

Use of the Term *Makom*, Omnipresent, in the Haggadah

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Editor's note: This essay is adapted from Rabbi Adler's, Haggadah Shel Pesach Vayaged Yosef.

The name *Makom* referring to God is used frequently in the Haggadah:

*Blessed is the Omnipresent, Blessed is He
And now the Omnipresent has brought us close to His service.
How many levels of greatness has the Omnipresent provided for us?*

ברוך המקום ברוך הוא.
ועכשיו קרבנו המקום לעבודתו.
כמה מעלות טובות למקום עלינו.

Why is God identified as *Makom* and why is this name referred to so prominently in the Haggadah? The Rav suggested that the answer can be understood with the perspective of a comment found in the Gemara:

Rava said: Yechezkel and Yeshaya saw the same thing. What is Yechezkel comparable to? A villager who sees the king. What is Yeshaya comparable to? A city resident who sees the king.

Chagiga 13b

אמר רבא כל שראה יחזקאל ראה ישעיה
למה יחזקאל דומה לבן כפר שראה את המלך
ולמה ישעיה דומה לבן כרך שראה את המלך.
חגיגה יג:

Compare the initial revelations of Yechezkel and Yeshayahu. Yechezkel describes his initial vision throughout the first chapter of Sefer Yechezkel. That which he experiences is identified as *ma'aseh merakvah*. He is compared to the villager who is privileged to see the king on one special occasion and consequently is effusive in describing this sole encounter. Yeshayahu describes his initial encounter with God in the sixth chapter of Sefer Yeshayahu, and it occupies barely three verses. He is compared to a city resident who sees the king on a daily basis.

Yeshayahu offers prophecy during the time of the First Temple, when everyone could experience divine revelation. Anyone who entered the Beit ha-Mikdash encountered the Shechinah (Divine Presence). The Shechinah could be felt and seen everywhere. Therefore, when God appears to Yeshayahu, he does not elaborate and says:

*Holy, Holy, Holy, is God, the Lord of Hosts, His glory fills
the land.*

Yeshayahu 6:3

קדוש קדוש קדוש ה' צבאות מלא כל
הארץ כבודו.
ישעיהו ו:ג

Yeshayahu, who lived during a time when one could see the king's palace every day, as it were, is described as the city boy who has access to the king at all times. There was no reason for him to elaborate upon his feelings and experience of divine revelation, since this was a common occurrence. On the other hand, Yechezkel offers prophecy at the time of the Temple's destruction, as the Jewish people are on the way to Bavel. When God appears to him it is a most unusual experience. Consequently, he describes that initial encounter in effusive detail. Yechezkel does not know whether he will have the privilege of a second encounter. As he feels the Shechinah leaving him he says:

Blessed is the glory of God from his place (Makom).

Yechezkel 3:12

ברוך כבוד ה' ממקומו.
 יחזקאל ג:יב

Yechezkel is referring to *mekomo hanistar*, His hidden place. He is saying, I am willing to acknowledge God even if I never have the privilege of seeing his Shechinah again. *Makom*, therefore, is the name selected for God to describe him in a state of *hester panim* (hiding). It is for this reason that on Monday and Thursday, after the Torah reading, we recite a moving prayer:

Our brethren, members of the Jewish people, who are subject to persecution or captivity ... The Omnipresent should have compassion on them.

אחינו כל בית ישראל הנתונים
 בצרה ובשביה ... המקום ירחם
 עליהם.

The Rav noted that this also explains why upon leaving a house of mourning, we say to the mourner: *ha-Makom yenachem etchem*, the Omnipresent should comfort you. The mourner has experienced some degree of *hester panim*. Many laws concerning behavior in a house of mourning, such as not extending the greeting of "*shalom aleichem*" and the omission of *birkat Kohanim* from *davening*, confirm the state of *hester panim* that the mourners have experienced.

Our Haggadah is designed primarily for the experience of exile. Rambam, at the conclusion of the "Laws of Chametz and Matzah," chapter 8, provides a text of his Haggadah. His introductory remark is:

This is the text of the Haggadah that the Jewish people have used during the exile.

נוסח ההגדה שנהגו בה ישראל בזמן הגלות כך הוא.

There are many indications to support the idea that our Haggadah is designed for the exile. For example, we are told:

One must analyze the section (Devarim 26:5-9) beginning with "My father was a lost Aramean" until one completes the entire section.

Pesachim 116a

ודורש מארמי אובד אבי עד
 שיגמור כל הפרשה כולה.
 פסחים קטז.

We have an obligation to read and interpret the entire *parsha* (section) of *Arami oved avi*. Yet, we omit the recitation and accompanying midrashic comment of the last verse of this unit thanking God for having brought us into the Land of Israel (Devarim 26:9). Indeed, this verse was recited during Temple times, and during periods of destruction and exile, it was omitted. Our Haggadah emphasizes that the obligation of *sippur yetziat Mitzrayim* (recounting the Exodus) applies equally to a generation living in Israel with an autonomous government and one during the Crusades, the pogroms, and in the midst of the Warsaw rebellion. In every generation, Jews must make the effort to recognize the miracles of *yetziat Mitzrayim* even if their own personal condition reflects *hester panim*. For this we say *Baruch ha-Makom*, with *Makom*, the Divine Name, associated with *hester panim*.