to control the greatest of forces – the force of freedom itself! One who is unable to control these powers, who gives free rein to every desire and every feeling, is not a free person but is enslaved by his desires and passions.

Slavery by itself is terrible, and that is why we do not lean when we eat *maror*. However, when slavery is united with the characteristics of freedom, when it complements the freedom of the person, it becomes lofty, and that is why we lean for *korech*. This is the path of true freedom – freedom and liberation while exercising self-control based on an uplifting servitude.

Slavery – the obligation of the free person!

We have explained, based on the words of Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook, that slavery is needed for us to know how to control our freedom in order to be transformed into servants of God.

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik (*Festival of Freedom*, pp. 133-134) explains the meaning of slavery in a different way:

The experience of Egyptian servitude underlies the very morality of the Jew... The fact that in Egypt the Jews were exposed to all kinds of chicanery and humiliation... engendered in the Jewish people sensitivity and tenderness toward their fellow man... Without the experience of slavery, we would have remained unexposed to suffering, emotionally vulgar and insensitive... Thus, only in Egypt could the Jews become an *am* [nation] and a *goy gadol* [great people]... This was necessary not only in order to develop *rahmanus* [merciful compassion]. The Jews had to see and experience evil, tyranny,

ruthlessness—for one cannot hate Satan unless one knows him well and has dealt with him... In pain and despair, we have attained greatness and nationhood. “Like the rose among thorns, so is my beloved among the maidens” (*Song of Songs* 2:2).

Only when a person is confronted by slavery, when he feels what evil truly is, is he able to understand and truly hate evil. Joseph had to be sold to Potiphar in order to recognize human cruelty. Had Jacob and his sons stayed in the Land of Canaan, they and their descendants would not have developed their sensitivity to honesty and fairness. Had we not felt the yoke of slavery, we would not have understood the demand not to afflict the stranger (Rav Soloveitchik, *ibid.*).

“He became there a nation” (*Deuteronomy* 26:5). In Egypt, Israel became a nation, a people. The ability to be transformed from a family into a nation, and to bear all the complexities and struggles of being a nation, requires the ability to recognize the bad and difficult parts of life. One who has never left his protected and safe home and has not seen suffering and pain around him, cannot be a leader. The Nation of Israel was required to become “a kingdom of princes and a holy nation” (*Exodus* 19:6) and to serve as a light to the nations (*Isaiah* 42:6), and, therefore, it was necessary for it to experience the slavery of Egypt, to see and to feel what suffering is and what evil is.

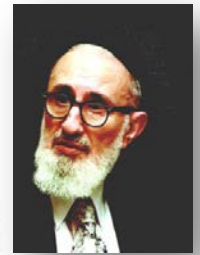
It was this slavery that enabled the Nation of Israel to be a truly free nation: a nation that is able to feel the problems of others, that is merciful, that detests evil and desires to connect with the good. We can all learn from the slavery of our forefathers, though we have been blessed by God with comfortable and safe lives, to strive to live a life of meaning in which we are conscious of the suffering of others.



Seder plate, 1992, china, artist: Ella Weizman
The Wolfson Museum, Hechal Shlomo



An Exalted Evening Haggadah
R' Yosef Dov Soloveitchik



The Torah sets out to teach man how to act. There are two alternatives: either to act like Ahasuerus, or to act the way one would in the presence of God. When one drinks wine in the latter case, the nervous system is stimulated, the sensitivity enhanced, emotions aroused but disciplined. There is a longing for something beautiful and fascinating. Man is under emotional pressure; he wants to release tension. He sings a song to the Almighty: "We do not sanctify except over wine" (*Pesachim* 107a). What does a Jew do on Passover night when he fills his fourth cup? Does he engage in idle, coarse talk? No. He recites the *Hallel*.

הלל

לפני ההלל נוהגים לומר "שפך חמתך" (רמ"א חפ"א, א), ומקורו ב"ן (פסחים ע"ב). משום שארבע כוסות הן כנגד כוסות התרעלה שעתידי הקדוש ברוך הוא להשקות לגוים (ירושלמי פסחים פ"א ה"א). והואיל ומזמור "לא לנו" מדבר מחבלי משיח וגוג ומגוג (פסחים ק"ח ע"ב), לכן אומרים לפניו "שפך חמתך" (באור הגר"א תפ"ז).

ומדברי רבנו (דברי אגדה, תסג) למדנו טעם נוסף להקדמת "שפך חמתך" להלל. שהביא דברי הגמרא (ברכות ט ע"ב): מאה ושלוש פרשיות אמר דוד, ולא אמר "הללויה" עד שראה במפלתם של רשעים. שגאמר (תהלים קד, לה): "יתמו חטאים מן הארץ ורשעים עוד אינם, ברכי נפשי את ה' הללויה".

והענין, שאמרו (סנהדרין ק"א ע"א) שכל זמן שהרשעים בעולם חרון אף בעולם, אבדו רשעים מן העולם נסתלק חרון אף מן העולם. פי הרשעים מתעלמים מבוראם, ומבטם מחלחל והשקפתם מסיתה ומדיחה לתחושת כחי ועצם די ולהתעלמות מהבורא יתברך. וכל זמן שהשקפה זו שולטת אי אפשר לומר "הללויה", כלומר לקרא לכל הבריאה לרגן לבוראה להודות לו ולהללו, כי השקפת הרשעים מונעת וחוסמת את ההלל מלנבצ מעמק הלב, מאחר ויחלחלה אליו תחושת "כחי ועצם די עשו לנו את החיל הזה", ואין הפרת אמת ש"ימין ה' רוממה, ימין ה' עושה חיל".

על כן, רק כאשר "יתמו חטאים מן הארץ ורשעים עוד אינם", רק כאשר "תרוף באף ותשמדים מתחת שמי ה'", רק אז יתרוגן ההלל.

Yisa Beracha Haggadah
R' Elyashiv



It is hard to praise Hashem when seeing the wicked prosper. We first say Shfoch Chamascha and only then can sing Hallel with a full heart.