

צפון

HIDDEN IN THE
HAGGADAH

פסח תשפ"א | PESAH 5781

הדר
HADAR
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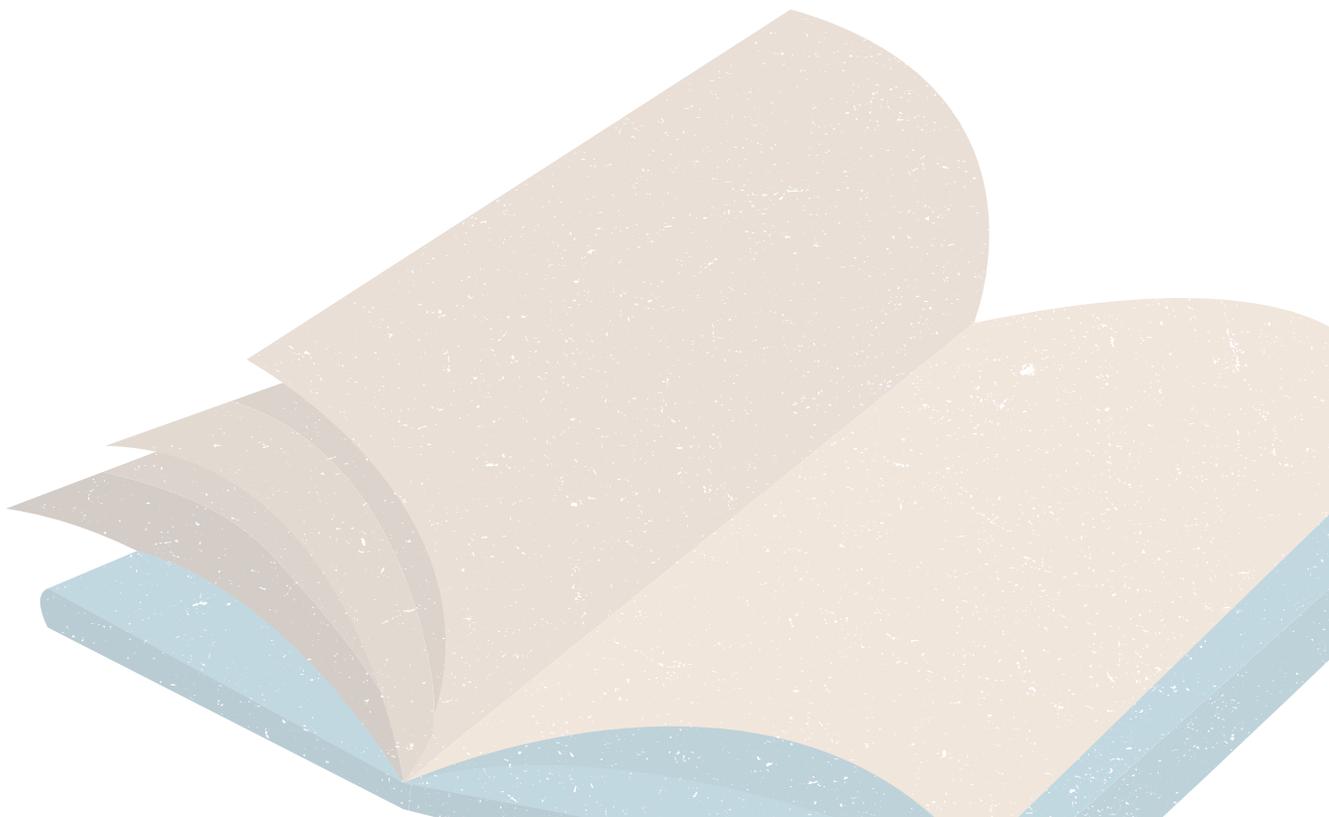
צפון

HIDDEN IN THE HAGGADAH

Nothing tickles the imagination quite like a treasure hunt—an enterprise of intrigue and inquiry, uncovering hidden gems, and discovering riches previously unseen. This year, we invite you to treat the Seder and the Haggadah as just such an adventure—a journey that starts with asking questions and seeking out answers, and culminates with Tzafun, where the hidden things are revealed.

The story of Pesah, like our whole tradition, is replete with hidden gems, and the more we search within it, the more little *afikoman* jewels we will find. Sometimes, these treasures are buried deep beneath the surface; sometimes, they are hiding out in plain sight, just waiting for us to take a closer look. This reader will help us on our quest to examine in a new light the values, characters, and stories of Pesah in order that we might uncover the messages and meaning that are there—whether hiding out in the open or buried beneath the surface—to enrich this holiday and our foundational Jewish narrative.

Hag kasher ve-sameah,
The Hadar Team



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This reader contains words of Torah, so please treat it with appropriate reverence.

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The Hadar Institute

190 Amsterdam Ave, New York, NY 10023

info@hadar.org

646.770.1468

To donate or sponsor future publications, please contact Jeffrey Stein at stein@hadar.org.

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WHO WE ARE



RABBI TALI ADLER

a *musmekhet* of Yeshivat Maharat, has been on faculty at Hadar since 2018. During her time at Yeshivat Maharat, Tali was a Wexner Graduate Fellow and served as the clergy intern at Kehilat Rayim Ahuvim and Harvard Hillel. She received her undergraduate degree from Stern College, where she majored in Political Science and Jewish Studies.

YITZHAK BRONSTEIN

is the Director of Maimonides Moot Court Competition at Hadar, overseeing programming at the high school and collegiate levels. He was a 2019 FASPE (Fellowship at Auschwitz for the Study of Professional Ethics) fellow, traveling to Germany and Poland. Originally from New York, Yitzhak has studied at the University of Chicago Divinity School and Yeshiva University.



RABBI IRVING (YITZ) GREENBERG

serves as the President of the J.J. Greenberg Institute for the Advancement of Jewish Life (JJGI) and as Senior Scholar in Residence at Hadar. Rabbi Greenberg was ordained by Beth Joseph Rabbinical Seminary of Brooklyn, New York and has a PhD in history from Harvard University.

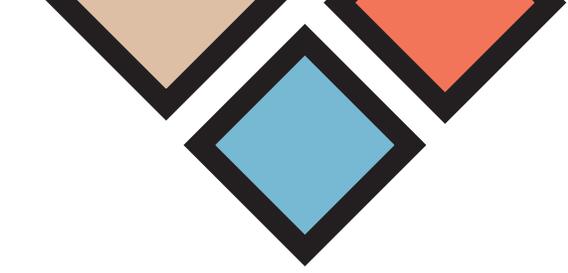
AVIGAYIL HALPERN

is a member of Hadar's Advanced Kollel. She holds a B.A. in Judaic Studies from Yale University, where she completed a senior thesis exploring talmudic narratives of women engaged in Torah discourse and the implications of such stories for feminists committed to the study of Talmud today.



RABBI SHAI HELD

is President, Dean, and Chair in Jewish Thought at Hadar. Previously, he served for six years as Scholar-in-Residence at Kehilat Hadar in New York City, and taught both theology and *halakhah* at the Jewish Theological Seminary. His most recent book, *The Heart of Torah*, a collection of essays on the Torah in two volumes, was published in 2017.



RABBI AVITAL HOCHSTEIN

is President of Hadar in Israel. A research fellow at Mechon Shalom Hartman, she holds a doctorate from Bar Ilan University and graduated from Hebrew University with a BA in Talmud. She is the co-author of *The Place of Women in Midrash* (Yedioth Ahronoth, 2008).



RABBI ELIE KAUNFER

is President and CEO of the Hadar Institute. A graduate of Harvard College, he completed his doctorate in liturgy at the Jewish Theological Seminary, where he was also ordained. A Wexner Graduate Fellow and Dorot Fellow, Elie has been named multiple times to Newsweek's list of the top 50 rabbis in America.



RABBI AVI KILLIP

is Hadar's VP of Strategy and Programs. A graduate of Hebrew College Rabbinical School, Avi also holds Bachelors and Masters from Brandeis University. She was a Wexner Graduate Fellow and a Schusterman Fellow. Avi teaches as part of Hadar's Faculty and is host of the *Responsa Radio* podcast. Avi lives in Riverdale, NY with her husband and three young children.



RABBI AVIVA RICHMAN

is Rosh Yeshiva at Hadar. She was ordained by Rabbi Daniel Landes. She has a doctorate from New York University in Talmud and previously studied in the Pardes Kollel and the Drisha Scholars' Circle.



RABBI AVI STRAUSBERG

is the Director of National Learning Initiatives at Hadar and is based in Washington, DC. Previously, she served as the Director of Congregational Learning of Temple of Aaron in St. Paul, Minnesota. She received her rabbinic ordination from Hebrew College in Boston and is a Wexner Graduate Fellow. She also holds a Masters in Jewish Education.





RABBI ETHAN TUCKER

is President and Rosh Yeshiva at Hadar and Chair in Jewish Law. Ethan was ordained by the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and earned a doctorate in Talmud and Rabbinics from the Jewish Theological Seminary and a B.A. from Harvard College. A Wexner Graduate Fellow, he was a co-founder of Kehilat Hadar. He is the author, along with Rabbi Micha'el Rosenberg, of *Gender Equality and Prayer in Jewish Law* (2017).

DENA WEISS

is Rosh Beit Midrash and Director of Fellowship Programs at Hadar, where she teaches Talmud, Midrash, and Hasidut. Dena earned an M.A. in Theology from Harvard Divinity School and a B.A. in Religious Studies from New York University.



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HIDDEN VALUES



WHAT PESAH CLEANING CAN TEACH US ABOUT BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF RADICAL TRUST

Rabbi Avi Killip



Whom do you trust?

This has been a complicated question this year. In order to function in community with others, we have needed to understand each other's lives down to unprecedented details. Where do you shop? Have you been going into work? Do you take the bus? Do you wear a mask? Who else do you see and how do *they* behave?

This year, we have sought communities of friends who share our values, assumptions, and ways of living. More than ever before, we've restricted our interactions to the people we feel we trust. As a result, trust itself has become more deliberately central to how we form and live in community. On some level, this has always been the case. In his essay, "Pluralism, Integrity, and Community," Rabbi Ethan Tucker defines community as intentional interdependence:

Community means being in a relationship with someone in a way that makes you vulnerable to them, dependent on their interpretations and

decisions. Living in community with someone means sacrificing some degree of autonomy... We form community with others when we allow others' choices and decisions to have consequences for us. We all need groups of people in our lives that we trust. This trust is what allows us to form close community.¹

True community, as Rabbi Tucker says, is always rooted in some form of shared trust.

The talmudic term for a person one can trust is a חֹבֵר/haver. Although this means "friend" in modern Hebrew, it has a different valence in Rabbinic texts. A Rabbinic *haver* is a person one can trust because of shared commitments and assumptions. Being a *haver* means one has formally taken on a commitment to a certain set of rules. Usually, this term applies to trust with regard to a certain level of stricture around ritual purity and tithing. And while scholars continue to debate its precise definition across multiple contexts and time periods,² one thing remains true: having a group of people you know you can trust allows for an

¹ Available [here](#).

² The contradictions between the second chapters of Mishnah and Tosefta Demai still have no clear resolution. See Saul Lieberman's classic treatment, "The Discipline in the So-Called Dead Sea Manual of Discipline," in *Texts and Studies* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1974).

entirely different level of community. *Haverim* have long relied on their shared trust to build strong and functioning societies.

Moreover, having *haverim* is life-giving and paramount for our religious existence. Jewish life and law cannot be practiced without trust. We cannot live in a constant state of doubting and checking each other. At some point, we must find a group of people whose commitments we share and who share ours in return. This is what allows us to eat from each other's kitchens, educate each other's children, and allow ourselves to be dependent on others' interpretations and decisions.

This kind of interdependent community is rooted in personal choices and commitments. Introducing the laws of *haverim*, the second chapter of Mishnah Demai indicates that one's status as a *haver* is a matter of personal autonomy: המקבל עליו להיות חבר / "One who takes it upon themselves to be a *haver*..." (Mishnah Demai 2:3). The Rabbinic society of *haverim* is constituted as an opt-in system. The determination of someone as inside or outside the circle of trust is not based on parentage, background, or appearance. You become a *haver* if you choose to take on the requisite commitments.

Who in your life do you consider a *haver*? With whom do you share this level of trust?

When it comes to trusting the ritual practices of others, Pesah can be a time of heightened concern. There are many Jews who eat in each other's homes throughout the year—but not during this holiday. On Pesah, we are more suspicious, more circumspect. The importance of avoiding *hametz* often leaves us in a posture of extreme caution. We ask: Does that person clean the way I do? Did they switch over all their dishes? What about the glassware? Do they eat *kitniyot*? Suddenly, people we trusted all year are suspect. We feel a natural inclination to shrink the circle of trust around *hametz*.

Surprisingly, the Talmud offers an almost radical view to the contrary. A *sugya* in the first chapter of Massekhet Pesahim (4a-4b) presents a situation where someone rents an apartment starting on the

night of the fourteenth of Nissan, the day the prohibition of *hametz* begins to take effect. Although the owners of the apartment are not around to be asked, the Talmud tells us to assume the house has been cleaned:

תלמוד בבלי פסחים ד.

אמר להו רב נחמן בר יצחק: תניתוה הכל נאמנים על ביעור חמץ.

Talmud Bavli Pesahim 4a

Said Rav Nahman bar Yitzhak to them: We teach it such that all are believed concerning the removal of *hametz*.

Really?! The Talmud asks, מאי טעמא / "Why are they believed?" And we are told:

טבר הכל חברים הם אצל בדיקת חמץ.

He thinks that all are *haverim* with respect to the searching of *hametz*.

This completely controverts the way we often behave around this *mitzvah*. Why is everyone suddenly trusted about the *mitzvah* of searching for *hametz*? What warrants this universal trust?

There are two ways we might understand the statement, "All are *haverim* with respect to the searching of *hametz*." We can understand this talmudic instance of universal trustworthiness as being descriptive. The Talmud may be observing that this *mitzvah* is so universally understood that we can assume everyone is cleaning properly. Maybe it is just a fact that on Pesah, every Jew behaves like a *haver*! Indeed, we do see some evidence of this in modern American Jewish life. Despite being one of the most complicated and demanding *mitzvot*, the Seder remains the most widely practiced Jewish ritual in America today; there is an inexplicable draw to this laborious holiday and challenging ritual. Many Jews who are otherwise unconcerned with the Jewish calendar invest significant time and effort into Pesah preparations.

On the other hand, this call for universal trust may be prescriptive. Perhaps it articulates not an observable reality, but an idealized aspiration—a wish, a vision of how the world is meant to be. Maybe we are being taught that, at least once a year, we need this level



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of trust in order to remain in community together. Redemption—even in ritual form—is only possible when everyone considers each other all-in.

This need for deep trust is a value that extends even beyond reason. After being told to treat everyone like a *haver* with regard to *hametz*, we are taught just how expansive trust of a *haver* is meant to be. We learn that trust between *haverim* can transcend reality:

דתניא: חבר שמת והניח מגורה מליאה פירות - אפי' הן בני יומן - הרי הן בחזקת מתוקנים.

For it was taught: If a haver dies and leaves a storehouse full of produce, even if they are but one day old, they are presumed to have been tithed.

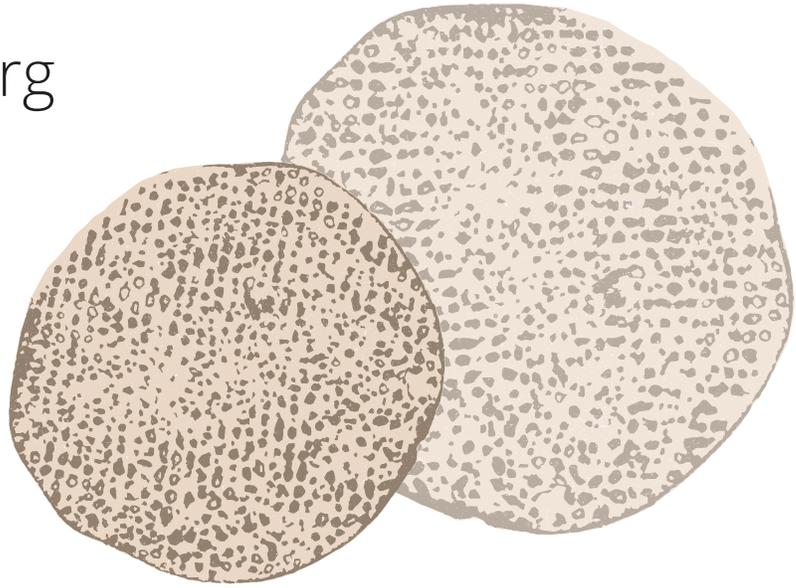
There is no almost no possibility that this person had time to tithe an entire store-house of produce on their last day on earth—and yet we consider the food tithed. There is no room for suspicion; we refuse to be skeptical. The blanket trust we have in a *haver* is even more powerful than reason—it becomes metaphysical. We trust in the *haver* even when that requires believing the impossible.

This is a level of trust that we usually reserve only for our closest friends and family. We all benefit from having small inner circles of people in whom we put unflinching trust. But the search for *hametz* pushes us beyond this small group. On Pesah, broadening our focus to the entire people allows us to become one community. On Pesah, we are all *haverim*. Each year, the holiday of redemption offers us the opportunity to trust, and through this trust we can build real community. ♦



THE BREAD OF FREEDOM

Rabbi Yitz Greenberg



Matzah is the hard bread that Israelites initially ate in the desert because they plunged into liberty without delaying, “since they were driven out of Egypt and could not delay; nor had they prepared provisions for themselves” (Exodus 12:39). However, *matzah* carries a more complex message than “Freedom now!” Made only of flour and water—with no shortening, yeast, or enriching ingredients—*matzah* recreates the hard “bread of affliction” (Deuteronomy 16:3) and meager food given to the Hebrews in Egypt by their exploitative masters. Like the bitter herbs eaten at the Seder, it represents the degradation and suffering of the Israelites.

Matzah is, therefore, both the bread of freedom and the erstwhile bread of slavery. It is not unusual for ex-slaves to invert the very symbols of slavery to express their rejection of the masters’ values. But there is a deeper meaning in the double-edged symbolism of *matzah*. It would have been easy to set up a stark dichotomy: *Matzah* is the bread of the Exodus way, the bread of freedom; *hametz* is the bread eaten in the house of bondage, in Egypt. Or vice versa: *Matzah* is the hard ration, slave food; *hametz* is the rich, soft food to which free people treat themselves. That either/or would be too simplistic. Freedom is in the psyche, not in the bread.

Halakhah underscores the identity of *hametz* and *matzah* with the legal requirement that *matzah* can be

made only out of grains that can become *hametz*—that is, those grains that ferment if mixed with water and allowed to stand. How the human prepares the dough is what decides whether it becomes *hametz* or *matzah*. How you view the *matzah* is what decides whether it is the bread of liberty or of servitude.

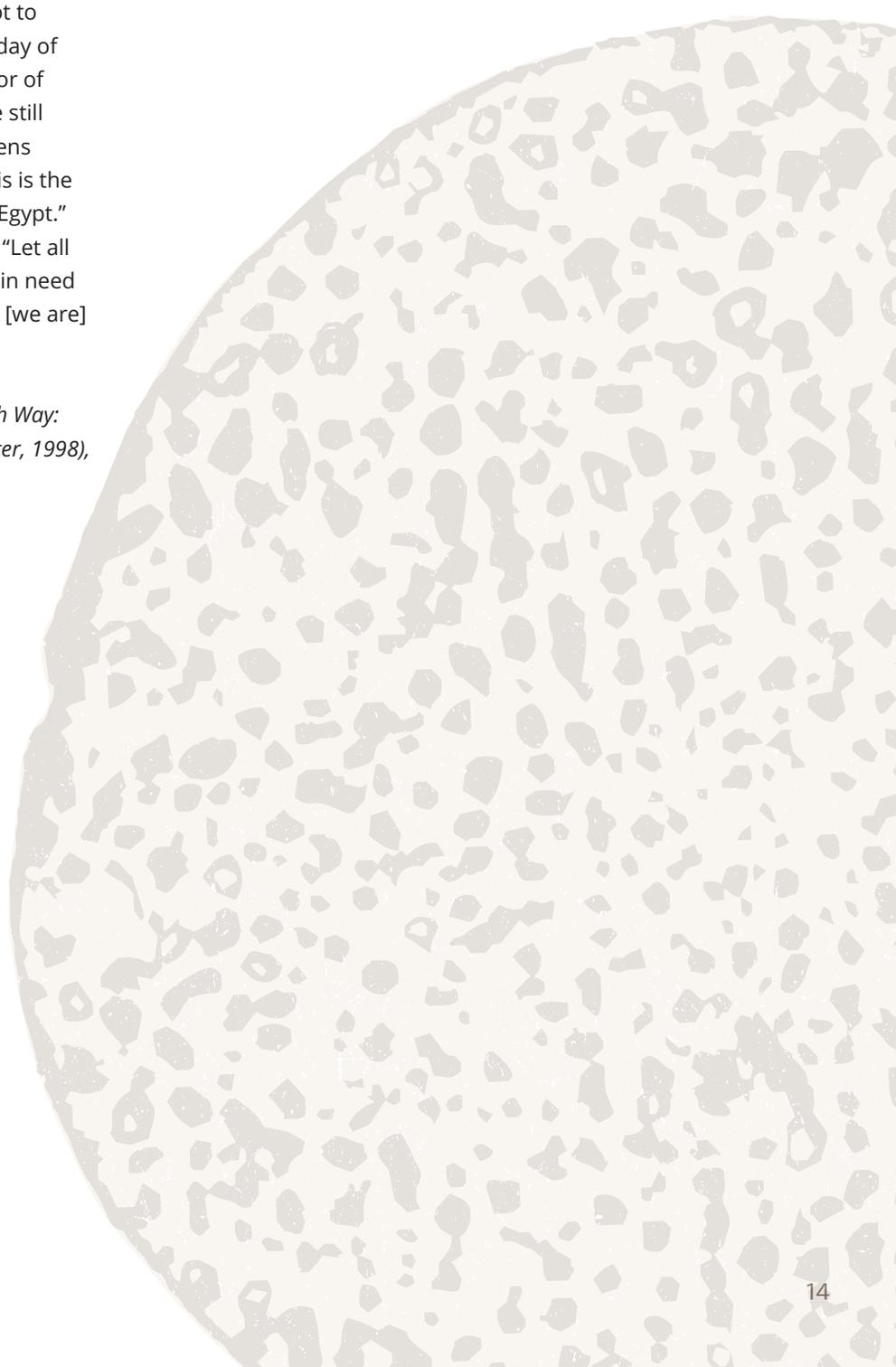
The point is subtle but essential. To be fully realized, an Exodus must include an inner voyage, not just a march on the road out of Egypt. The difference between slavery and freedom is not that slaves endure hard conditions while free people enjoy ease. The bread remained equally hard in both states, but the psychology of the Israelites shifted totally. When the hard crust was given to them by tyrannical masters, the *matzah* they ate in passivity was the bread of slavery. But when the Israelites willingly went from green, fertile deltas into the desert because they were determined to be free, when they refused to delay freedom and opted to eat unleavened bread rather than wait for it to rise, the hard crust became the bread of freedom. Out of fear and lack of responsibility, the slave accommodates to ill treatment. Out of dignity and determination to live free, the individual will shoulder any burden.

Rabbi Levi Yitzhak of Berditchev, whose analyses always portrayed the people of Israel in a favorable light, insisted that the willingness of the Israelites to enter the desert with hard bread continues to evoke

God's love. Levi Yitzhak asked: Why does the Torah continually call Pesah "*hag ha-matzot*," the feast of unleavened bread, when the Jews call it "*hag ha-pesah*," the feast of Passover? Because as lovers, they stress each other's goodness. Israel praises God who passed over the homes of the Jews when destroying Egypt. God praises the Jews who went so trustingly out of the fertile plain of Egypt into a barren desert with meager food.

Tradition specifically requires eating unleavened bread on the first two nights of Pesah; during the rest of the holiday, the only requirement is not to eat *hametz*. Eating hard bread during the holiday of liberation stimulates appreciation for the flavor of freedom and summons up empathy for those still in need. At the Seder, the Exodus retelling opens with the Aramaic phrase, "*Ha lahma anya* / This is the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate in Egypt." The moral consequence follows immediately: "Let all who are hungry enter and eat; let all who are in need come and join in the Pesah with us. This year, [we are] slaves. Next year, [may the slaves be] free." ♦

Adapted from Rabbi Irving Greenberg, The Jewish Way: Living the Holidays (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998), pp. 46-48.



FINDING OUR SONG IN AN UNREDEEMED WORLD:

Three Troubled Origins of Hallel

Rabbi Aviva Richman

Imagine being shut up in your home as destruction rages beyond your doorstep. There is a plague. There is confusion. A nation is being torn apart. Unfortunately, this scene of Pesah eve in Egypt resonates all too close to home this year. And in our context, where the plague hits our own communities, friends, and family, the idea of marking this time through song and celebration may seem particularly hard.

Yet, in Rabbinic teachings, this moment gives rise to a song that somehow manages to emerge in the midst of great tumult. According to one strand in our tradition, this is *the* original moment of our people's song, of Hallel. We will explore this tradition, alongside other competing views of the origins of Hallel, hoping to find what these various moments teach us about the possibility—and difficulty—of finding the power of our voice within the chaos of our world.

Going chronologically through the Torah, it seems clear that the first time our people sang a song together was at the Reed Sea, as it says, "Moses and Israel sang this song" (Exodus 15:1). But our rabbis know of ten songs that punctuate the entire arc of Jewish history—past, present, and future—and the first is *not* the Song of the Sea! This *midrash* evokes the vivid imagery of Isaiah to paint the scene of an earlier song we sang while still in the midst of Egypt:

**מכילתא דרבי ישמעאל בשלח, מסכתא דשירה
פרשה א**

...הראשונה שנאמרה במצרים שנ' "השיר יהיה לכם
כליל התקדש חג" וגו' (ישעיה ל:כט).

**Mekhilta de-Rabbi Yishmael Be-Shallah,
Massekhta de-Shirah Parashah 1**

...the first was recited in Egypt, as it says "For you, there shall be singing, as on a night when a festival is hallowed" (Isaiah 30:29).

As this section of Isaiah describes the wrath and punishment God will wreak on nations in an apocalyptic vision, this verse turns the spotlight to Israel, describing how they will be singing, as if on the eve of a holiday, even as tumult surrounds them. The *midrash* takes this generic holiday eve to be Pesah eve, since that is the only holiday in the Torah celebrated specifically at night. Through this association, the *midrash* surprisingly locates our first moment of song within the depths of Egypt before redemption—where the Torah itself records no song—rather than at the more obvious Song of the Sea.

What song did Israel sing that night in Egypt? What song can be sung in such a context? Our rabbis point to Hallel, Psalms 113-118. In the Talmud, our rabbis connect Hallel—the song (שיר) we recite on all



festivals (חג)—to this same verse in Isaiah (Talmud Bavli Pesahim 95b). Our own recitation of Hallel over the Seder meal is meant to connect back to that first song we sang as a people on this very evening. Our first song stems not from a moment of clear triumph, but from hope in an unredeemed state that Pesah eve in Egypt represents.

A closer look, however, reveals that there is nothing straightforward about singing the songs of Hallel on Pesah eve. How can we possibly sing songs of exaltation and joy when we were still stuck in Egypt and hadn't yet been redeemed? Beit Shammai expresses this view, saying that we should truncate the extent to which we recite Hallel over the second cup of wine at the Seder:

תוספתא פסחים י:ט

עד היכן הוא אומר?
בית שמיי אומרים עד אם הבנים שמחה ובית הלל
אומרים עד חלמיש למעינו מים.
וחותם בגאולה
אמרו בית שמיי לבית הלל: וכי כבר יצא
שמזכירין יציאת מצרים?

Tosefta Pesahim 10:9

How much [of Hallel] does [the leader] say [on the second cup of wine]?

Beit Shammai says: Until the end of Psalm 113 (“a joyful mother of children”).

But Beit Hillel says: Until the end of Psalm 114 (“the flint into a fountain of waters”).

And [the leader] closes with [a blessing for] redemption.

Beit Shammai said to Beit Hillel: Had they left yet, so that we should mention the Exodus from Egypt?

Beit Shammai's position allows for just the tiniest taste of Hallel—the very first paragraph of the full liturgy (Psalm 113)—for this moment when we are stuck inside our homes in the depths of Egypt but can just start to taste redemption. In their view, we reenact the Exodus at the Seder each year, and at this point, we just haven't come far enough into redemption to sing anything more. How can we go on to recite, “When Israel left Egypt” (Psalm 114) when we have not actually left Egypt yet? Imagining ourselves as Israel sitting in their homes waiting for the actual redemption to occur, we sing about a new orientation: being servants of God rather than Pharaoh. We sing about God as

more mighty than any nation after so many plagues. But for all we know, the Exodus might not happen. We are still stuck in Egypt and cannot possibly sing about leaving. Beit Shammai points to the limits of songful celebration when we are so keenly aware of our unredeemed state.

When Beit Hillel responds that we go on to sing of the Exodus itself in the next chapter of Psalms, “When Israel left Egypt,” there is more than a paragraph at stake. Beit Hillel offers us an entirely different picture of our mindset on Pesah eve. Yes, in that moment we are reliving the experience of being stuck in our homes in the depths of Egypt, but we still sing about leaving. This could be a song of hindsight—generations later, we know the Exodus will happen, and it is being on the other side of “history” that allows us to recite these words. But this could also be a song of vision. In our reenactment of Pesah eve, we imagine we are Israelites still stuck in Egypt but singing of leaving nonetheless. The song of the sanctification of the festival, according to Beit Hillel's approach, is the song that can picture a stage of redemption beyond the current limits of reality.

In the text, Beit Hillel offers this retort to Beit Shammai's truncated Hallel:

אמרו להם בית הלל: אפילו הוא ממתין עד קרות הגבד
הרי אילו לא יצאו עד שש שעות ביום! היאך אומר את
הגאולה ועדין לא נגאלו!?

Beit Hillel said to them: It wouldn't even be enough to wait until the rooster crows—they didn't really leave until the sixth hour of the day! How can one say the blessing for redemption if they hadn't yet been redeemed?

Beit Hillel points out the absurdity of Beit Shammai's position—we would be sitting at the table for far too long if we waited for the full redemption to kick in. And in truth, even Beit Shammai concedes to a Seder structure where we adopt the mindset of redemption earlier than it would have occurred; there is no argument about reciting the *blessing* for redemption over the second cup of wine, even as they debate how much of Hallel to sing. While Beit Shammai wants to leave some sense of stopping short before mentioning our steps out of Egypt, Beit Hillel urges us to sing about those steps even when we go back to the scene

of Pesah in Egypt, when our feet were firmly locked in place, stuck inside while the chaos of the Destroyer reigned beyond our doorstep.

A different midrashic tradition offers what may appear as a much more logical origin story of our people's first eruption into song:

תלמוד בבלי פסחים קיז.

ההלל זה מי אמרו?

רבי יוסי אומר: אלעזר בני אומר, משה וישראל אמרוהו בשעה שעלו מן הים...

Talmud Bavli Pesahim 117a

...This Hallel, who said it?

Rabbi Yose says: Elazar my son says, "Moshe and Israel said it when they came up from the sea..."

This passage offers a more obvious scene for the first Hallel Israel sings: on the banks of the Reed Sea, after we have come out safely. In a plain reading of the Torah, this is clearly the first moment we arrive into redemption fully enough to sing. On a conceptual

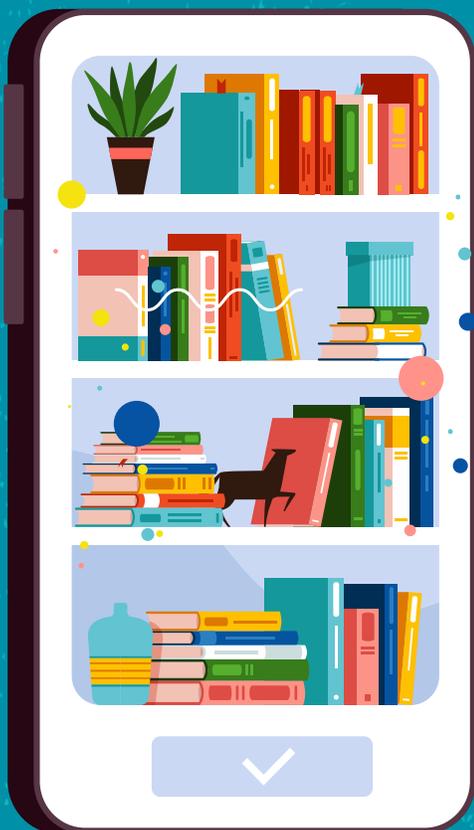
level, one might imagine Beit Shammai's allowance of the first paragraph of Hallel at the Seder as actually culminating in this moment of complete redemption after crossing the sea. Played out to its theoretical extreme, Beit Shammai's approach would only imagine singing Hallel fully when we reach this stage of redemption on the seventh day of Pesah.

There is another, perhaps more neutral, story of the origin of Hallel. Perhaps Hallel simply originates with the poetic pen of David, along with the rest of Psalms, as Rabbi Yose continues:

וחלוקין עליו חביריו לומר שדוד אמרו.

"But [Rabbi Elazar's] colleagues disagree with him and say that David said it [Halle]."

In weighing these two possibilities—that Hallel originated at the crossing of the sea or through David's poetic creativity generations later—Rabbi Yose suggests that David's time was not right for the emergence of this celebratory song:



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ונראין דבריו מדבריהו... פסלו של מיכה עומד בבני,
וישראל אומרים את ההלל.

“But I [Rabbi Yose] prefer [my son’s] opinion to theirs... the idol of Micah was standing in tears, and Israel would recite Hallel?”

David’s context was too tainted for Hallel to originate then. The idol created in Micah’s time was set up in the tabernacle.¹ How could we have sung triumphantly about God’s redemption, and the downfall of idols (“Let the [idol crafters] be like [the idols]!” in Psalm 115), when our own people had created an idol, and it stood at our sacred site? Here, we have another glimpse into what can dampen our ability to offer songs of praise. Our capacity to sing of redemption is not only muted by the fact of incomplete redemption and still living under oppressors. Our song can also be curtailed by the fact of living in a world where we have failed or sinned. The idol of Micah represents a reality where toxic and dangerous beliefs reign, even in our own communities.

In these three potential Rabbinic origins for our people’s song—Pesah eve in Egypt, emerging out of the Reed Sea, and David’s composition of Psalms—the crossing of the sea clearly stands apart. It is one sliver of time when redemption reached its peak, and it appears to be the best option for the origin of Hallel. On either side of it, we can’t sing of redemption in any full-throated way; we are either still suffering from the hands of oppressors or suffering from our own mistakes and failures.

The truth is, however, that the crossing of the sea is also not an untainted origin for Hallel. Where the biblical text clearly points to this as the moment for celebratory song, a later *midrash* questions whether it was appropriate to sing at all. When the angels try to sing their daily song to God the day the sea split, God rebukes them. “My creations are drowning in the sea—and you are going to sing to me?” (Talmud Bavli Megillah 10b). This song is also tainted—not because the redemption is incomplete, but because

the fullness of our own redemption is accompanied by too great a loss. Lest we think the sensitivity to the death of others is something only angels need to be concerned about, while we mere mortals can comfortably sink into our own experience of relief and redemption as our enemies suffer, the charge to the angels finds its way into our own practice as well. The *Shibbolei ha-Leket*² offers this *midrash* as the reason we say a truncated Hallel on the last six days of Pesah, the days where we commemorate the miracle of crossing the sea. We too, like the angels, must mute our Hallel when the devastation around us looms too large. Even the climactic moment of crossing the sea is not an entirely obvious time for a full redemption song.

This year, the images of that first Pesah and Isaiah’s vision are likely more resonant than usual—reaching for the song within us when we feel very stuck in our homes, as destruction rages around us. As we sing a redemption song that may feel particularly out of sync with a world that feels quite unredeemed—because of plague, because of so many lives lost, and because of human failures—let’s remember that this moment is actually how redemption starts. What is this song of ours, the song of the night that marks our first holiday, our first sacred time as a people? We sing that song that grows out of our awareness of the vast work that lies ahead, singing in company (whether physical or emotional) with the partners who will share this work with us. This taste of Hallel at night makes no pretense that redemption is complete or untainted. We know our redemption song is intertwined with the heaviness of unfinished work, loss, and acute awareness of our limitations and failures. But Hallel at night is the song of clear-sighted vision, even in the murkiest of times.

Even if this year, we have felt very stuck, on this night, we sing a song that will ultimately fuel our march out of Egypt. ♦

1 See Judges 17.

2 A halakhic work from 13th century Italy, see *Shibbolei ha-Leket*, Rosh Hodesh, part 174 / אין... אבל בפסח אין / אבא אמר בנפול אויבך אל תשמח לפי שנבעו בו המצריים אנו גומרים את ההלל אלא יום ראשון ולילו ולמה שמואל בן אבא אמר בנפול אויבך אל תשמח לפי שנבעו בו המצריים.



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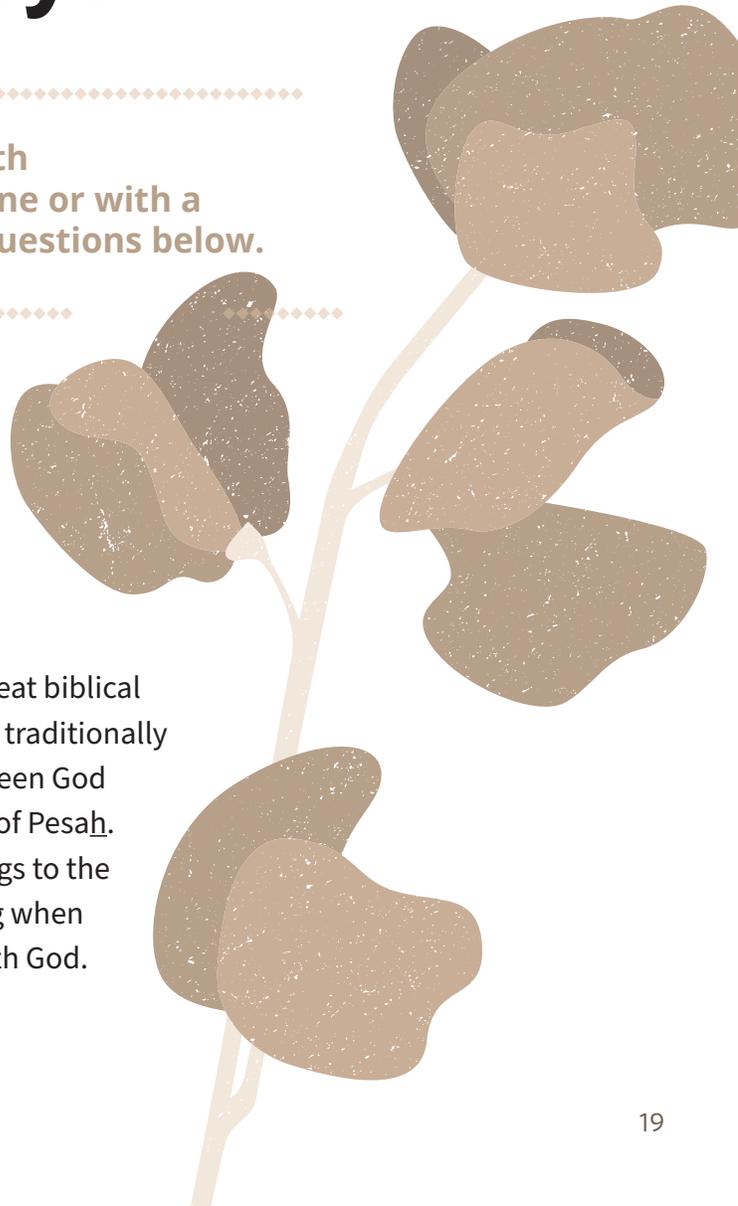
"I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys"

.....

This is a sample of a Project Zug course with Rabbi Aviva Richman. Explore this text alone or with a *havruta* (study partner) using the guided questions below.

.....

PEOPLE LOVE TO TELL AND RETELL THE STORY OF how they fell in love, relishing in the highlights, the pivotal moments, and even the challenges and obstacles that stood in the way. In some respects, the Exodus is a love story, too—the tale of the burgeoning relationship between God and Israel. For this reason, it is fitting that the Song of Songs (Shir Ha-Shirim), the great biblical love poem from the perspective of heterosexual lovers, traditionally understood allegorically as a story about the love between God and Israel, is customarily read publicly on the Shabbat of Pesah. The *midrash* below further links the text of Song of Songs to the Exodus and highlights two great moments representing when God “fell in love” with us, and when we “fell in love” with God.



SOURCE 1: THE VERSES

These verses form the basis for the *midrash* below. Take a look at them first in their own right before seeing how the *midrash* treats them.

SOURCE #1 ס

שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים ב:א-ג	Song of Songs 2:1-3
אֲנִי חֲבַצְלֵת הַשָּׁרוֹן שׁוֹשַׁנֹּת הָעֲמָקִים:	I am a rose of Sharon, A lily of the valleys.
כְּשׁוֹשַׁנָּה בֵּין הַחוֹחִים כֵּן רַעֲיָתִי בֵּין הַבָּנוֹת:	Like a lily among thorns, So is my darling among the maidens.
כְּתַפּוּחַ בְּעֵצֵי הַיַּעַר כֵּן דּוּדֵי בֵּין הַבָּנִים	Like an apple tree among trees of the forest, So is my beloved among the youths.
בְּצֵלוֹ חִמְדָּתִי וְיִשְׁבֹּתִי וּפְרִיָּו מְתוֹק לְחִכִּי:	I delight to sit in his shade, And his fruit is sweet to my mouth.

Questions from Rabbi Aviva Richman

1. This passage has two voices, one male and one female. Here, the male lover describes his “darling” as “a lily among thorns,” while the female lover describes her “beloved” as “an apple tree among trees of the forest.” Reflect on these metaphors. *What sort of relationship do they conjure for you? What is the nature of each voice’s love for the other?*
2. While verse 2 is clearly the male voice (referring to his love being “... among the maidens [banot]”) and verse 3 is clearly the female voice (referring to her love being “... among the youths [banim]”), verse 1 is somewhat ambiguous. *Which do you think is represented in verse 1? How would it change your reading of the exchange to switch the character?*
3. In the allegorical reading of this book, the male speaker is God and the female speaker is Israel. Try to extrapolate from the description of the earthly relationship to a heavenly one between us and God. *What do these images tell us about the kind of relationship God has with us? What do they tell us about the kind of relationship we have with God?*
4. *Can you identify the characters in the verses with aspects of the divine-human relationship? E.g., who are the “maidens” in the allegorical reading? What is the “tree?” What are the “fruits?”*

SOURCE 2: THE MIDRASH

Our *midrash* (from *Shir Ha-Shirim Rabbah*, an early midrashic collection anchored around the biblical book) atomizes the phrase “I am a rose of Sharon” (חבצלת השרון) in different ways, each evoking different linguistic resonances.

Tackle each of these two sections of the *midrash* one by one. Afterwards, take stock of the larger picture.

SOURCE #2

שיר השירים רבה ב:א

אני חבצלת השרון, אמרה בנסת
 ישראל אני היא וחביבה אני,
 אני שחבבני הקדוש ברוך הוא
 משבעים אמות. חבצלת השרון,
 שעשיתי לו צל על ידי בצלאל,
 דכתיב (שמות לו, א): ויעש בצלאל
 את הארון. השרון, שאמרתי לפניו
 שירה על ידי משה, דכתיב (שמות
 טו, א): אז ישיר משה ובני ישראל.

Shir Ha-Shirim Rabbah 2:1

“I am a rose (*havatzelet*) of Sharon, a lily of the valleys.” The assembly of Israel said: I am she, and beloved (*havivah*) am I; I am she whom the Holy Blessed One loved out of seventy nations. “A rose (*havatzelet*) of Sharon”—because I made for him a shadow (*tzeil*) by the hand of Bezalel, as it is written: “And Bezalel made the ark” (Exodus 37:1). “Sharon”—because I said before Him a song (*shirah*) by the hand of Moses, as it is written: “Then sang (*yashir*) Moses and the children of Israel” (Exodus 15:1).

Questions from Rabbi Aviva Richman

1. In what ways is the ark a “shadow” (from God’s perspective)?
2. Why do you think the ark of the covenant is such a core aspect of our relationship with God?
3. What makes a song such a potent expression of love?
4. The splitting of the Reed Sea is perhaps the archetypal act of God’s saving the Israelites. What makes this such an apt time for song? For love?

SOURCE #3

שיר השירים רבה ב:א

דבר אחר, אני חבצלת השרון,
 אני היא וחביבה אני, אני היא
 שהייתי חבויה בצלן של מצרים,

Shir Ha-Shirim Rabbah 2:1

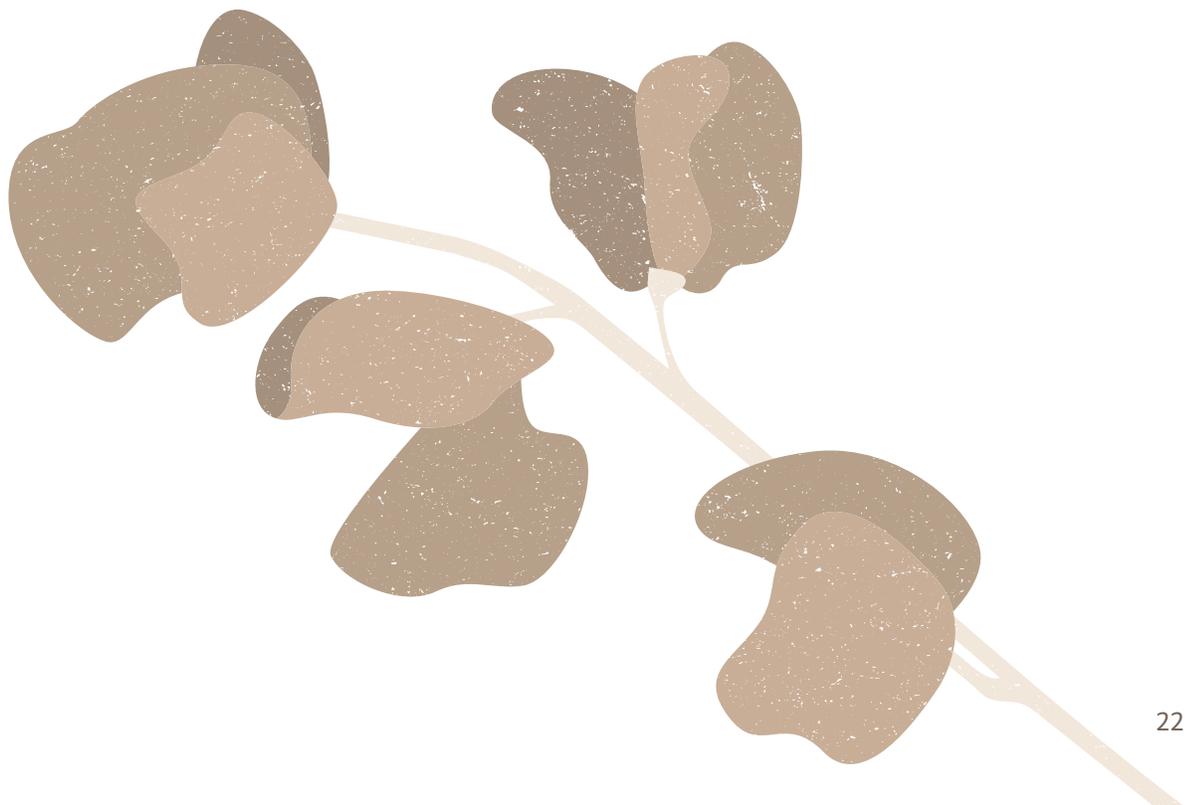
Another interpretation: “I am a rose (*havatzelet*) of Sharon, a lily of the valleys.” I am she, and beloved (*havivah*) am I; I am she who was beloved in the

וּלְשַׁעָה קָלָה בְּנִסְגֵי הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ
 הוּא לְרַעְמָסִס, וְהִרְטַבְתִּי מְעֻשִׁים
 טוֹבִים בְּשׁוֹשָׁנָה, וְאָמַרְתִּי לְפָנָיו אֵת
 הַשִּׁירָה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (יִשְׁעִיָה ל', כֵּט):
 הַשִּׁיר יִהְיֶה לָכֶם בְּלֵיל הַתְּקַדֵּשׁ חָג.

shadow (*tzeil*) of Egypt, and in a short time, the Holy Blessed One gathered me to Ramses, and I bloomed with good deeds like “a lily,” and I said before Him a song (*shirah*), as it is said: “You will have song on the night of the sanctified feast” (Isaiah 30:29).

Questions from Rabbi Aviva Richman

1. This section reminds us that Egypt was originally kind to our ancestors, giving them “shade” during a famine, and describes the Israelites’ time there as being somewhat sheltered. *Do you think it is virtuous or inappropriate to remember this aspect of our history in Egypt on Seder night? Why or why not?*
2. Read through this midrashic lens, celebrating the paschal offering on Seder night itself (even prior to actually leaving Egypt) becomes a climax of our love for God and God’s love for us. *What do you think about this aspect of the Seder? Have you ever experienced the night in this way?*
3. The love here is described as blossoming over a long period of time, from Jacob’s descent to Egypt to the slaves’ liberation. *What kind of love have you experienced that builds up over time like this? What does this characterization say about the love between God and us?*
4. *Which of these two moments (building the ark in the tabernacle and celebrating the paschal offering on Seder night) best encapsulates God’s relationship with the Jewish people? Why? Which of them is more central to your relationship with God?*



A JOY THAT UNITES

Avigayil Halpern



The first night of Pesah is unique among holidays. For most festivals, their particular joy is a phenomenon associated with the daytime, when the standard holiday sacrifices were offered. But the focus of Pesah's joy is at night, the time of eating the paschal sacrifice. In this way, the joy of Pesah stands alone. What is the nature of this joy? Why is it specifically alive on Pesah night?

Rav Yitzhak Hutner poses this question in his collection of essays (*ma'amarim*) on Pesah.¹ Citing the Talmud in Berakhot, he explains that there were two kinds of salvation that took place on Pesah: "*ge'ulah*" (redemption), which took place at night, and "*yeti'ah*" (exodus), which took place during the day (Talmud Bavli Berakhot 9a). What characterizes the unique joy of the former is not just that it occurred at night, but, according to Rav Hutner, that "only and exclusively at that moment was the congregation of Israel in its complete unity and full brotherhood." In the moment of *yeti'ah*, Israel were joined by the *erev rav*, the mixed multitude of others, that left Egypt with them—the people were not a united whole but a heterogenous

group. *Ge'ulah*, however, happened on the night before the *erev rav* joined with the people, when the Israelites were fully unified.

For Rav Hutner, the joy of Pesah night—and its redemptive power—comes from the complete unity of the Jewish people in that moment. But this unity comes at a cost: the rhetorical rejection of the *erev rav*, those who are seen as outside of the community, even as they have chosen to join the Jewish people at their moment of liberation. Rav Hutner's insight, though, that the unique joy of Pesah goes hand-in-hand with unity, can be reformulated in the other direction. We can understand this joy not as resulting from communality, but as generating it. The liberatory nature of the joy that is unique to Pesah night can be expansive and welcoming, building relationships rather than requiring pre-existing ones. It can bring in others rather than excluding them—a joy that leads to true liberation.

Perhaps the archetypical moment of joy during the Exodus is the Song at the Sea. After making it through

1 Yitzhak Hutner, "Ma'amar 71" in *Pahad Yitzhak on Pesah* (New York: Gur Ayre, 1964).

the sea to the other side and watching their oppressors drown, the Israelites burst out in song, led by Moses. The Torah then teaches that:

שמות טו:כ

וַתִּצְאֹן מִרְיָם הַנְּבִיאָה אֶחָוֹת אֶהְרֹן אֶת־הַתִּבְרִית בְּיָדָהּ
וַתִּצְאֹן כָּל־הַנְּשִׂיִם אַחֲרֶיהָ בְּתִפְפִים וּבַמְחֹלֹת:

Exodus 15:20

Then Miriam the prophet, Aaron's sister, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her in dance with drums and timbrels.

How did the women have their drums and timbrels in the desert? To have prepared drums to dance with, to be this ready for joy, seems near unthinkable amidst the experience of enslavement. This reflects not just an attitude but a real, material commitment to joy: these women sat and assembled these instruments, preparing in concrete ways for the moment of liberation. As Rashi explains in his comment to this verse, “the righteous women in that generation were confident that God would perform miracles for them.”

The readiness of the women’s drums seems to contrast sharply with another much-discussed moment of the Exodus narrative: the Israelites’ lack of prepared bread and food upon leaving Egypt.² How can we imagine that the same people who sat carefully crafting instruments to celebrate liberation with, when it seemed so far off, were so unprepared to have no provisions whatsoever when it came time to leave? Again, Rashi helps us answer this question:

רש"י שמות יב:לט

“וגם צדה לאעשו להם.” לדרך. מגיד שבחן של ישראל, שלא אמרו היאך נצא למדבר בלא צידה? אלא האמינו והלכנו; הוא שמפרש בקבלה, “זכרתי לך חסד נעורייך אהבת כלולתיך לכתך אחרי במדבר בארץ לא זרועה” (ירמיהו ב:א-ב).

Rashi on Exodus 12:39

“Nor had they prepared any provisions for themselves” for the journey. This is stated to praise Israel: that they did not say, “How can we go out into the wilderness without provisions?” Rather,

they believed and went. This is stated explicitly in the Prophets: “I accounted to your favor the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride—how you followed Me in the wilderness, in a land not sown” (Jeremiah 2:1-2).

The choice of the Israelites to set off into the desert unprovisioned is a profound act of trust in God. Although it doesn’t fully account for the lack of preparedness, this interpretation reframes this scarcity of provisions in the terms of romantic intimacy: the Israelites are God’s bride, demonstrating their great love for God by following God into the desert.

The lack of provisions and the presence of drums and timbrels, then, are two sides of the same coin. The women have been preparing for their moment of joy and celebration because they trust that it will come, just as the Israelites trust that God, their beloved, will care for them in the desert. Even more so, the expectation of joy is necessary to fuel the trust in care in the future. It is only in this relationship with God in which they anticipate—and experience—joyous redemption that the Israelites can then believe that they will receive the care they need as well. It is by being prepared for—and cultivating moments of—joy that we can learn to trust that we will receive the care we need in abundance, rather than dreading scarcity. Joy is the grounds for the connectedness and intimacy that enabled the Jewish people to follow God into the desert.

In commenting on the same verse about the women and their timbrels, the Keli Yakar³ offers a reflection on the connections between joy and relationship.

כלי יקר שמות טו:כ

ותקח מרים הנביאה וגו'. עכשיו נעשית נביאה כי במ־עמד זה זכו גם הנשים לראות פני השכינה... לכך נאמר ותצאן כל הנשים אחריה, כי הנבואה התחילה במרים וכל הנשים יצאו בעקבותיה במעמד זה כי כולם זכו לנבואה, ולפי שאין השכינה שורה כ"א מתוך שמחה והנשים יש להם צער לידה ע"כ לקחה את התוף בידה ותצאן כל הנשים אחריה בתופים ובמחולות כדי שתחול עליהם רוח הקודש מתוך שמחה.

² See Exodus 12:39.

³ A commentary on the Torah by Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim ben Aaron Luntschitz, written in Poland c.1600.

Keli Yakar on Exodus 15:20

“And Miriam the prophet took, etc.” She was now made a prophet,⁴ because at this moment, the women too merited to see the face of the Shekhinah... therefore [the verse] says, “all the women went out after her,” because the prophecy began with Miriam, and all the women followed in her footsteps in this moment because they all merited to prophesy, and since the Shekhinah only comes to rest [on a person] from joy, and the women had experienced the pain of birth, therefore she took the drum in her hand, and all the women followed her with drums and timbrels, so that the Divine Spirit would rest upon them via joy.



Here, the Keli Yakar is drawing on a longstanding tradition. In Rabbinic Hebrew, “זאת / זה / this” is understood to refer to pointing to something literally right in front of you—“This thing right here that I am pointing to!” Therefore, when the Israelites say in the Song, “This is my God” (Exodus 15:2), they must be referring to something that they can see directly: the presence of God.

What the Keli Yakar adds is that not all of the people were immediately prepared and able to have that experience of intense relationship in that moment. He attributes the need for joy in order to prophesy in particular to the women, who had experienced the unique pain of childbirth.

The moment of the Exodus is easily metaphorized as a birth process: the Israelites experience suffering and

then pass through a narrow canal to emerge reborn as a nation. It is perhaps not the literal suffering of birth, then, that inhibits the Divine Presence from connecting with the women—after all, many women do not or have not given birth—but the nature of the struggle for liberation: it can feel endless and be deeply wearying. That weariness can make it hard to prophesy, both in the sense of openness to connection—God cannot reach the women—and in the sense of imagining the future. It is joy that alleviates that weariness and pain. Joy, teaches the Keli Yakar, is the factor that enables those who are suffering to build relationships and to imagine the world that has not yet come into being.

This can inform the nature of the joy we experience on Pesah night that Rav Hutner identifies: it is a joy that connects. It is a joy that transmits from person to person, transforming Miriam’s solitary revelation into a spirit of prophecy that rests on every person. It is a joy that welcomes the *erev rav* into the unity of Israel. It is a joy that builds trust that we will be cared for even in the unknown emptiness of the desert.

adrienne maree brown, in her collection *Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good* writes that “true pleasure—joy, happiness, and satisfaction—has been the force that helps us move beyond the constant struggle, that helps us live and generate futures beyond this dystopic present, futures worthy of our miraculous lives.”⁵

It is joy itself that is a key ingredient in liberation. Pesah night is a moment of unique joy because it is the time of our liberation, and it is the time of our liberation because it is a moment of unique joy. ♦



⁴ This is the first time that Miriam is referred to as a prophet in the Torah.

⁵ This collection of Black feminist thought focuses on pleasure, eroticism, embodiment, and joy, and greatly informed my thinking in this essay. *Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good*, ed. adrienne marie brown (Chico: AKR Press, 2019), p. 437.

ACTIVITY: PASSOVER PROMPTS



Engage everyone in your Seder! These cards will help each person contribute and make your Seder a time of connection, conversation, and creativity. Try one or two of these ideas for giving your Seder some “PoP”!

1. PoP Up Discussion

Print and cut out enough cards so that each participant (who is able to read) can get up to three cards. For children too young to read, have them team up with someone who can. Have one person, perhaps your child, be the dealer. At different steps of the Seder, play a round of “PoP Up” Discussion. The dealer will hand out 1-3 cards to each person or team. The object of the game is to use as many prompts as you can during the Seder or at a predetermined section of the Seder. Prompts must be allowed to shape the conversation. For example, if someone says, “Tell me more,” the speaker to whom that prompt is directed, needs to elaborate.

2. The more we expand...

The Haggadah tells us that it is praiseworthy to expand on the telling of the Exodus story. During your retelling of the Pesah story, make it a challenge to use these prompts for as many consecutive turns as you can:

I want to build on what you just said... Tell me more...



See how long your family can build and sustain the conversation or the telling of the story... until someone says, "*dayyeinu!*" It is enough for us!

3. One must see oneself as having personally come out of Egypt.

Give everyone the prompt, "One connection I have to this part of the Haggadah/story is..." Challenge each participant to make at least one personal connection and share it during the Seder. Participants can choose to play their card at any time.

4. Maimonides teaches, "In every generation, one must present oneself as if they personally went out of Egypt." (Maimonides, Laws of Hametz and Matzah 7:6)

Use the prompt card, "I notice... I wonder." Ask participants to imagine who they are in the Exodus story. (For example, an Israelite child or an Israelite grandfather, etc.). Ask them to place themselves in particular stages of their experience leaving Egypt: living as slaves, witnessing the plagues, preparing to leave Egypt, crossing the sea, etc. Invite participants to speak as if they were live at the scene and to share an "I notice" or an "I wonder" through the eyes of their Exodus-selves.

5. The Pesah Symbols: Is there another way of understanding that?

Each symbol on the Seder plate holds multiple meanings to explore. The richness of each symbol coaxes us to imagine multiple dimensions of our collective experience moving from slavery to freedom. For example, the *matzah* represents both affliction and freedom. With the introduction of each symbol, keep the card that says "Is there another way of understanding that?" within reach of everyone. Anyone can pick up the card and ask the question as a challenge to other participants. The trick is that you can only pick up the card to make the challenge if you, yourself, have another idea to share! Share your idea after other participants get a chance. See how many meanings—traditional, contemporary, or personal—your participants can offer.

6. For the one who does not yet know how to ask...

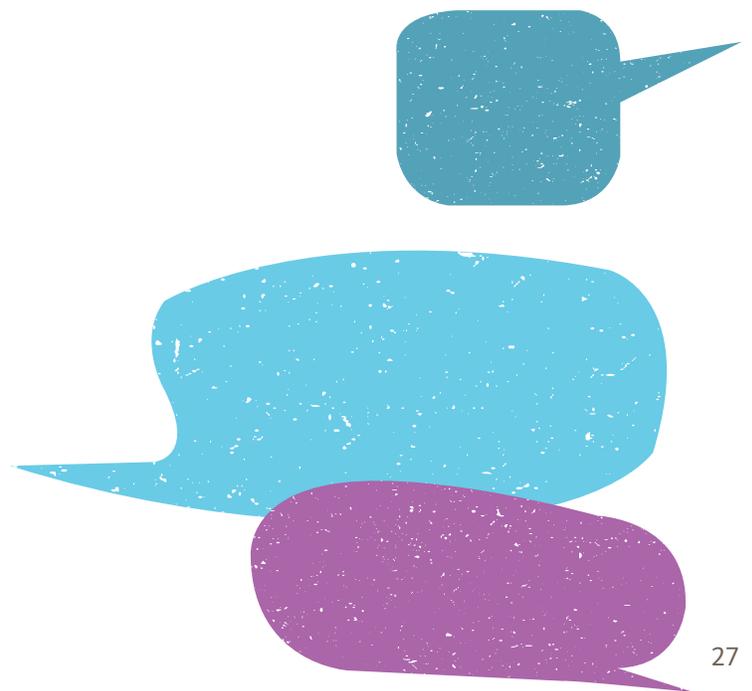
I notice... We tend to underestimate the power of noticing and pointing out what we notice to others. Yet, noticing is the beginning of wonder and the beginning of questions. The youngest talkers (and even babies who point!) can draw our attention to what makes this night different. Stop at three points during the Seder and challenge young children to point out as many noticings as they can about what just transpired, what is in the room, or something in the Haggadah. Adults and older children can celebrate those noticings by following it with a wonder: *Your noticing made me wonder...! Thank you!*

7. For the Symposium Seders

For those families who like to discuss and debate, challenge yourselves to use "So are you saying X?" BEFORE you use "I agree/disagree because..." In this way, you can truly understand another person's idea before rushing to your own judgment. Make sure that the prompt, "One question I want to talk about is..." is available to everyone, not only the leader. In this way, each person can exercise their freedom to shape the content of the Seder experience.

8. Make up your own!

Make up your own activity with these cards or challenge your children to create their own in order to engage participants at different points in the Seder.





Tell me more...



**I notice...
I wonder...**



**Is there another way of
understanding that?**
(text, symbol, character, idea)



So are you saying X?



**I want to build on what
you just said...**



**I agree/disagree with you
because...**

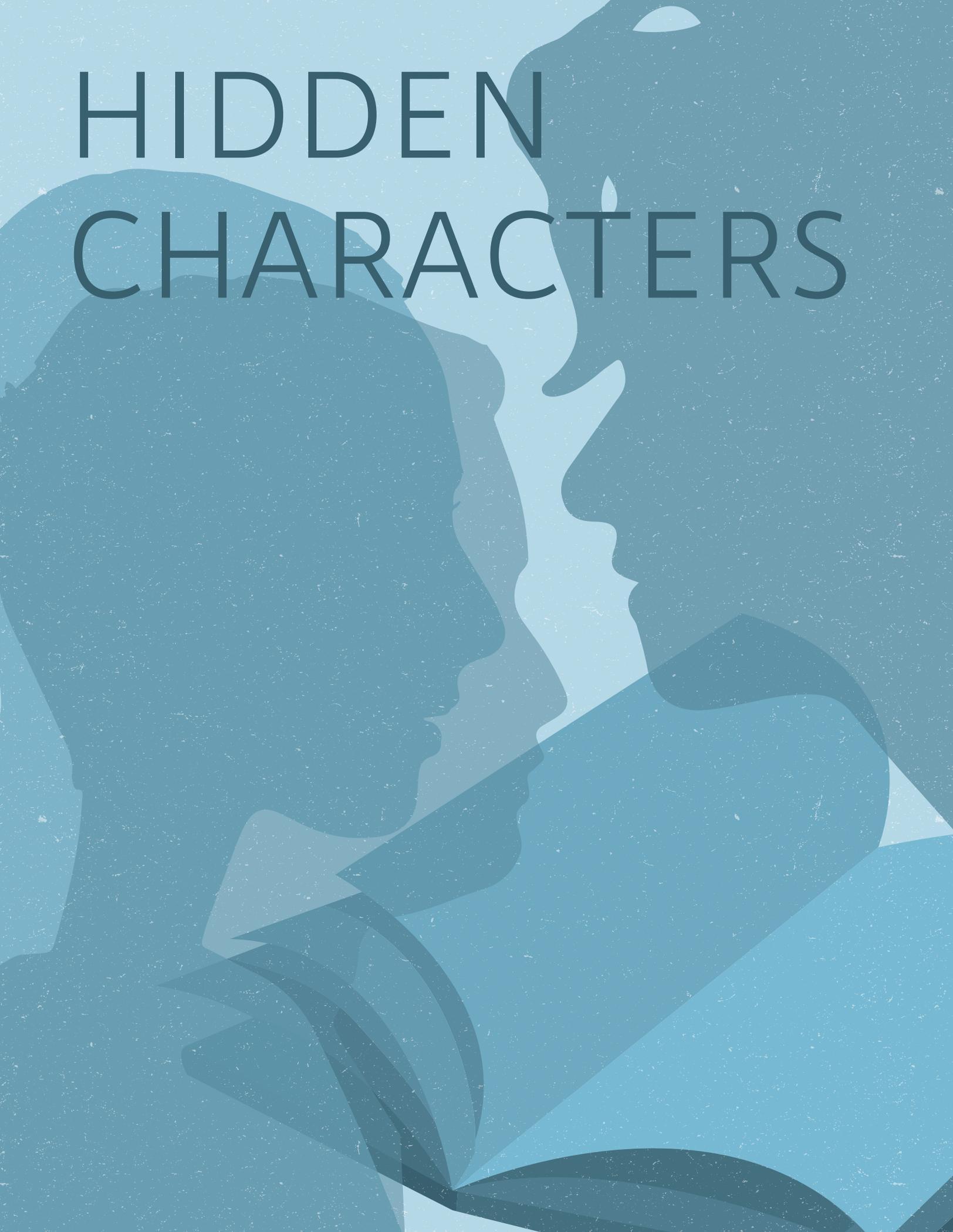


**One connection I have
to this part of the
Haggadah/story is...**



**One question I want to
talk about is...**

HIDDEN CHARACTERS



GHOSTS IN THE HAGGADAH

Rabbi Tali Adler



The Exodus from Egypt is, in one way of telling it, a ghost story.

This is not the usual genre we assign to the tale. We describe it as a story of liberation. The emotions we associate with it are a mixture of triumph, joy, and awe. But stories are created, in part, by where we choose to begin and end them, and *יציאאת מצרים*/the Exodus is a story with many beginnings.

We usually choose to begin the story of *יציאאת מצרים*/the Exodus with our enslavement, to follow its arc through the plagues, the night of rushed departure and unrisen dough, and to end it either with the people's passage through the Reed Sea or, in the longer version, their arrival at the Promised Land. That arc is the story we know: the story of God's promise fulfilled, of freedom, and of hope. But a close reading of the opening lines of Sefer Shemot suggests another way to read the story—one that begins not with our enslavement, but with our collective sin.

שמות א:א-ה

וְאֵלֶּה שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל הַבָּאִים מִצְרָיִם אֶת יַעֲקֹב
אִישׁ וּבֵיתוֹ בָּאוּ: רְאוּבֵן שְׁמֵעוֹן לֵוִי וַיהוֹדָה: יִשְׂשַׁכָּר

זְבוּלוֹן וּבְנֵימוֹ: דָּן וְנַפְתָּלִי גָד וְאַשֶׁר: וַיְהִי כָּל-נַפְשׁ יִצְאֵי
יִרְדֵּן-יַעֲקֹב שִׁבְעִים נַפְשׁ וַיֹּסֶף הָיָה בְּמִצְרָיִם:

Shemot 1:1-5

These are the names of the sons of Israel who came into Egypt with Ya'akov; every man came with his household: Reuven, Shimon, Levi, and Yehudah; Yissakhar, Zevulun, and Binyamin; Dan and Naftali, Gad and Asher. And all the souls that came out of the loins of Ya'akov were seventy souls; and Yosef was in Egypt already.

"And Yosef was in Egypt already." With this clause, the text invites us to remember the story that precedes the story, the beginning before the beginning. We did not end up in Egypt by accident. We were there because of a tragedy precipitated by unthinkable hatred: Yosef's brothers selling him into slavery and deceiving their father, Ya'akov, into thinking that Yosef was dead. We were in Egypt because we were a family torn apart. And while in one way of telling that before-story, the saga of Yosef and his brothers, ends with tearful reconciliation and the family's salvation in Egypt, there is another way of telling it—the way, in fact, that the Torah itself chooses in the final lines of

Bereishit—which insists that this story, the story of the Jewish people’s foundational sin, is not complete until Yosef’s body has been returned to Canaan.

בראשית נ:כה-כו

וַיִּשָׁבַע יוֹסֵף אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר פְּקֹד יִפְקֹד אֱלֹהִים
אֶתְכֶם וְהֶעֱלַתְּם אֹת־עַצְמוֹתַי מִזֶּה: וַיָּמָת יוֹסֵף בֶּן־מֵאָה
וָעֶשֶׂר שָׁנִים וַיַּחַנְטוּ אֹתוֹ וַיִּישְׂם בְּאֵרוֹן בְּמִצְרַיִם:

Bereishit 50:25-26

And Yosef took an oath of the children of Israel, saying: “God will surely remember you, and you shall carry up my bones from here.” So Yosef died, being a hundred and ten years old. And they embalmed him, and he was put in a coffin in Egypt.

And so, on the night of the Exodus, while the Jewish people are rushing, packing, preparing to leave, while the Jewish people are experiencing the story of their redemption, Moshe instead goes to fulfill this ancient promise, taking Yosef’s body with him out of Egypt.¹ It is a doubled experience: redemption side-by-side with atonement, bones and unbaked bread, together, making the exit from the land of Jewish sin and Jewish slavery. The story of life and freedom is twinned with a ghost story, a story of a people haunted by their greatest sin, and accompanied for forty years by the bones of the man they sinned against.

This story, the one in which יציאת מצרים/the Exodus is, at least in part, a long march to atonement, does not end until Yosef is finally buried in Shekhem, the place, Rashi points out, from which his brothers sold him all those years ago (Yehoshua 24:32). Intriguingly, the account of Yosef’s burial follows almost immediately after Yehoshua’s account of Jewish history, which we recite at the Seder:

יהושע כד:ב-ד, לב

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אֶל־כָּל־הָעָם כֹּה־אָמַר ה' אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
בְּעֶבֶר הִנָּהר יָשְׁבוּ אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם מֵעוֹלָם תָּרַח אָבִי אֲבָרָהָם
וְאָבִי נָחוֹר וַיַּעֲבְדוּ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים: וְאֶחָח אֶת־אָבִיכֶם
אֶת־אֲבָרָהָם מֵעֶבֶר הִנָּהר וְאוֹלָף אֹתוֹ בְּכָל־אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן
וְאֲבָרָהָ אֶת־זָרְעוֹ וְאֶתְּוֹלוּ אֶת־יִצְחָק: וְאֶתְּוֹלוּ לְיִצְחָק

אֶת־יַעֲקֹב וְאֶת־עֵשָׂו וְאֶתְּוֹלוּ לְעֵשָׂו אֶת־הַר שְׁעִיר לְרִשְׁתָּה
אוֹתוֹ וַיַּעֲקֹב וּבְנָיו יָרְדוּ מִצְרַיִם... וְאֶת־עַצְמוֹת יוֹסֵף
אֲשֶׁר־הֶעֱלוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרַיִם קָבְרוּ בְּשֶׁכֶם.

Yehoshua 24:2-4, 32

Then Yehoshua said to all the people, “Thus said God, the Lord of Israel: In olden times, your forefathers—Terah, father of Avraham and father of Nahor—lived beyond the Euphrates and worshiped other gods. But I took your father Avraham from beyond the Euphrates and led him through the whole land of Canaan and multiplied his offspring. I gave him Yitzhak, and to Yitzhak I gave Ya’akov and Esav. I gave Esav the hill country of Seir as his possession, while Ya’akov and his children went down to Egypt... The bones of Yosef, which the Israelites had brought up from Egypt, were buried at Shekhem.

The juxtaposition between Yosef’s burial and Yehoshua’s recounting of Jewish people’s arrival in Egypt makes the gap in the text glaringly obvious. “And Ya’akov and his children went down to Egypt.” More accurately, Ya’akov and all but one of his children. Ya’akov and all but one of his children went down to Egypt because of what they had done to the one who was already there. It is the gap here that tells the shadow story at the Seder. Yosef sits at the Seder, invisible, his story addressed primarily through deliberate silence.

According to some commentaries, however, Yosef is alluded to one more time at the Seder. The Ben Ish Hai in the 19th century identifies one of the dippings at the Seder with the event of our foundational sin:²

בן איש חי שנה ראשונה פרשת צו

וְטִיבוֹל רֵאשׁוֹן זֶה שְׁהוּא כִרְפֵס בְּחוּמָץ הוּא זָכַר לְסִיבַת
קוֹשֵׁי הַשֶּׁעֶבֶד שְׁהִיָּה בְּשִׁבִיל מְכִירַת יוֹסֵף הֵעִי
וְשֶׁהֵטְבִילוּ כְּתוּנַת פְּסִים שְׁלוֹ בְּדָם וּמְכָרוּהוּ וּגְרָמוּ צַעַר
לִיעֲקֹב אֵע״ה, וְזֶה נִרְמַז בְּכִרְפֵס וְהִינּוּ אוֹתִיּוֹת כ”ר הֵם
סוּף מְכָר וְאוֹתִיּוֹת פֶּס הֵם רֵאשׁ פְּסִים.

Ben Ish Hai Year 1, Parashat Tzav

The first act of dipping, the karpas in vinegar,

1 See Shemot 13:19.

2 This identification of the custom is first mentioned in Rabbeinu Manoah’s 13th century commentary on the Rambam’s Mishneh Torah: “ואנו נוהגין בכרפס זכר לכתנות הפסים שעשה יעקב אבינו ליוסף אשר בסבתה נתגלגל הדבר וירדו אבותינו למצרים”.

is in memory of the fact that the enslavement was because of the sale of Yosef, and that [his brothers] dipped his coat in blood and caused pain to his father, Ya'akov Avinu. This is alluded to in the word "karpas" (כרפס) which has the letters kaf and reish, which are the last letters of the word "mekher" (מכר), sale, and the letters pey and sin, which are the first letters in the word "pasim" (פסים) [the word used to describe Yosef's coat].

According to the Ben Ish Hai, in dipping the *karpas*, we bring the story of the brothers' sale of Yosef into the open. Almost as soon as we open the Seder, before we even touch a piece of *matzah* or begin to tell the story of our enslavement, we engage with our collective sin. We begin the Seder with the story before the story, actually reenacting the moment it all began. Notably, we do not simply tell the story of Yosef's sale. Instead, in reenacting it, we become the holders of our ancestral sin, once again dipping Yosef's coat into blood.

This interpretation of *karpas* is not an easy one. It demands that on the night that we celebrate our freedom, on the night when we (rightly) remember our ancestors as victims who were freed from bondage, on the night when we praise God for our redemption, we look back even further and see the story in greater complexity. While our ancestors may have been slaves, their ancestors before them were slave sellers. In this interpretation of *karpas*, we are reminded that even on this night of celebration and joy, we have a responsibility to remember.

The two stories stand together, neither story obscuring the other. Yes, our ancestors committed this sin. Yes, our ancestors were enslaved and then redeemed. Yes, these two stories are intertwined. Yes, our acknowledgment and responsibility must be assumed, and yes, our redemption is to be celebrated. In weaving them together on the night of the Seder, we refuse to allow overt guilt to destroy our gratitude and celebration, or our joy to deny our guilt.

Perhaps it is not a coincidence that this balancing act of memory occurs on the Seder night, the night on which we celebrate past and future redemptions. Perhaps, in telling the truth about our past, we are actually creating redemption.

Maybe redemption is what happens when we sit together and tell our stories in their entirety, hiding nothing.

Maybe redemption is what happens when we set our ghosts free. ♦



RESPONSIBILITY & REDEMPTION:

The Key Role of Iyyov in the Exodus Story

Rabbi Ethan Tucker



So much of Tanakh conveys the power of good storytelling. We are often moved by the full arc of characters' lives—drawn in by the way narratives overlap and intersect, folding into each other, blossoming into a rich universe where the story of Torah spirals in upon itself, taking students along for an adventure of learning where one narrative leads to another, and where every story teaches about every other. Sefer Iyyov (The Book of Job), though, seems, at best, disconnected from—and at worst, wholly conflicting with—the rest of the biblical corpus. Aside from its apparently inconsistent theological message, Iyyov himself has no clear setting, no time period in which he is located, no interactions with other biblical characters or events; it is not even obvious from the book whether or not he is Jewish. Cut off from the rest of the Bible, Iyyov has a hint of being above time and space, leading Reish Lakish to claim that איוב לא היה ולא נהיה / "Iyyov never existed at all" (Bereishit Rabbah 57).

But most other Rabbinic readers were more stubbornly attached to finding temporal and geographic anchors for this story, to casting Iyyov as a crossover character in other biblical dramas, like a cinematic

universe crossover that gives a major character from one franchise a minor role in another. They combed the book for markers that might point to a concrete context. It seems they found Iyyov everywhere—a collective picture of these traditions turns Iyyov into the Forrest Gump or Waldo of biblical history, showing up in all the key times and places, in the times of Avraham, the Shoftim, King Shlomoh, or even Ahashverosh.¹

But I am most interested, for our purposes, in the readings that place Iyyov right at the heart of יציאת מצרים / the story of the Exodus:

בראשית רבה נז

רבי לוי בשם ר' יוסי בר חלפתא אמר: בירידתן למצרים נולד ובעלייתן מת...

Bereishit Rabbah 57

Rabbi Levi in the name of Rabbi Yose ben Halafta said: He was born when they went down to Egypt, and died when they came out...

According to this *midrash*, Iyyov's life is entirely coterminous with the Israelites' time in Egypt. I would

¹ All found in Bereishit Rabbah 57, among other places.

suggest this is not merely an effort to play close attention to textual hints and locate Iyov in real time.² Rather, it is a deeper claim: If you want to understand יציאת מצרים / the Exodus, you will have to understand Iyov's role in it. Put another way, Iyov is a critical figure in making sure we are taking redemption at its full depth. Iyov pushes us to understand that, despite our narrative predilections to see a face-off between pure good and pure evil, redemption is never a black-and-white process, one which rewards all the righteous and punishes all the wicked—even for an oppression as backbreaking as Pharaoh's and for slaves as worthy of salvation as our ancestors. There are complexities throughout the oppression-redemption process, from how to react when you see your society is heading down a dark path, to whether you can avoid your complicity in its systemic oppressions, and how to recognize the collateral damage that inevitably results.

Rabbinic traditions flesh out just exactly where Iyov was during the Israelite period in Egypt: in Pharaoh's court! Iyov is cast as a key royal adviser, there at the moment when the Egyptian king proposes the initial acts of enslavement that lead to permanent subjugation. Recall the biblical scene: Pharaoh says of Israel, "הָבֵה נִתְחַבְּקָה לּוֹ / Come now, let us use our wits against him" (Shemot 1:10). The word "הבה / Come now," suggests more of a proposal than a command, as if an audience were being pitched on this plan so as to gain their approval. The Talmud fills out the scene:

תלמוד בבלי סוטה יא.

א"ר חייא בר אבא א"ר סימאי, שלשה היו באותה עצה: בלעם, ואיוב, ויתרו.
בלעם שיעץ - נהרג,
איוב ששתק - נידון ביסורין,
יתרו שברח - זכו מבני בניו שישבו בלשכת הגזית...

Talmud Bavli Sotah 11a

Rabbi *Hiyya bar Abba* said Rabbi *Simai* said: Three were consulted by Pharaoh in that moment. They

were *Bil'am, and Iyov, and Yitro.*

Bil'am, who hatched the plan, was [punished by being] killed [in the war with Midian, see Bemidbar 31:8]. Iyov, who was silent, was punished by suffering. Yitro, who ran away, merited that some of his descendants sat in the Chamber of Hewn Stone...

This text features an amusing ensemble cast of famous gentiles in Tanakh. Bil'am, later involved in plots against the Israelites, is a natural fit for this moment of persecution. Placing him here also helps account for his eventual harsh end, otherwise out of proportion to his general adherence to divine instructions throughout the Bil'am-Balak narrative.³ He is cast here as actively advancing the plan.

Yitro, Moshe's future father-in-law, could not abide Pharaoh's evil decree, but since he could not stop it either, he fled. He is rewarded with offspring—descendants of Moshe—who sit on the Sanhedrin, the High Court in ancient Jerusalem.

But it is Iyov who draws our gaze. Iyov is not a voice for persecution, but he is also unwilling to give up his place at Pharaoh's table. He therefore tries silence. Whether this is a weaselly form of plausible deniability, or an effort to remain a force for good at a later point in time, the Talmud does not like it. His silence is enough to justify the otherwise inscrutable suffering that Iyov must withstand in the book that bears his name. *Sefer Iyov* is transformed from a tale of righteous suffering to a chronicle of the just deserts meted out to one who would not raise his voice while others suffer.

Iyov is not an enemy of the Jewish people like Bil'am. He is not an agent of oppression and can therefore be described as righteous to the end. But he failed to actually detach from the oppression, as Yitro did, and he must suffer as a result. Redemption never happens on its own. It requires not only liberators but people with power who are willing to risk some

² For example, Iyov loses a vast amount of cattle due to a "fire of God that descended from heaven" (Iyov 1:16), evoking the plague of hail with its fiery core (Shemot 9:24). He is smitten with boils (Iyov 2:7), another one of the Egyptian plagues (Shemot 9:8-11). Most hauntingly, when his children are wiped out as the house collapses in on them, we are given the address: "The home of the first-born brother" (Iyov 1:18). Thus, the ultimate plague of Egypt seems to visit Iyov as well.

³ In Bemidbar 31:16, Moshe associates Bil'am with somehow instigating Israel's sex-driven apostasy of Ba'al Peor, but that does not seem to have satisfied the author of this *midrash* as a full explanation for his death by the sword.



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of that power in order to interfere in the schemes of those who would persecute. Iyyov failed to do this. From between the lines of the story of **יציאת מצרים** / the Exodus, he asks us: Are you remaining silent when you should be speaking up?

Iyyov is present at the moment Pharaoh's plan is hatched—but his role does not end there. As the plagues run rampant, the Torah makes it clear that it is not telling a story of a showdown between good Israelites and evil Egyptians, despite how dramatic and comforting this picture might be. Here and there, we hear of Egyptians who esteemed Moshe, gave valuables to the Israelites prior to their departure, and slowly but incompletely came to recognize the power of the God of Israel—unlike their king, stubborn to the last. One of the more poignant moments where this emerges is during the plague of hail:

שמות ט:יח-כא

הַנִּי מִמְטִיר בְּעֵת מָחָר בְּרָד בְּרָד כְּבֵד מְאֹד אֲשֶׁר לֹא־הָיָה
כְּמֹהוּ בְּמִצְרַיִם לְמִן־הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה וְעַד־עַתָּה: וְעַתָּה
שְׁלַח הַעֵז אֶת־מִקְנֶךָ וְאֵת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר לְךָ בַּשָּׂדֶה כָּל־
הָאָדָם וְהַבְּהֵמָה אֲשֶׁר־יִמָּצָא בַּשָּׂדֶה וְלֹא יֵאָסֹף הַבַּיְתָה
וְיָרֵד עֲלֵהֶם הַבְּרָד וּמָתוּ: הֲיִנָּה אֶת־דָּבָר יִקְוֶה מֵעַבְדֶּי
פְּרָעָה הַנִּיִּס אֶת־עַבְדֶּיךָ וְאֶת־מִקְנֵהוּ אֶל־הַבַּיְתִּים: וְאֲשֶׁר
לֹא־שָׂם לְבֹו אֶל־דָּבָר יִקְוֶה וַיַּעֲזֹב אֶת־עַבְדֶּיךָ וְאֶת־
מִקְנֵהוּ בַּשָּׂדֶה:

Shemot 9:18-21

"Here, around this time tomorrow, I will cause to rain down an exceedingly heavy hail, the like of which has never been in Egypt from the days of its founding until now! So now, send word: give refuge to your livestock and to all that is yours in the field; all men and beasts who are found in the field and who have not been gathered into the house—the hail will come down upon them, and they will die!" Whoever feared the word of God among Pharaoh's servants had his servants and his livestock flee into the houses, but whoever did not pay any mind to the word of God left his servants and his livestock out in the field.

Who were these people in Pharaoh's court who "feared the word of God?" On a surface level, it seems they were just afraid, taking action to save their own

skin and preserve their wealth. But the language of **ירא** / fear connotes something more as well, something approaching piety and reverence. Iyyov himself is described as **איש תם וישר וירא אלהים וסר מרע** / a complete man, honest and God-fearing, and avoiding evil" (Iyyov 1:8). This textual connection is used by Rabbi Yishmael to place Iyyov into the biblical scene as one of the God-fearers who brought their livestock and servants into their houses.⁴ By linking, via Iyyov, these two meanings of **ירא**, fear and awe, we also get a different picture of the Egyptians at large. There were Egyptians who were not just looking to protect themselves, but who were actually righteous people, responding to God's direct intervention in their society.

However, being individually pious in a world of systemic evil is simply not enough. An early *midrash* links these animals saved from the plagues by God-fearers with one of the most dangerous threats to Israelite freedom: the horses drawing the Egyptian chariots at the Reed Sea.

מכילתא דרבי ישמעאל בשלח - מסכתא דויהי פרשה א

משל מי היו הבהמות שהיו טוענין המרכבות? אם תאמר: משל מצרים היו, והלא כבר נאמר, "וימת כל מקנה מצרים!" (שמות ט ו) ואם תאמר: משל פרעה היו, והלא כבר נאמר, "הנה יד ה' הויה במקנך אשר בשדה!" (שמות ט ג) ואם תאמר: משל ישראל היו, והלא כבר נאמר, "וגם מקנינו ילך עמנו לא תשא פרסה!" (שמות י כו) אלא של מי היו? של הירא את דבר ה'. נמצינו למדין: הירא את דבר ה' הם היו תקלה לישראל...

Mekhilta de-Rabbi Yishmael Be-Shallah, Massekhta de-VaYehi, Parashah 1

Where did the horses come from required for the chariots? If you would say from Egypt, is it not written, "and all the livestock of Egypt died" (Shemot 9:6)? And if you would say from Pharaoh, is it not written, "Behold, the hand of the Lord is in your livestock in the field, in the horses, etc" (Shemot 9:3)? And if you say from Israel, is it not written, "And our livestock, too, will go with us; not a hoof will remain" (Shemot 10:26)? From where, then, did they come? From those "who feared the

4 See Talmud Yerushalmi Sotah 5:6.

word of God [and drove their horses from the field into the houses]" (Shemot 9:21). We find, then, that those who feared the word of God proved to be an impediment to Israel...

The Mekhilta is asking a breathtakingly simple question: If all the animals of Egypt died in the plagues—except for the Israelites' livestock, which left with them—where did the horses come from for Pharaoh's chariots? There is only one possible solution: Pharaoh took the horses of the God-fearing Egyptians, turning their very act of piety and trust in God into a tool of violence and oppression. Had all the Egyptians been wicked and dismissive of God, there would have been no threat whatsoever to the Israelites at the Sea!

What are we to make of this? Is it pointless to be righteous? Was there no value to the piety of Iyov and others in the midst of Egyptian oppression? That seems an unnecessary and untenable conclusion. Rather, these *midrashim* remind us that, ultimately, oppression and redemption are systemic processes. You can be the most righteous person in the world—but if the regime marshals horses to oppress people, it will come for your horses to further its own aims. There is no real redemption without systemic change. Until then, even the best intentioned will have their wealth and power repurposed for evil. We can't always be agents of that kind of systemic change—witness Yitro's decision to flee—but we shouldn't kid ourselves that we can (from the perspective of the oppressed) be uncorrupted islands of righteousness in a wider sea of oppression. Iyov assumed that he could have his cake and eat it too by sticking to his morals as a conscientious objector, while remaining firmly ensconced in the larger Egyptian society. This is a project doomed to fail. Embedding Iyov and other righteous individuals in *יציאַת מצרים* / the story of the Exodus reminds us of this painful lesson.

There is one final moment of Iyov's cameo in *יציאַת מצרים* / the story of the Exodus, at the Sea itself, as the final moment of redemption is about to arrive. The Egyptians are closing in, pinning the Israelites between the desert and the sea. The people are panicked, even as Moshe tries to calm them with assurances that God will deliver them from this

crisis and wipe out their approaching enemy. At this moment, God says to Moshe: "Why do you cry out to me? Tell the Israelites to move forward!" This sounds as if something has just been set in place and the moment must be seized. But what? A *midrash* in *Shemot Rabbah* fills in the gap:

שמות רבה (וילנא) כא:ז

א"ר חמא בר"ר חנינא: בשעה שיצאו ישראל ממצרים עמד סמאל המלאך לקטרג אותן. ור' חמא בר חנינא פירשה משום אביו: משל לרועה שהיה מעביר צאנו בנהר; בא זאב להתגרות בצאן. רועה שהיה בקי מה עשה? נטל תיש גדול ומסרו לו. אמר, "יהא מתגשש בזה עד שנעבור את הנהר ואח"כ אני מביאו." כך בשעה שיצאו ישראל ממצרים עמד סמאל המלאך לקטרג אותן. אמר לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא, "דבש"ע עד עכשיו היו אלו עובדים עבודת כוכבים ואתה קורע להם את הים?" מה עשה הקדוש ברוך הוא? מסר לו איוב--שהיה מיועצי פרעה--דכתיב בו (איוב א) איש תם וישר. אמר לו: "הנו בידך." אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא, "עד שהוא מתעסק עם איוב ישראל עולים לים ויורד דים ואח"כ אציל את איוב..." באותה שעה אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא למשה: "משה, הרי מסרתי איוב לשטן. מה בידך לעשות? דבר אל בני ישראל ויסעו!"

Shemot Rabbah 21:7

...Said Rabbi *Hama bar Rabbi Hanina*: When Israel was leaving Egypt, the angel *Samael* (i.e. the Satan) came to argue against them. Rabbi *Hama bar Rabbi Hanina* explained this, in the name of his father, as a parable: A shepherd was crossing his sheep across the river and a wolf came to attack them. What does an experienced shepherd do? He takes a big, old goat and hands him over to the wolf, thinking, "Let the wolf struggle with the goat—this will buy us time to cross the river, and then I will go back and get the goat." Similarly, when Israel left Egypt, the angel *Samael* came to argue against them in God's presence. He said, "Master of the Universe, these people were idolaters—you are going to split the sea for them?!" What did God do? Handed him Iyov, who was one of Pharaoh's advisers... God said to *Samael*: "I hereby hand him over to you." God thought, "While *Samael* is dealing with Iyov, Israel can make it through the sea and then I will go back to get Iyov."... At that moment, the Holy Blessed

THE BLESSING OF A MIXED MULTITUDE

Rabbi Avi Strausberg



The curtain of the Pesah story opens on a new king and an ever-so-fertile Israelite people. The Torah tells us that the Israelites were fruitful, and they multiplied until “the land was filled with them” (Exodus 1:7-9). Enter the new king, who looks at this prolific Israelite people, who sees that they are *rav ve-atzum*, numerous and vast, and he is afraid. He sees their ever-increasing numbers, and he worries that they will soon amass enough people to overtake his oppressive regime. Threatened by the Israelites and their growing potential for power, he seeks to break them both in body and in spirit. He sets taskmasters over them and initiates a program of forced, back-breaking labor—yet still, the Israelites increase in number (Exodus 1:10-12).

While the Torah refers to Pharaoh as a *melekh hadash*, a new king, a prominent talmudic opinion teaches us that this shouldn't be taken literally to mean that he was actually a new king.¹ Rather, it was this same Pharaoh who hired Joseph and welcomed Jacob and his family into Egypt with great hospitality, but he now became *like* a new king in the sense that he betrayed

his prior relationship with the Children of Israel, a king “who did not know Joseph.” He acted as if Joseph, who was once his close advisor, single-handedly responsible for his kingdom's success and ability to profit in years of famine, was now part of the ever-growing mass of Israelites he did not value, each one indistinguishable from the next.

Pharaoh looked at the swarm of Israelites, and he did not see Joseph, his confidant, his advisor, his steward. Rather, he saw a people *rav ve-atzum*, numerous and vast. Pharaoh didn't see them as individuals replete with humanity and worthy of dignity. Rather, he saw a people *rav ve-atzum*, a mass to be feared.

But Jewish tradition professes the paramount worth of the individual. Rooted in the idea that we are each created *be-tzelem Elohim*, in the image of God,² our sages teach us about the singular value of each individual life and the importance of seeing each person in the fullness of their humanity. In essence, our rabbis teach us how not to be like Pharaoh.

¹ Either Rav or Shmuel, see Talmud Bavli Sotah 11a.

² Genesis 1:27.

Mishnah Sanhedrin, in the context of talking about capital punishment, offers a striking counter-example to Pharaoh's approach.

משנה סנהדרין ו:ה

אָמַר רַבִּי מֵאִיר, בְּשָׁעָה שֶׁאָדָם מִצְטַעֵר, שְׂכִינָה מֵהַ
הַלְשׁוֹן אוֹמְרַת בְּבִיבּוֹל, קִלְנִי מֵרֹאשִׁי, קִלְנִי מִזְרוּעֵי.

Mishnah Sanhedrin 6:5

Rabbi Meir said: When a person suffers, what expression does the Shekhinah use? "I am distressed about My head, I am distressed about My arm."

Rabbi Meir teaches that even for those who have sinned, even at the moment of their punishment, the Divine despairs and is deeply saddened by their suffering.

Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira, writing from the context of immense suffering in the Warsaw Ghetto, notes that Rabbi Meir asks his question in the singular and not the plural. Rabbi Meir could have asked, "When the Jewish people suffer," but instead he asks about the individual.

אש קודש, פרשת תולדות, מרחשון תש"א

דר"מ מרמו בזה שלא בלבד כשהכלל כלו מצטער אלא גם צער אדם פרטי עולה למרום כי זה נהרג וזה מת ר"ל מתוך צרותיו...

כי אף שהכלל ישראל מתקיים מ"מ איש הפרטי שמת אותו ואת חייו אבדה ועד תחיית המתים את חייו הכריתו ר"ל וזה שאומר הלשון שאדם מצטער כמו שאמרו בסנהדרין דף ל"ח ע"א אדם יחידי נברא שגם על צער אדם יחידי השכינה אומרת וכו' ועל הפרט והיחיד דוקא השכינה אומרת כיון שבה בחי' הפרט והיחידית כנ"ל

Eish Kodesh, Parashat Toldot, 1940

With his question, Rabbi Meir is hinting that the Shekhinah suffers not only when the entire Jewish people are in trouble, but that the pain of an individual person also ascends upon high...

Even though the Jewish people as a whole are

eternal, when one individual dies, both he and his life are lost, and until the resurrection of the dead, his life is cut off, may the Merciful One protect us. This, then, is the meaning of the particular choice of wording, "When a 'person' suffers," as we learn in the Talmud, "A 'person' was created solitary" (Sanhedrin 38a). This is why even over the pain of a single individual the Shekhinah says, "O woe! My head, O woe! My arms." It is specifically the Shekhinah who speaks up when an individual suffers because she embodies the concepts of singularity and individuality.

Rabbi Shapira writes that Rabbi Meir's use of the singular is significant and teaches us that God cares not only about the survival of the Jewish people as a whole, but rather, that God cares about each and every life. Profoundly, as Rabbi Shapira attempts to make sense of his own suffering and the suffering of those around him, he affirms and insists that God cares about the fate of each person and not just the survival of the Jewish collective. Most unlike Pharaoh, God does not look at us and see only the *rav*, a mass, each person indistinguishable from the next; rather, God looks at us and sees individuals. God mourns the suffering of each and every person because each of us is significant to God. As it is taught in Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5, Adam was created alone to teach us the paramount importance of each and every single life.

But our rabbis go beyond teaching us that God cares about, and is deeply saddened by, the sorrow of each individual. It's not just about suffering; rather, our rabbis teach us that God values each of our unique lives in their totality. In his commentary on Parashat Bemidbar, Rabbi Shai Held writes, "Jewish sources insist that God cherishes human beings not just as faceless representatives of a privileged species but as individuals; God loves us in all of our singularity and uniqueness."³ In our individuality, in our uniqueness, we are each a crucial part of the fabric of the Jewish people.

Furthermore, Rabbi Mordekhai Yosef Leiner⁴ extends

³ Shai Held, "[Parashat Bemidbar: Divine Love and Human Uniqueness.](#)" The essay is also included in *The Heart of Torah: Essays on the Weekly Torah Portion* (Philadelphia: JPS, 2017).

⁴ 1801-1884, Izhbitz, Poland, also called the Mei ha-Shiloah after his most famous work.

the importance of each individual when writing about the census, in which male Israelites over 20 years of age are counted (Numbers 1:2). Although this is only a partial census of the people, Rabbi Leiner sees in it a message about the importance of each individual that speaks to the value of every member of the community regardless of age or gender.

מי השילוח במדבר ב

שאו את ראש וכו' ענין נשיאות ראש היה כפי מה
דאיתא בגמ' (ברכות נ"ח). אין דעתו של זה דומה לשל
זה. כי הש"י חלק לכל אחד טובה וחיים בפני עצמו
ואין אחד דומה לחבירו. ע"כ נאמר שאו את ראש היינו
שתעמדו כל אחד על מקום השייך לו. ועי"ז יהיה
במקומו מדוגל ומנושא...

Mei Ha-Shiloah, Numbers 2

*"Take a census of the whole Israelite community..."
The matter of taking a census is according to that
which is brought in the Talmud (Berakhot 58a):
The mind of one person is not similar to that of
another. Because the Holy One distributed to each
person goodness and life for each one, and one
is not similar to the other. And so it says, "take a
census of each person" in order that you stand
each person in the place to which they belong.
And through this, they will be in their place,
marked and raised."⁵*

Rabbi Leiner teaches that the broad, spiritual purpose of the census is to elevate each and every person, to note that each person is unique from the other, and to give each person the opportunity to stand and to be raised up in their place. When we see each person as the unique individual they are, valuing them in the fullness of their identity and humanity, when we allow them to stand in the place that is right for them, we raise them up. Rabbi Leiner goes on to teach the following parable: It's like someone who has carefully planted an orchard in a certain order. If a couple of the plants are switched, or if just one plant is missing, the garden is not whole. If just one of us is made to

stand in a place that is not our own, if just one of us is missing, then the orchard is incomplete. When one of us is not valued in the fullness of our identity, we are all lacking.

When the Israelites came out of Egypt, they did not come out alone. Rather, they came out as an *erev rav*, a mixed multitude.⁶ Commentators note that this mixed multitude included Egyptians and converts from among the nations who joined up with the Israelites on their march to freedom.⁷ Why did these Egyptians and converts from among the nations join up with the Israelites? Perhaps, they recognized that in this new community, individuals mattered; every person would be counted.

In the opening of the Book of Exodus, when Pharaoh looked at the Israelites, he did not see individual people. He saw a people *rav ve-atzum*; a growing mass to be feared. The lesson of the Pesah story is one in which we learn to recognize the individuality and humanity of every person. Rather than look at a crowd and simply see the indistinguishable *rav*, we learn to value and to raise up the individual. Rather than see with the eyes of Pharaoh, we aspire to see with the eyes of God.

On this Pesah, as we retell the story of our Exodus from Egypt, may we celebrate the blessing of a mixed multitude. May we each be counted in our places, raised up and honored. ♦

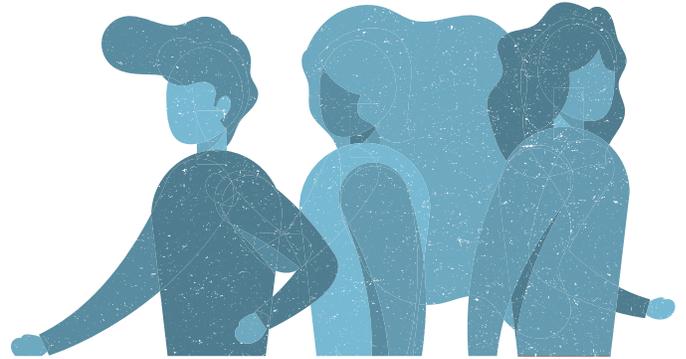
⁵ The Hebrew root נשא means both "to count" and "to raise."

⁶ Exodus 12:37-38: "The Israelites journeyed from Ramses to Succot, about six hundred thousand men on foot, aside from children. Moreover, a mixed multitude went up with them, and very much livestock, both flocks and herds."

⁷ Rashi on Exodus 12:38 writes that the mixed multitude included converts from among the nations, and Seforno there writes that it included Egyptians who went out with them.

'ומרגיש כי הוא עם': על שייכות ואחרות בפרשת בא

הרב אביטל הוכשטיין



מכילתא דרבי שמעון בר יוחאי

פרק יב, עמ' 92

'אתם' אין לי אלא אתם, גרים ועבדים מנין? תלמוד לומר: 'גם אתם'.

הדרשן מציג קריאה זהירה, עדינה וקשובה לפסוקים. ראשית, הוא מתמקד במילה 'אתם' שבדברי פרעה. נראה שהמילה 'אתם' מכוונת למשה ואהרן, אשר להם קורא פרעה בתחילת הפסוק. מילה זו מבחינה בין משה ואהרן לשאר העם, כאילו פרעה מדגיש: אני לא רוצה שרק אתם תצאו ממצרים, אלא בני ישראל כולם. אולם הדרשן בוחר לראות במילה זו מילה המדירה קבוצה חברתית מסוימת: 'אתם', בניגוד לגרים ועבדים. הדרשן שואל מנין יודעים ולומדים שממצרים יצאו לא רק בני ישראל, אלא גם הגרים והעבדים שבעם.

השאלה 'מנין' חושפת שתי הנחות יסוד: ראשית, את העובדה שברור לדרשן שאכן יצאו ממצרים גם הגרים והעבדים. אולם, הוא גם מבהיר כי קריאה ישירה של הפסוקים לא מעידה על כך, כלומר שישנו פער בין הנחת יסוד מכלילה זו לבין מה שנאמר באופן ישיר בפסוקים. אם כך, השאלה העולה במדרש היא: לנוכח הנחת היסוד של הדרשן שממצרים יצאו לא רק 'אתם', אלא גם הגרים והעבדים, מהו העוגן בפסוקים עוגן שיאשר את ההנחה הזאת?

פרק יב בספר שמות מציג ברוחב יריעה מבט של הווה וגם אל עבר העתיד. בשיאו נמצא סיפורה של מכת בכורות ויציאת מצרים שבעקבותיה. חלקו הראשון של הפרק הוא הצו למשה ואהרן על אודות ההתנהלות הרצויה בלילה שיהפוך להיות ליל יציאת מצרים ותיאור ההכנות לקראת הלילה הזה (שמות יב, א'-י"ג). חלקו השני הוא הצו ביחס ל'פסח דורות', כלומר על אופן קיום הפסח בעתיד, כזיכרון לילה הזה (שם, י"ד-כ'). החלק השלישי הוא תיאור הצו של משה אל הזקנים בנוגע להכנות (שם, כ"א-כ"ט), ואז פונה הפרק לתאר את אירועי הלילה ההוא (שם מפסוק ל' והלאה).

נתמקד במספר מצומצם של פסוקים המתארים את יציאת מצרים, ובשאלה דרשנית שעולה לגביהם:

שמות יב, ל' - ל"א

וַיְקַם פְּרֹעֹה לַיְלָה הַזֶּה וַיִּקְרָא לְיִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמֶר קוּמוּ צֵאוּ מִתּוֹךְ עַמִּי
כִּי אֲנִי מֵת וְלֹא יָרֶדְתִּי לְיִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא יָרֶדְתִּי לְיִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא יָרֶדְתִּי לְיִשְׂרָאֵל
וְלֹא יָרֶדְתִּי לְיִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא יָרֶדְתִּי לְיִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא יָרֶדְתִּי לְיִשְׂרָאֵל

הדרשן התנאי במכילתא דרבי שמעון בר יוחאי שואל על אודות מקומו של קבוצות שונות מלבד בני ישראל באירועי הלילה:

יש מקום לעמוד על הדמיון הדרשני שהדרשה חושפת: במצרים היו לא רק העבדים בני ישראל, אלא שהיו להם נלווים - לא רק שלישראל עצמם היו עבדים, אלא שאליהם הצטרפו גם גרים. האם הכוונה היא לגרים במונח החז"לי, אנשים שהחליטו להיכנס לברית ולקשר הייחודי עם אלוהי ישראל, אלוהי אברהם, יצחק ויעקב, או שהכוונה היא לגרים במשמעות המקראית, כלומר זרים הנספחים אל העם בצורה זו או אחרת? כך או כך, מתוך השאלה עולה תמונת עולם מורכבת שמצייר הדרשן: ישראל בתקופה זו, לתפיסתו, הוא עם מורכב שבתוכו כלולות ומתקיימות קבוצות שונות. בנוסף, מובן לדרשן שקבוצות אלו לא רק הסתפחו לבני ישראל העבדים במצרים, אלא גם הצטרפו אליהם עם יציאתם ממצרים.

פעם אחר פעם מעזים חז"ל לשאול ולהעלות על הדעת את הבלתי נתפס. כך, הם מעזים לתאר את בני ישראל במצרים כעם שיש לו בעצמו עבדים וגרים. אולם יתרה מזו, השאלה שהמדרש מעלה לוקחת אותנו למסע מחשבתי שבסופו אנו חושבים על ישראל לא כעל עם עבדים בזוי ונדכא בהיותו במצרים, אלא כקבוצה שאליה רוצים אנשים להיטפח ולהצטרף כגרים. זאת ועוד - העם שמתאר המדרש הוא קבוצה בעלת היררכיות פנימיות, מעמדות ומשרתים - בבחינת עבדים.

אולם, אף שהשאלות שמעלים המדרשים הן לעתים בלתי נתפסות, על פי רוב הן משקפות תפיסת עולם, חשש, אמונה או תקווה. עלינו, הקוראים והלומדים, לעמוד לא רק על תוכן הדברים - אלא גם על משמעותם ועל העומד מאחוריהם. באותו אופן, עלינו לא רק להבין את משמעות הדברים אלא גם את השלכותיהם.

לדרשה שלפנינו אמירה ישרה אחת אולם למעשה היא משקפת תפיסת עולם כמעט הפוכה. הדרשה שלפנינו מכלילה את הגרים והעבדים בתוך העם מצד אחד, אולם בד בבד היא גם משאירה אותם כנספחים ונבדלים.

דרשה זו היא דוגמא מובהקת לדרשת ריבוי, המכניסה פנימה

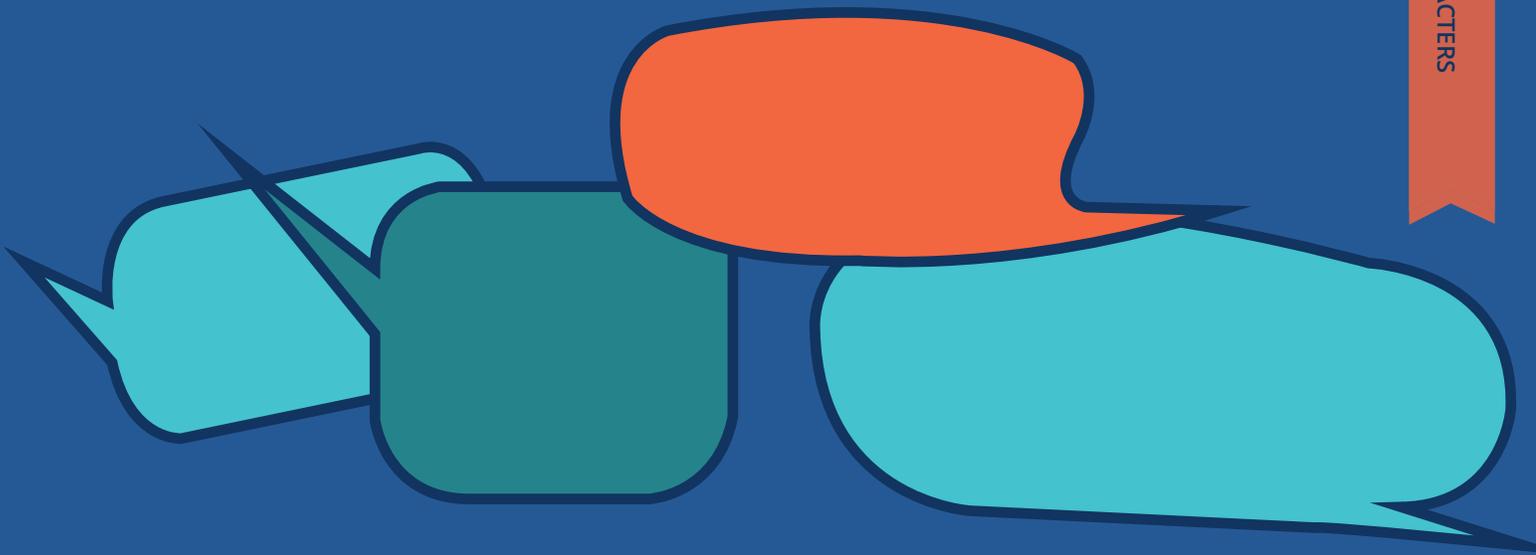
קבוצה מודרת, ואולם קריאה זהירה תגלה כי זוהי דרשה שהמסר המובהק שלה הוא למעשה הדרה. אף שהדרשה מסבירה שממצרים יצאו גם הגרים והעבדים, האופן שבו מרבים בה את הקבוצות השונות גם מבהיר את מעמדם כנספחים ואחרים. הגרים והעבדים הם בבחינת 'גם', ואינם חלק מקבוצת הגרעין הראשונית 'אתם', הם בבחינת 'מילית' ולא בבחינת מהות או שורש, הם נילוויים ולא חלק מקבוצת הגרעין 'בני ישראל'.

אם אנו חיים בחברה המודעת לעוולות הכרוכות בהדרה, אם אנו חיים במרחב בו נשמעת קריאה להרחיב את השורות, להתייחס ברובי קולות, לחיות חיים של הכללה ושיוון - דרשה זו מלמדת אותנו דבר מה בסיסי: לא מספיק להכליל, לא מספיק לרבות. יש חובה לבדוק את אופי ההכללה שלנו, לעיין בדרך שבה אנו מזמינים אנשים להצטרף, ובאורח ההתנהלות שלנו בעת צירופם: לא פעם הדרכים הללו בעצם מדירות, מותירות את מי שהוזמן פנימה במעמד של נספח ונלווה. אם מטרנתנו היא הכללה אזי דרשה זו מזמינה אותנו לבחון האם אנו פועלים באופן שתואם את מטרותינו אם לאו. ♦



1 מילת הריבוי "גם" המופיעה בפסוק משמשת העוגן לביסוס תפיסת המדרש שלפיה התיאור מתייחס גם ל'גרים ועבדים'. כדברי המדרש: "תלמוד לומר: 'גם אתם'". כך מבין הדרשן שהצירוף 'גם אתם' מבהיר שממצרים יצאו ישראל יחד עם הגרים והעבדים שנלוו אליהם.

ONE MINUTE DEBATES



The Seder is all about asking questions because posing questions, challenging assumptions, and debating Torah is how we learn from each other and transmit our tradition.

We invite you to partake in this debate culture with this fun game to engage the whole family. This works well with kids (and adults!) of all ages. Use these cards to spark short, energizing debates, and feel free to come up with your own creative arguments for each topic!

Advanced Prep:

Cut out these cards or create your own with index cards before Pesah.

How to play:

- Each topic has one "True" card and one "False" card.
- Each card has one or two suggested arguments, but feel free to come up with your own.
- For each topic, ask for volunteers or assign people cards.
- Consider working in pairs or teams, particularly with younger children.
- Each side gets only 30 seconds to make their case.
- Finally, the table votes on a winner.



קִדּוּשׁ / KADEISH

recitation of Kiddush

We should spill a bit of wine on the tablecloth.

True: It makes people more comfortable and less nervous, especially guests.

False: Don't waste food! Spills are messy.



וּרְחָץ / URHATZ

washing hands before appetizers

We should wash each others' hands.

True: That way everyone feels what it's like to be royalty. It's nice to help people.

False: Whoever does the pouring might feel like a slave. Even royals should wash their own hands.



כַּרְפָּס / KARPAS

eat a vegetable dipped in salt water

It is good to cry.

True: Crying helps you let go of sadness and move on. Tonight is a time to remember even the bad parts of the whole story.

False: It is not good to dwell on sadness. Tonight is a time to celebrate freedom.



יַחַץ / YAHA TZ

breaking the middle matzah

It's better to save things for later than use them now

True: You never know what might happen in the future, and saving helps you be prepared.

False: Live in the moment, and enjoy what you have in the here and now.



מַגִּיד / MAGGID

telling of the story

הֵא לַחֲמַת עֲנִינוֹ / HA LAHMA ANYA
("Bread of Affliction")

Matzah is the bread of affliction.

True: It's hard, dry, and gives us all a stomach ache.

False: Matzah is delicious and reminds us of our freedom.



מַגִּיד / MAGGID

telling of the story

מָה נִשְׁתַּנָּה / MAH NISHTANAH
("Four Questions")

This night is not really so different.

True: We have Kiddush, *ha-motzi*, and way too much to eat, just like every Yom Tov.

False: Are you kidding me?



מַגִּיד / MAGGID

telling of the story

וַנִּצְעַק אֶל אֲבוֹתֵינוּ / VA-NITZAK EL AVOTEINU
("We Cried Out")

God would not have saved us if we hadn't cried out.

True: It's good to ask for help. Prayer is about asking for help.

False: Some people don't know what to say. God would help people even if they don't ask for it.



מַגִּיד / MAGGID

telling of the story

עֶשֶׂר מַכּוֹת / TEN PLAGUES

It is okay to hope for the enemy to be punished.

True: We need clarity of right and wrong. Actions have consequences.

False: We should never wish pain on human beings. It won't make anything better or take away the pain that was caused.



מַגִּיד / MAGGID

telling of the story

דַּיְיֵינוּ / DAYYEINU
("It Was Enough for Us")

You should say thank you even when your problems are not entirely fixed.

True: Every step forward matters. It's always important to show gratitude.

False: Don't become complacent with how things are. Always strive for better.



רחצה / RAHTZAH

washing hands before bread

You should take a bath every day.

True: You're dirty, and you smell. Germs make you sick.

False: You're not that dirty, come on. Germs build up your immune system.



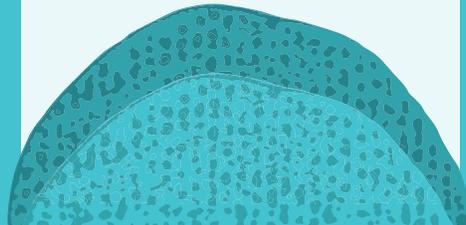
מוציא מצה / MOTZI MATZAH

eating matzah

Jews in America today are no longer afflicted.

True: We are safe and powerful.

False: Antisemitism is alive in the world, and is lurking beneath the surface in many places.



מרור / MAROR

eat bitter herbs

It is important to remember the bitter moments in our past.

True: They make you wiser... and more empathetic.

False: They just make you more bitter and sad. Let that negativity go!



כורך / KOREIKH

Hillel sandwich of matzah and maror

A sandwich made of matzah can still be considered a sandwich.

True: Two slices and a filling!

False: If it crumbles on your plate and leaves your mouth dry, it isn't a sandwich!



שולחן ערוך / SHULHAN OREIKH

eating the festive meal

Make something new to eat at the Seder.

True: *Hiddur mitzvah* (beautifying the mitzvah). Spice it up and keep it fresh.

False: This night is all about nostalgia: go for the comfort foods you know!



צפון / TZAFUN

eat the afikomen

The afikoman tastes like dessert.

True: Yum, what better way to end the meal?!

False: Ick, does it contain chocolate?



ברך / BAREIKH

thank God for the food

It's better to express gratitude after the meal than before.

True: You're way more excited about saying thank you after being so satisfied by the delicious meal.

False: It's rude to enjoy a meal without first saying thank you.



הלל / HALLEL

Psalms of praise

You can praise God even when things are still bad.

True: You can decide to see the good at any moment.

False: Praise in hard times is forced and inauthentic.



נרצה / NIRTZAH

prayer that God accepts our service

We should sing all of the songs.

True: They're so great!

False: No one knows all the songs! It is so late, go to bed!

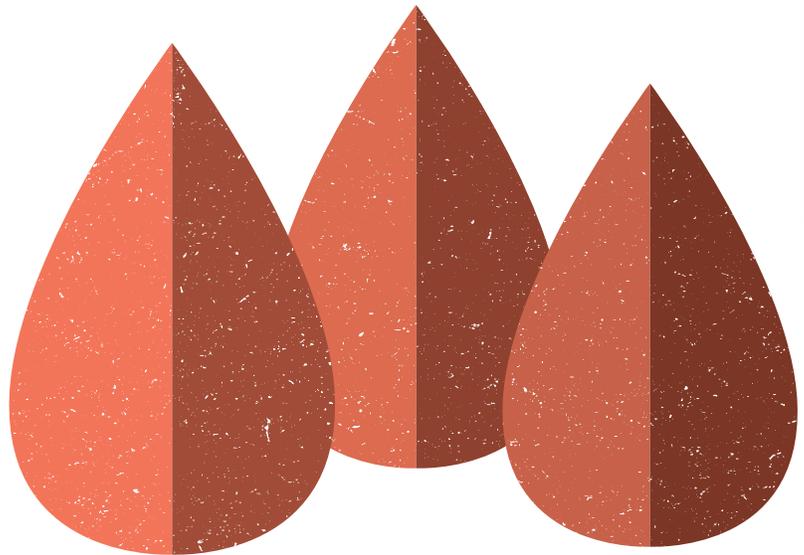


HIDDEN STORIES



TELLING THE REAL STORY

Dena Weiss



The Mishnah in Pesahim provides a basic framework for how to tell the Pesah story, “מתחיל בגנות ומסיים בשבח / beginning with degradation and ending in praise” (Mishnah Pesahim 10:4). This is a helpful guideline for the telling of any story; listeners like to hear a story of triumph and victory. The overcoming of adversity increases the dramatic tension. But at the Pesah Seder, we aren’t telling people stories that they don’t know; there is no real element of suspense. Even the children who don’t know why we lean or why we dip twice know that in the end of the story, everything turns out alright. If we hadn’t been redeemed, we wouldn’t be alive to hear and tell the story. So why do we need to start in the low place? Why don’t we just start the Seder with Hallel, praising God for our freedom?

The requirement to tell the story in this manner, moving from the negative and going to the positive, serves another function. Telling the story from the difficult beginning accentuates the complexity of growth, healing, and success. All redemptive processes leave their scars. The struggle is not forgotten even once the victory has been obtained. The costs are still real, and the trials at the outset are an inextricable part of the joyful conclusion. There is no freedom without the slavery that precedes it. The praise at the end of

the story derives its reality and its relevance from our awareness of where the story began.

We need this rule to be in place when we tell our own stories because it reminds us that everyone we encounter is carrying their past with them. Our Rabbis teach in the Mishnah:

משנה בנה מציעא ד:י

כשם שאונאה במקח וממכר כך אונאה בדברים... אם היה בעל תשובה לא יאמר לו זכור מעשיך הראשונים אם הוא בן גרים לא יאמר לו זכור מעשה אבותיך שנאמר “וגר לא תונה ולא תלחצנו” (שמות כב:כ)

Mishnah Bava Metzia 4:10

Just as there is exploitation in business transactions, there is also exploitation in speech... If he is a penitent, no one should say to him, “Remember your prior deeds.” If he is the child of converts, no one should say to him, “Remember the deeds of your ancestors,” as it says, “Do not exploit a convert (lit. stranger or refugee) and do not oppress him” (Shemot 22:20).

Telling our story with all of the difficult pieces intact reminds us to be sensitive in this way. The penitent never fully “moves past” his old ways, and therefore, it

is cruel to remind him of his past behavior. The child of converts never forgets where they came from and are always concerned about belonging. What you think of as old scars and topics that can be referenced lightly might still be felt as acute and festering wounds by the person who bears them. A person can be in a new stage in their life, look and feel fine, and all it might take to bring them back to their most painful moment could be the offhand comment that you make to them.

A person who is remarried is not necessarily free from the devastation of the loss of their first spouse. Someone who has struggled with infertility might not have forgotten the months and years of disappointment in trying to conceive, even once they've had children. Getting the new job does not erase the sense of shame and insecurity that prolonged unemployment can bring.

When we tell the story of our redemption from the beginning, incorporating the suffering into our narrative, we make the telling real. This process should increase our awareness of the pain that can endure beyond any happy ending. The story of our freedom includes the story of our shackles. Every year, we repeat, "*avadim hayyinu*, we were slaves," because that slavery remains a part of us. The Haggadah reminds us of the ways in which our history still marks us, how everything we've endured still shapes us, our feelings, and our perceptions.

And we should use the awareness of our own painful moments to increase our sensitivity to the hidden pain of the people we encounter. ♦

IS THE PESAH STORY ETERNAL?

Rabbi Elie Kaunfer



How do we think about major events in our past? Do they remain core features of who we are, or do they ultimately fade with time? Do traumatic—or miraculous—moments in our lives define us forever? Or are they best forgotten in order to move forward and grow?

These core questions of self and identity are surprisingly front and center in the Haggadah, but it takes a little work to uncover them.

In the early part of the Haggadah, we encounter a strange debate between the Sages and Ben Zoma. In typical Rabbinic fashion, they argue about the meaning of a seemingly extraneous word in the Torah. As is also typical of Rabbinic debates, the implications of the argument extend well beyond an esoteric point of grammar.

These rabbis are discussing the end of this verse:

דברים טו:ג

לֹא־תֹאכַל עֲלֶיךָ חֶמֶץ שְׁבַע־יָמִים תֹּאכַל־עֲלֶיךָ מִצּוֹת
לֶחֶם עֲנִי בֵּי בְחֻפְזוֹן יֵצְאֶת מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לְמַעַן תִּזְכֹּר
אֶת־יְיָוָה יִצְאֶתְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם כֹּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ:

Deuteronomy 16:3

You shall not eat anything leavened with it; for seven days thereafter, you shall eat unleavened bread, bread of distress—for you departed from the land of Egypt hurriedly—so that you may remember the day of your departure from the land of Egypt all the days of your life.

The extra word in the verse is “all.” The verse simply could have concluded “the days of your life.” What is the meaning of specifying “all the days”?

Ben Zoma states that this extra word comes to teach us that we must remember the Exodus during both the day and the night, not just the day. But the majority of the Sages disagree. They claim this extra word, “all,” comes to teach us that we must remember the Exodus not just in this world but also in the world to come.

So far, so good. We seem to have a technical debate about whether the extra word does or doesn’t indicate a requirement to remember the Exodus at night. But the Haggadah only quotes the first part of the debate, the part found in the Mishnah (Berakhot 1:5). The rest, preserved in the Tosefta, makes clear that there are bigger issues at stake:

תוספתא ברכות א:יב

אמר להם בן זומא לחכמים: וכי מזכירים יציאת מצרים לימות המשיח? הרי הוא אומר "לכן הנה ימים באים נאם ה'" (ירמיהו כג:ז) וגו'.

אמרו לו: לא שתעקר יציאת מצרים ממקומה, אלא שתאמר יציאת מצרים מוסף על המלכיות ומלכיות עיקר ויציאת מצרים טפילה.

Tosefta Berakhot 1:12

Ben Zoma said to the Sages: But will they mention the Exodus from Egypt in the days of the Messiah? For it says, "Therefore, behold days are coming—declares YHVH..." (Jeremiah 23:7).

They said to him: The Exodus from Egypt will not be uprooted from its place, rather the Exodus from Egypt will be said in addition to the [destruction of the] kingdoms [in the end of days], but the kingdoms will be primary and the Exodus from Egypt secondary.

Ben Zoma's argument claims, in effect, that in the future we won't need to remember the Exodus from Egypt at all. He cites the prophet Jeremiah, who stated that in the future, God will no longer be known as the God "who brought the Israelites out of the land of Egypt," but rather as the God who "led the offspring of the House of Israel from the northland" (Jeremiah 23:7-8). In other words, Ben Zoma is claiming that the Exodus from Egypt, although certainly important to remember nowadays, is not an eternal part of the Jewish story. In fact, one day in the future, God will redeem the Jewish people from exile again by returning them from the land of the North. The Egyptian redemption will no longer be critical to the story of the Jewish people. And therefore, there will be no need to mention it in the World to Come—that is, eternally.

Here, Ben Zoma offers a radical approach to memory. We only need to remember the most recent redemption, he claims. Old redemptions, like that of Egypt, are only important until the next redemption. Traumatic, even miraculous, events don't last forever in our consciousness.

But the Sages counter with their own explanation of the verse from Jeremiah. Yes, in the future, the redemption from the North will be central, and the

redemption from Egypt will be secondary. But the redemption from Egypt will never disappear from our memories. We will eternally tell this story, even if it is no longer the most relevant story in our history.

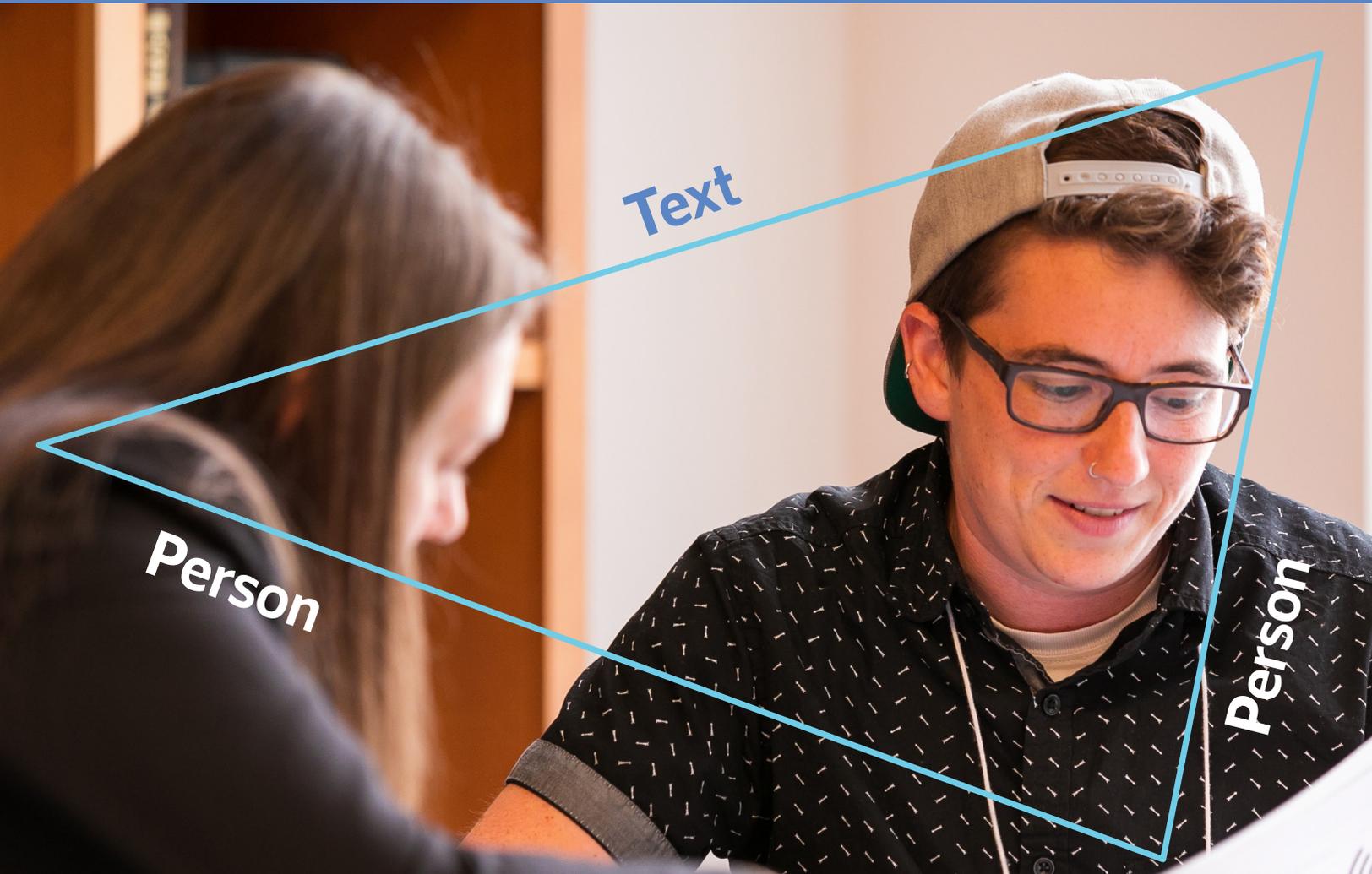
This is a fundamental debate about how we relate to the past. Are the Jewish people forever meant to remember—and be defined by—the Exodus from Egypt? Or are later redemptions meant to fully supersede this memory? What do we gain and lose by constantly returning back to this story, and telling it every year at Pesah?

The debate has deep implications for identity and the possibility of change. For some, change is only possible when one becomes another and forgets the past. Maimonides, for example, suggests this is the power of changing one's name as a form of *teshuvah* or repentance. "That is to say, I am another, and I am not the same person who did those deeds" (Mishneh Torah, Laws of Repentance 2:4). Maimonides suggests that one way to change is to forget the past entirely and reinvent oneself. This represents Ben Zoma's vision of memory.

But there is another, more gradual model of personal change, which maps on to the Sages' position. The Book of Chronicles, the final book of the Bible, opens with a genealogy, which it interrupts briefly to say: "Abram, that is Abraham" (I Chronicles 1:27). The Talmud reads this verse to mean that Abraham retained his righteousness from the beginning to the end of his life (Megillah 11a). In other words, even with all the journeying Abraham does, there is a core part of him that never changes. Indeed, his name, Abram, grows to Abraham, but all the letters of his original name remain. He develops, but never loses, his core.

While I find a certain appeal to Ben Zoma's approach, I nevertheless am drawn to the majority position. We can never forget our original enslavement and exile as a people, even as later events in Jewish history come and go. The power of the Seder is the power of memory in action, telling a story that still is a major part of our identity, even as it shifts in importance. ♦

Adapted from My Jewish Learning, "[Is the Passover Story Eternal?](#)"



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IMAGINING LIBERATION

Yitzhak Bronstein



The role of memory on Pesah is unique among all Jewish holidays. Nowhere is this more clear than in the concluding paragraph of Maggid:

בְּכָל־דּוֹר וְדוֹר חַיִּיב אָדָם לִרְאוֹת אֶת־עַצְמוֹ כְּאִלוֹ הוּא
 יֵצֵא מִמִּצְרַיִם, שְׁנֹאמֵר: וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר,
 בְּעֵבֹר זֶה עָשָׂה ה' לִי בְּצֵאתִי מִמִּצְרַיִם. לֹא אֶת־אֲבוֹתֵינוּ
 בְּלִבְדָּ גָּאֵל הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא, אֲלֵא אִךְ אוֹתֵנוּ גָּאֵל
 עַמָּהֶם, שְׁנֹאמֵר: וְאוֹתֵנוּ הוֹצִיא מִשָּׁם, לְמַעַן הִבִּיא
 אוֹתֵנוּ, לְתֵת לָנוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לְאֲבוֹתֵינוּ

Generation by generation, a person is obligated to see oneself as having left Egypt, as it is said: "And you shall tell your child on that day, 'Because of this, God acted for me when I came out of Egypt.'" It was not only our ancestors whom the Holy One redeemed; but rather, we were also redeemed with them: "[God] took us out from there, to bring us to the land promised to our ancestors to give to us."

The obligation is not only to recall the Exodus but to relive it. On the one hand, rituals of remembrance on festivals are commonplace: We light a *menorah* on Hanukkah to remember the miracle of the oil. We

circle the *bimah* on Sukkot with the four species to remember a ritual performed on Sukkot in the Temple. On the 9th of Av, we read the Book of Lamentations to remember the destruction of the Temple. Yet, it is only on Pesah where the obligation to reenact is described not as an exercise of memory—to remember that the Israelites were liberated—but to see oneself as having actually lived through the experience. What is it about Pesah that calls for a different relationship with memory?

A second peculiarity emerges in how the Haggadah describes the Exodus experience earlier in Maggid. Rather than citing the verses in the Book of Exodus that describe the story, the Haggadah quotes from the twenty-fifth chapter of Deuteronomy. The chapter describes the First Fruits ceremony, which took place in the Beit ha-Mikdash (Temple) on Shavuot. On Shavuot, each householder would bring their first fruits to Jerusalem. Once there, they recite an invocation, narrating briefly the journey from Egypt to the land of Israel. In describing the Exodus, why does the Haggadah cite the First Fruits invocation in Deuteronomy, rather than the narrative from the Book of Exodus?

Some scholars suggest that the First Fruits text is included in the Haggadah because it would have been familiar to many Jews in Temple times.¹ I would like to suggest that the choice to cite the First Fruits text at a central point in the Haggadah is closely related to the obligation to see oneself as having personally experienced the Exodus. At the end of the ceremony, after one has recited the invocation describing the Exodus, the passage concludes:

דברים כו:יא

וְשִׂמְחֶתָּ בְּכָל־הַטּוֹב אֲשֶׁר נָתַן־לְךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ וּלְבֵיתְךָ
אֶתֶּה וְהַלְוִי וְהַגֵּר אֲשֶׁר בְּקִרְבְּךָ

Deuteronomy 26:11

And you shall enjoy, together with the Levite and the stranger in your midst, all the bounty that God your Lord has bestowed upon you and your household.

The person being addressed in this verse is a farmer who has toiled for many months on their land. At the moment when the fruits of their labor are finally coming to realization—and when one is most likely to feel self-congratulatory over their hard-earned success—the Torah commands them to travel to Jerusalem and assist the Levite and stranger, neither of whom possess land of their own. But what does this ritual have to do with Pesaḥ which leads to it being cited at the peak of Maggid?

I would suggest that, in a sense, this ritual is a manifestation of what it means to have experienced liberation from slavery. The experience of liberation is incomplete until the Israelites can provide this freedom to others by ensuring others' material needs are met. Although the Israelites are freed from Pharaoh on Pesaḥ, it is not until the First Fruits ceremony on Shavuot that they embody this freedom by sharing their economic bounty with the landless. With freedom comes a newfound responsibility for

the less fortunate, and it is only during the First Fruits ceremony that this quality of liberation is actualized.

With this backdrop, the meaning of seeing ourselves as having personally left Egypt becomes clearer. This directive is not only about our capacity to imagine ourselves departing from Egypt, but something far more action-oriented and concrete—that we must act in the world as if we ourselves had been oppressed and then liberated. One who has experienced liberation can feel the ultimate motivation to help others in need, and this paragraph in Maggid calls us to see ourselves in this light. It is for this reason that we are instructed not only to remember liberation, but to re-live the experience through the Seder, so that it truly informs how we treat others throughout the year. To this end, we recite the First Fruits invocation, the first instance in the Torah where the Israelites have an opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of what liberation entails.

The challenge of Seder night is to put ourselves in the place of a liberated slave such that it transforms how we relate to those whose liberation is not yet realized. There are countless instances in the Torah where the justification of a particular *mitzvah* is connected to remembering the Exodus from Egypt; there's even a biblical obligation to recall the Exodus each and every day.² From our earliest beginnings, the experience of liberation was intended to be foundational to our identity and inform our core values.³ However, the ubiquity of the imperative to remember the Exodus can belie how challenging it truly is.

On Seder night, we are not remembering the Exodus for the sake of memory but exploring what it means to live life having been transformed by the Exodus. Our task is not only one of imagination, but one of channeling our liberation narrative into transforming the world. ♦

¹ Among other suggestions, see the detailed analysis in Joshua Kulp, *The Schechter Haggadah*, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: Urim Publications, 2009), pp. 213-215.

² Remembering the Exodus: e.g. Exodus 23:9, Leviticus 19:34, Deuteronomy 5:15. Recalling the Exodus every day: Deuteronomy 16:3.

³ Tellingly, God tells Abraham in Genesis 15, generations prior to the oppression in Egypt, that a slavery experience will be a formative experience for his descendants. For more on this theme, see Shai Held, "[Turning Memory into Empathy](#)" and collected in *The Heart of Torah* (Philadelphia: JPS, 2017).

THE JOURNEY AND THE (ELUSIVE) DESTINATION

Rabbi Shai Held



Sometimes we feel we know certain texts so well that we lose the capacity to be surprised and unsettled by them. It is thus easy to forget—or to fail to notice—that two of Judaism’s most basic texts are marked by the same oddity: they tell a story whose ending has been lopped off.

The foundational story of the Jewish people is about our ancestors being freed from slavery in Egypt and brought by God to the Land of Israel. And yet, reading the Haggadah at Pesah, we come upon an anomaly: We learn a great deal about the Exodus but hear almost nothing about arriving in the Land. Amazingly, in reading the Torah, we encounter much the same thing: We are told quite a lot about the Exodus and the long journey through the wilderness. We hear many details about what is supposed to happen when the Israelites arrive in the Land and conquer it, but the Torah startlingly ends before they actually get there. What is going on here?

The Haggadah repeatedly truncates key biblical passages. One of the central texts traditionally studied at the Seder is the formula recited by the Israelite

who brings first fruits to the Temple.¹ Recapitulating Israelite history, he declares:

“My father was a wandering Aramean. He went down to Egypt with meager numbers and sojourned there; but there he became a great and populous nation. The Egyptians dealt harshly with us and oppressed us; they imposed heavy labor upon us. We cried to God, the Lord of our fathers, and God heard our plea and saw our plight, our misery, and our oppression. God took us out of Egypt by a mighty hand, and by signs and portents” (Deuteronomy 26:5-8).

We were enslaved and suffered greatly, the Israelite recounts; we cried out to God, and God saved us. There the Haggadah leaves it. But this is extremely strange. The Mishnah explicitly instructs us to read the passage from Deuteronomy “until we complete the whole section” (Mishnah Pesahim 10:4). But we do not, in fact, complete the section. Curiously, the last verse in the passage is simply omitted: “He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey” (26:9). The final stage of the story,

1 For more on this key element of the Seder, see Yitzhak Bronstein’s essay earlier in this Reader, [here](#).

God's bringing the people to the Land, has mysteriously been erased.

At the Seder, we bless God for keeping God's promise to Israel, and recall the "covenant between the pieces" (*berit bein ha-betarim*) between God and our forefather Abram. We read of the promises God made on that day: "Know well that your offspring shall be strangers in a land not theirs, and they shall be enslaved and oppressed for four hundred years. But I will execute judgment on the nation they shall serve, and in the end, they shall go free with great wealth" (Genesis 15:13-14). Reading the Haggadah alone, we would think that God's promises had ended there. But a simple look at the text in Genesis shows that this is not at all the case. God goes on: "And they shall return here... To your offspring, I assign this land, from the



river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates" (15:16, 18). Once again, the conclusion has simply been elided, as if all that God had promised was the Exodus from Egypt. The promise of the Land has once again disappeared.

At the beginning of Parashat Va'Eera, God speaks to Moses and informs him that God has heard the groaning of the Israelites and remembered the covenant (Exodus 6:5). Moses is to speak to the Israelites in God's name, and say: "I am God. I will take you out (*ve-hotzeiti*) from under the burdens of Egypt, and I will rescue you (*ve-hitzalti*) from their bondage. I will redeem you (*ve-ga'alti*) with an outstretched arm and through extraordinary chastisements. And I will take you (*ve-lakhti*) to be My people, and I will be your God. And you shall know that I, the Lord, am your God

who took you out from under the burdens of Egypt. I will bring you (*ve-heveiti*) into the land..." (6:6-8). There are five crucial terms here, suggestive of five stages of divine redemption. These verses are crucial to Pesah, and yet at the Seder, we drink four cups of wine, which are said to correspond to the four-staged redemption promised by God.² Yet again, a pivotal biblical text has been truncated, and the last stage of redemption, arrival in the Land (*ve-heveiti*), has been totally effaced.

Where has the Land of Israel gone? Why is the Seder night so focused on the journey and seemingly so uninterested in the destination?

Scholars have offered historical answers to our question—parts of the Seder took shape, they remind us, during a time of exile, and it is only natural that a community stripped of access to the Land would downplay its centrality. Moreover, there were power struggles between Jewish communities living in the Land of Israel and those living in Babylonia, and the latter often triumphed (remember that the core text of much of Jewish culture is the Babylonian Talmud rather than the Palestinian). So perhaps our arrival in the Land is absent from the Seder because of the historical circumstance in which the Haggadah came together, a reflection of deep-seated communal rivalries.

Perhaps. But there is likely also something deeper at play. Maybe the Haggadah seeks to teach us that the journey is often more important than the destination.

If we look closely at our verses from Va'Eera, we quickly realize that the Haggadah is not alone in omitting the promised ending. The Israelites are promised five stages of redemption, culminating in inheriting the land, but the Torah itself ends before that final promise has been fulfilled. On some level, the story the Torah tells is incomplete: the promised destination is still out of reach. As Bible scholar Terence Fretheim puts it, "The ending [of the Torah] defers the fulfillment of the promise; it gives to the Pentateuch

2 Some versions of the Talmud do prescribe the drinking of five cups, but the version that has held sway prescribes the drinking of four, and that is what we, in fact, do (Babylonian Talmud Pesahim 118a). See the words of my teacher, Rabbi Yitz Greenberg, in describing why he, in fact, drinks this fifth cup at the Seder, "You Are Not Free Until You Are Home," Parashat Va'Eera, available [here](#).

the character of an unfinished symphony.”³ In leaving out the arrival, then, the Haggadah is in a sense merely imitating the Torah.

Maybe the Torah, too, wants us to know that the journey is not just a means but also an end in itself. The journey does not merely serve to lead us to the Land. No, the journey itself is intrinsically holy. Think for a moment about Judaism’s three pilgrimage festivals. Pesah, of course, commemorates the Exodus from Egypt. Shavuot, as our Sages understand it, commemorates the revelation at Mount Sinai. And Sukkot? Sukkot does not recall any earth-shattering or life-orienting events. It merely remembers (and reenacts) the long journey of the Israelites through the wilderness. Strikingly, which of these holidays is considered the most joyous? Sukkot, referred to as *zeman simhateinu*, the time of our joy. The happiest days of the year in Judaism are the days devoted to remembering and re-experiencing the journey.

We can personalize this as well. For many people, the experience of a religious quest is more fundamental, and more meaningful, than the (often illusory) sense of having arrived. Many years ago, when I was a teenager studying in an Israeli yeshivah, I found myself preoccupied by a series of what felt to me like pressing theological questions, mostly about biblical criticism and its implications for faith. I asked several of my teachers for help, but they were uniformly unhelpful: some confessed ignorance of the issues at hand, while others warned me that my questions posed a danger to the religious welfare of other students. Quite by accident, I stumbled upon a book by the late Rabbi Louis Jacobs, in which he wrestled with precisely some of the questions I found most vexing. As only an angst-ridden adolescent could, I proceeded to write him a fifteen-page handwritten letter about my religious concerns, anxieties, and fears. He was kind enough to respond right away. What stayed with me was how he concluded his very kind note.

3 Terence Fretheim, *The Pentateuch* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), p. 54.

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“Remember always,” he said, “that the search for Torah is itself Torah and that in the very search you have already found.” Those words have sustained me through periods of great doubt and enabled me to be nourished by the joy of spiritual and intellectual quest.

In a similar vein, the talmudic Sage Rabbi Yitzhak teaches: “If a person tells you, ‘I have searched and not found’, do not believe him” (Babylonian Talmud Megillah 6b). The Hasidic Master Rav Menahem Mendel of Kotzk comments: “Because, after all, the searching is itself the finding.”

There is real beauty and profound truth in all this, and yet, we should be careful to avoid naiveté. There is something powerful about where both the Torah and the Haggadah end, but there is also something tragic about it. A promise, followed by a journey, and finally... a promise left often painfully unfulfilled. This is the stuff of deep spiritual growth, but it can also cause great pain and suffering. Think of Moses’ life: he dies knowing all too well that a journey without an ending can be disappointing and even excruciating. He journeys to the very border of the land and then dies without entering. This is not—or at least, is not only—about uplift; it is also about heartbreak and loss.

As the Torah comes to a close, anxiety about the future remains in place. In Fretheim’s words, “The promise is left suspended and the people are dispirited and fearful.” The future is not simply filled with delights; it is fraught with danger. The people are so

stubborn and sinful that the likelihood is that they will be disloyal to God again and again (e.g. Deuteronomy 28:15, 29:17, 30:17, 31:16). In light of all this, Fretheim notes that “Deuteronomy leaves readers wondering what might be in store for this inevitably disobedient people. These negative possibilities create an ending of no little ambivalence.”⁴

Had the Haggadah wanted to give us simple, happy endings, we’d have been instructed to stay up long into the night recounting the joys of living in a land flowing with milk and honey. Had the Torah wanted to give us simple, happy endings, it would have contained six books rather than five; it would have ended with the Book of Joshua, with its narrative of conquering the land, rather than Deuteronomy, with the people still outside, looking in. As always, Jewish spirituality asks us to embrace complexity rather than eschew it: The journey can indeed be more significant, and more joyous, than arriving at the destination. But the never-endingness of the journey can also exhaust and enervate us. The perpetual elusiveness of our destination can enliven our hearts, but sometimes it can also break them. ♦



4 Fretheim, p. 54.

ACTIVITY: FOUR CHILDREN



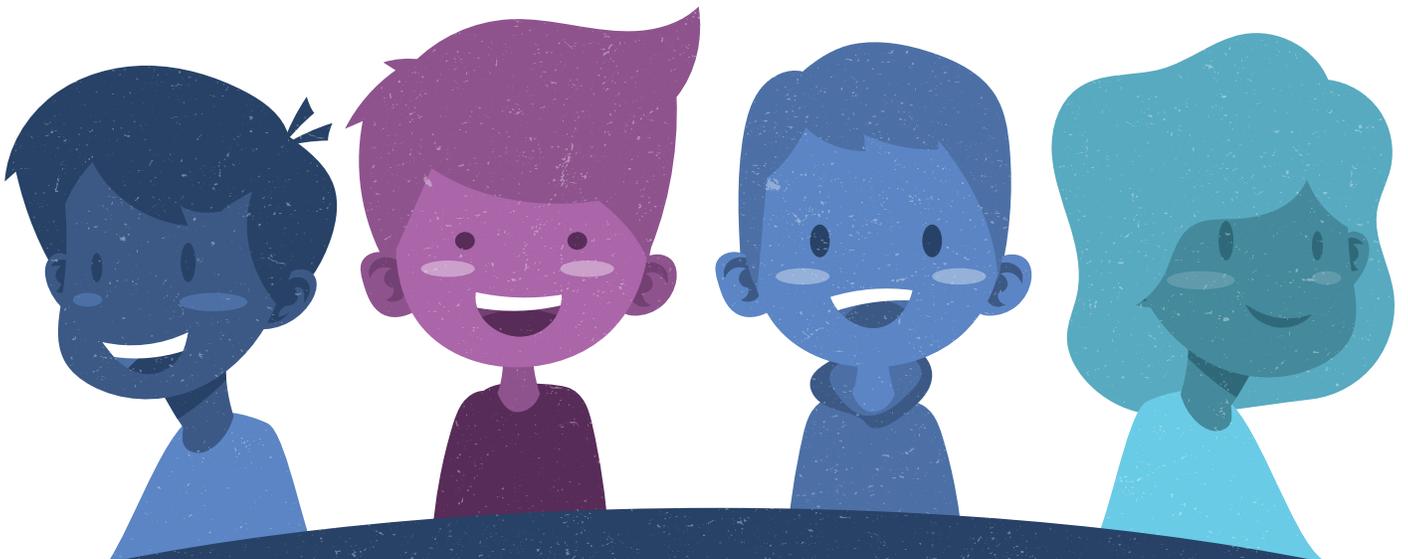
INTRODUCTION

The four children, wise, rebellious, simple, and the one who does not know to ask, are the main cast for the central part of the Haggadah, the telling of the Pesah story. Like any good cast, they are an intriguing and relatable group. We all feel like each one of the four children at various times. And also true to a good cast, each one helps us better understand the story they are a part of. In our case, the telling of the Pesah story fully emerges through responding to these children with essential texts of that story.

Although the Haggadah tells us which texts should respond to each child, did you know that they are not always matched in the same way? Different Jewish sources disagree about this matching. For example, one of the texts that responds to the children is,

“You should teach them the laws of the paschal sacrifice...” In the Haggadah, this is a response to the wise child, but in other sources, it is the response to the simple one. This makes us rethink what the text means, what being “wise” means and what being “simple” means.

The following activity invites us to ask exactly these kinds of questions, particularly: “Who are these four children? What is the meaning of the texts offered as responses to them?” and “What is the best way to engage with each of these children?” Through doing so, we will discover a bit more about ourselves, the four children, and the story we all share together.



Steps

1. PREPARE

Cut out each of the squares. They are not matched in any particular way.

2. EXAMINE

Look closely at

- the titles of each of the four children
- their questions
- the possible texts offered as responses to them

3. MATCH

Without looking at the Haggadah (since that is only one possible answer!), match the children and their questions together with the response text that you think go together best.

4. READ

Read the children's questions and the text response with tones and gestures you feel fit each one best.

5. DISCUSS

Discuss: Use evidence from the words describing the children, their questions, and in the response texts to explain your choices (see example below). Discuss how your choices reflect your understanding of each child. Feel free to make any changes to your combinations or tones based on your conversation.

Example:

The one who does not know to ask

↳ *"It is because of this that God acted for me when I left Egypt" (Exodus 13:8).*

Evidence and Explanation: I chose this response text for the child "who does not know to ask" because I think there are a lot of reasons people don't ask questions. In the Haggadah, I feel like we usually think it's because this child doesn't know enough, but then I thought about how people sometimes don't ask questions because they think they know too much. In that case, the text I chose as a response is a good one because it says "...God acted for *me*." Someone is offering their point of view to help the child, who thinks they know already, understand that other people have different experiences that they can learn from. The gesture I imagine for this child is looking up because they're wrapped up in their own thoughts. The responder would emphasize the word "me" and be reaching out to the child to try and get their attention.

6. REFLECT

What new understandings about the children or texts did you have as you put your combinations together? About the Pesah story as a whole? What did you learn from how someone else combined the elements? Did your combinations change at any point? Why?





CUT OUT THESE CARDS
FOR THE ACTIVITY!



WISE



What does the wise one say?
"What are the testimonies,
statutes, and laws that God
our Lord commanded us?"

"If the child has no knowledge,
their parent teaches them"

(Mishnah Pesahim 10:4)

You should tell him:
"God brought us out of Egypt from
the House of Bondage
with a strong hand"

(Exodus 13:14)

REBELLIOUS

What does the rebellious
one say? "What is this
service to you?"



"It is because of this that God
acted for me when I left Egypt"

(Exodus 13:8)

SIMPLE



What does
the simple one say?

"What is this?"

"You should teach him the laws of
the paschal sacrifice, which end with
'no dessert (*afikoman*) may
be had after it'"

(Mishnah Pesahim 10:8)

DOESN'T KNOW

???



"You will tell your child on that day"

(Exodus 12:26)

FOR FURTHER STUDY

On this page you will find two helpful resources. The first is the set of response texts given to the four children as found in their original context. This resource can be used while doing the activity. The second is a comparison of the four children as found in the other two classical Jewish sources besides Haggadah. This second resource should be set aside until after the activity is over, for those who are interested in additional text study.

שמות יב:כא-לה

^{כא}וַיִּקְרָא מֹשֶׁה לְכָל־זִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם
מִשְׁכּוֹ וּקְחוּ לָכֶם צֹאן לְמִשְׁפַּחְתֵּיכֶם וּשְׁחֹטוּ
הַפֶּסַח: ^{כב}וְלִקְחֶתֶם אֲגָדַת אֲזוּב וּטְבַלְתֶּם בְּדָם
אֲשֶׁר־בַּסֵּף וְהִגַּעְתֶּם אֶל־הַמַּשְׁקוּף וְאֶל־שְׁתֵּי
הַמְּזוּזוֹת מִן־הַדָּם אֲשֶׁר אֲשֶׁר בַּסֵּף וְאַתֶּם לֹא תֵצְאוּ
אִישׁ מִמִּפְתַּח־בֵּיתוֹ עַד־בֹּקֶר: ^{כג}וְעָבַר ה' לַגֹּף אֶת־
מִצְרַיִם וְרָאָה אֶת־הַדָּם עַל־הַמַּשְׁקוּף וְעַל שְׁתֵּי
הַמְּזוּזוֹת וַפָּסַח ה' עַל־הַפֶּתַח וְלֹא יָתַן הַמַּשְׁחִית
לְבֹא אֶל־בְּתֵיכֶם לַגֹּף: וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־הַדָּבָר הַזֶּה
לְחֻק־לֶךְ וּלְבְנֵיךָ עַד־עוֹלָם:

^{כד}וְהָיָה כִּי־תִבְאוּ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יָתַן יְהוָה
לָכֶם בְּאֲשֶׁר דָּבַר וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־הַעֲבָדָה הַזֹּאת:
^{כה}וְהָיָה כִּי־יֹאמְרוּ אֲלֵיכֶם בְּנֵיכֶם מָה הַעֲבָדָה
הַזֹּאת לָכֶם: ^{כו}וְאָמַרְתֶּם זָבַח־פֶּסַח הוּא לַה' אֲשֶׁר־
פָּסַח עַל־בְּתֵי בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּמִצְרַיִם בְּנֹגְפוֹ אֶת־
מִצְרַיִם וְאַת־בְּתֵינֵנוּ הִצִּיל וַיִּסַּד הָעָם וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּ:
^{כז}וַיִּלְכוּ וַיַּעֲשׂוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֶת־
מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן בְּן עֶשׂו:

^{כח}וְהָיָה בְּחֻצֵי הַלַּיְלָה וְה' הִפָּה כָּל־בְּכוֹר בְּאָרֶץ
מִצְרַיִם מִבְּכוֹר פְּרֹעָה הַיֹּשֵׁב עַל־בֶּטְאוֹ עַד בְּכוֹר
הַשֶּׁבִי אֲשֶׁר בְּבֵית הַבּוֹר וְכָל בְּכוֹר בְּהֵמָה: ^{כט}וַיִּיָּקָם
פְּרֹעָה לַיְלָה הוּא וְכָל־עַבְדָּיו וְכָל־מִצְרַיִם וְתָהִי
צָעֲקָה גְדֹלָה בְּמִצְרַיִם כִּי־אִיוּ בֵּית אֲשֶׁר אִיוּ־שָׁם
מֵת: ^לוַיִּקְרָא לְמֹשֶׁה וּלְאַהֲרֹן לַיְלָה וַיֹּאמֶר קוּמוּ
צֵאוּ מִתּוֹךְ עַמִּי גַם־אַתֶּם גַּם־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּלְכוּ
עִבְדוּ אֶת־ה' כְּדַבְּרֵיכֶם: ^{לא}גַּם־צֹאנֵיכֶם גַּם־בְּקָרְכֶם
קָחוּ בְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתֶּם וּלְכוּ וּבְרַכְתֶּם גַּם־אֹתִי:

^{לב}וַתִּתְחַזַּק מִצְרַיִם עַל־הָעָם לְמַהֵר לְשַׁלְּחָם מִן־
הָאָרֶץ כִּי אָמְרוּ בְּלִנְיָ מֵתִים: ^{לג}וַיִּישָׂא הָעָם אֶת־
בָּצֵקוֹ טָרֶם יִחַמַּץ מִשְׁאַרְתָּם אַרְרוֹת בְּשִׁמְלֹתָם
עַל־שִׁבְמָם: וּבְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל עָשׂוּ כְּדַבַּר מֹשֶׁה

Exodus 12:21-35

²¹Moses then summoned all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Go, pick out lambs for your families, and slaughter the passover offering. ²²Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and apply some of the blood that is in the basin to the lintel and to the two doorposts. None of you shall go outside the door of his house until morning. ²³For when God goes through to smite the Egyptians, He will see the blood on the lintel and the two doorposts, and God will pass over the door and not let the Destroyer enter and smite your home.

²⁴"You shall observe this as an institution for all time, for you and for your descendants. ²⁵And when you enter the land that God will give you, as He has promised, you shall observe this rite. ²⁶And when your children ask you, 'What do you mean by this rite?' you shall say, 'It is the passover sacrifice to God, because He passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt when He smote the Egyptians, but saved our houses.'" The people then bowed low in homage. ²⁷And the Israelites went and did so; just as God had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did.

²⁸In the middle of the night God struck down all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh who sat on the throne to the first-born of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the first-born of the cattle. ²⁹And Pharaoh arose in the night, with all his courtiers and all the Egyptians—because there was a loud cry in Egypt; for there was no house where there was not someone dead. ³⁰He summoned Moses and Aaron in the night and said, "Up, depart from among my people, you and the Israelites with you! Go, worship God as you said! ³¹Take also your flocks and your herds, as you said, and begone! And may you bring a blessing upon me also!"

³³The Egyptians urged the people on, impatient to have them leave the country, for they said, "We shall all be dead." ³⁴So the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading bowls wrapped in their cloaks

וַיִּשְׁאַלוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם כְּלֵי-כֶסֶף וְכֵלֵי זָהָב וְשִׁמְלֹת:

שמות יג:א-טו

אִנְיָדַבֵּר ה' אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: יִקְדָּשׁ-לִי כָל-בְּכוֹר
פֶּטֶר כָּל-רֶחֶם בְּבִנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאָדָם וּבַבְּהֵמָה לִי
הוּא: וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-ה'עֵם זָכוֹר אֶת-הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה
אֲשֶׁר יִצְאֲתֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עַבְדִּים כִּי בַחֲזֹן
יָד הוֹצִיא ה' אֶתְכֶם מִזֶּה וְלֹא יֵאָכֵל חֶמֶץ: יְהִיֹּם
אֲתֶם יִצְאִים בְּחֹדֶשׁ הָאָבִיב: יְהִיֵּה כִי-יִבְיָאֲךָ ה'
אֶל-אֶרֶץ הַכְּנַעֲנִי וְהַחִתִּי וְהָאֲמֹרִי וְהַחִוִּי וְהַיְבוּסִי
אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לְאַבְרָהָם לֵאמֹר לְתֶת לְךָ אֶת-אֶרֶץ חֶלֶב
וְדָבָשׁ וְעַבְדְּךָ אֶת-הָעֶבֶדְךָ הַזֶּה אֶת-בְּחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה:

יִשְׁבַּעַת יָמִים תֹּאכַל מִצֹּת וּבַיּוֹם הַשְּׂבִיעִי חָג
לֵה': יִמְצוֹת יֵאָכֵל אֶת שְׂבַעַת הַיָּמִים וְלֹא-יִרְאֶה
לְךָ חֶמֶץ וְלֹא-יִבְיָאֲךָ לְךָ שָׂאֵר בְּכֵל-גְּבֻלָּךָ: יְהִי־גִדְתָּ
לְבִנְךָ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר בְּעַבְדִּי זֶה עָשָׂה ה'
לִי בְצֵאתִי מִמִּצְרַיִם: וְהָיָה לְךָ לְאוֹת עַל-יָדְךָ
וּלְזִכָּרוֹן בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ לְמַעַן תִּהְיֶה תּוֹרַת ה' בְּפִידְךָ
כִּי בְיַד חֲזָקָה הוֹצֵאֲךָ ה' מִמִּצְרַיִם: וְשִׁמְרָתָ אֶת-
הַחֻקָּה הַזֹּאת לְמוֹעֲדָהּ מִיָּמִים יְמִימָה:

יְהִיֵּה כִי-יִבְיָאֲךָ ה' אֶל-אֶרֶץ הַכְּנַעֲנִי בְּאֲשֶׁר
נִשְׁבַּע לְךָ וְלְאַבְרָהָם וְנִתְּנָה לְךָ: יְהִי־עַבְדְּךָ כָּל-
פֶּטֶר-רֶחֶם לֵה' וְכָל-פֶּטֶר שֶׁגֶר בְּהֵמָה אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה
לְךָ הַזֶּכֶר לֵה': וְכָל-פֶּטֶר חֶמֶר תִּפְדֶּה בְּשֵׂה
וְאִם-לֹא תִפְדֶּה וְעַרְפָּתוֹ וְכָל בְּכוֹר אָדָם בְּבִנְיָךָ
תִּפְדֶּה: יְהִיֵּה כִי-יִשְׁאַלְךָ בְּנֶךָ מָחָר לֵאמֹר מַה-
זֹאת וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו בַּחֲזֹן יָד הוֹצִיאָנוּ ה' מִמִּצְרַיִם
מִבֵּית עַבְדִּים: וַיְהִי כִי-הִקְשָׁה פְרַעֲה לְשַׁלַּחֲנוּ
וַיַּהַרְג ה' כָּל-בְּכוֹר בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבְּכוֹר אָדָם
וְעַד-בְּכוֹר בְּהֵמָה עַל-כֵּן אֲנִי זֹבֵחַ לֵה' כָּל-פֶּטֶר
רֶחֶם הַזֶּכֶר וְכָל-בְּכוֹר בְּנֵי אֶפְרָיִם: וַיְהִיֵּה לְאוֹת
עַל-יָדְכֶם וּלְטוֹטְפֹת בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ כִּי בַחֲזֹן יָד
הוֹצִיאָנוּ ה' מִמִּצְרַיִם:

upon their shoulders. 35The Israelites had done Moses' bidding and borrowed from the Egyptians objects of silver and gold, and clothing.

Exodus 13:1-16

¹God spoke further to Moses, saying, ²"Consecrate to Me every first-born; man and beast, the first issue of every womb among the Israelites is Mine." ³And Moses said to the people, "Remember this day, on which you went free from Egypt, the house of bondage, how God freed you from it with a mighty hand: no leavened bread shall be eaten. ⁴You go free on this day, in the month of Aviv. ⁵So, when God has brought you into the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which He swore to your fathers to give you, a land flowing with milk and honey, you shall observe in this month the following practice:

⁶"Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a festival of God. ⁷Throughout the seven days unleavened bread shall be eaten; no leavened bread shall be found with you, and no leaven shall be found in all your territory. ⁸And you shall explain to your son on that day, 'It is because of what God did for me when I went free from Egypt.' ⁹"And this shall serve you as a sign on your hand and as a reminder on your forehead—in order that the Teaching of God may be in your mouth—that with a mighty hand God freed you from Egypt. ¹⁰You shall keep this institution at its set time from year to year.

¹¹"And when God has brought you into the land of the Canaanites, as He swore to you and to your fathers, and has given it to you, ¹²you shall set apart for God every first issue of the womb: every male firstling that your cattle drop shall be God's. ¹³But every firstling ass you shall redeem with a sheep; if you do not redeem it, you must break its neck. And you must redeem every first-born male among your children. ¹⁴And when, in time to come, your son asks you, saying, 'What does this mean?' you shall say to him, 'It was with a mighty hand that God brought us out from Egypt, the house of bondage. ¹⁵When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, God slew every first-born in the land of Egypt, the first-born of both man and beast. Therefore I sacrifice to God every first male issue of the womb, but redeem every first-born among my sons.' ¹⁶And so it shall be as a sign upon your hand and as a symbol on your forehead that with a mighty hand God freed us from Egypt."

Below is a table comparing the four children as they appear in the Talmud Yerushalmi versus the Mekhilta de-Rabbi Yishmael. Both have differences with the classical Haggadah text.

**Mekhilta de-Rabbi Yishmael,
Massekhta de-Pasha, Parashah 18**

What does the wise child say? “What are the testimonies, statutes, and laws that the Lord our God commanded us?” (Deuteronomy 6:20). You should open up to them with the laws of the paschal sacrifice, which end “no dessert (*afikoman*) may be had after it” (Mishnah Pesahim 10:8).

Talmud Yerushalmi Pesahim 10:3

What does the wise child say? “What are the testimonies, statutes, and laws that the Lord our God commanded us?” (Deuteronomy 6:20). You should tell them: “God brought us out of Egypt from the House of Bondage with a strong hand” (Exodus 13:14).

What does the wicked one say? “What is this service to you?” (Exodus 12:26). You, but not them: since they have excluded themselves and denied our faith, you should put them in their place and tell them, “It is because of this that God acted for me when I left Egypt” (Exodus 13:8). Me, but not you: had you been there, you would not have been redeemed.

What does the wicked one say? “What is this service to you?” (Exodus 12:26). What is this trouble that you impose on us every year? Since they have excluded themselves, you should say to them, “It is because of this that God acted for me” (Exodus 13:8)—for me God acted, but not for them. Had they been there, they would never have been worthy of being redeemed.

What does the simple (*tam*) one say? “What is this?” (Exodus 13:14). You should say to them: “God brought us out of Egypt from the House of Bondage with a strong hand.”

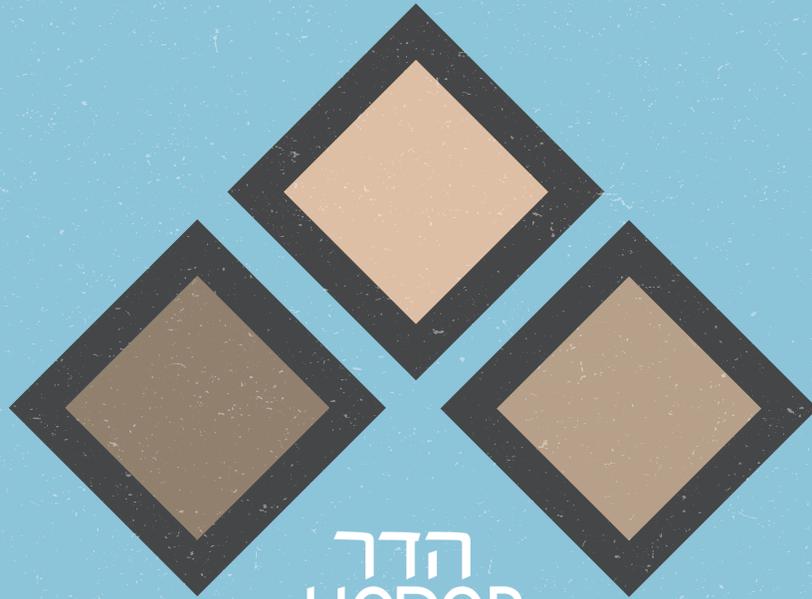
What does the dull (*tipesesh*) one say? “What is this?” (Exodus 13:14). You should teach them the laws of the paschal sacrifice, which end “no dessert (*afikoman*) may be had after it” (Mishnah Pesahim 10:8), so that one not go between one group of sacrifice subscribers to the next.

The one who does not know how to ask—open up to him first. Rabbi Yose says: The Mishnah even says this: “if the child has no knowledge, their parent teaches them” (Mishnah Pesahim 10:4).

The one who does not know to ask—open up to them, as in the verse: “You will tell your child on that day” (Exodus 12:26).

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HADAR INSTITUTE

190 Amsterdam Ave, New York, NY 10023
646.770.1468

hadar.org