

INSIGHTS INTO THE PASSOVER REDEMPTION

מעשה ברבי אליעזר ורבי יהושע ורבי אלעזר בן עזריה ורבי עקיבא ורבי טרפון שהיו מסבין בבני ברק והיו מספרים ביציאת מצרים כליאתו הלילה עד שבאו תלמידיהם ואמרו להם רבותינו הגיע זמן קריאת שמע של שחרית.

It is told of Rabbi Eliezer, and Rabbi Yehoshua, and Rabbi Elazar the son of Azarya, and Rabbi Tarfon, who were reclining at the Seder service in B'nei Berak, and had spent the whole night long telling the Story of the Exodus from Egypt, until their pupils came and said to them: Our masters, it is time to recite the morning Shema!¹

Here the Haggada hints at the dichotomy between מצרים, the Story of the Exodus from Egypt, and קריאת שמע של שחרית, the recitation of the *Shema of Shaḥarit*. The onset of the זמן, time boundary, of *Keriyat Shema* is the absolute end and cutoff of the *mitzva* of *Sippur Yetziyat Mitzrayim*. The *Keriyat Shema* commences as *Sippur Yetziyat Mitzrayim* closes. Why this mutual exclusiveness?

Consider further: The Rambam states:²

מצות עשה של תורה לספר בנסים ונפלאות שנעשו לאבותינו במצרים בליל חמשה עשר בניסן שנאמר וזכור את היום הזה אשר יצאתם ממצרים כמו שנאמר וזכור את יום השבת לקדשו. It is a positive biblical commandment to tell all about the miracles and wonders that were performed for our forefathers in Egypt on the night preceding the fifteenth day of Nissan, as it is said, "Remember this day upon which you left Egypt," just as it is said, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy."

The Rambam equates the *mitzva* of *Sippur Yetziyat Mitzrayim* with the *mitzva* of Kiddush on Shabbat. Why? What philosophical rationale exists for this derivation?

Finally, the Netziv³ has stated that the concept of ריח ניחוח, "sweet savor", found as an element of all other sacrifices, does not exist for the *Korban Pesach*. Why is this so?

To resolve all of the above problems, we may compare *Sippur Yetziyat Mitzrayim* and *Keriyat Shema of Shaḥarit*, which do not co-exist in time. The differences may be seen to lie in the fact that *Sippur Yetziyat Mitzrayim* is a מצות לילה, a *mitzva* of the night, while *Keriyat Shema of Shaḥarit* is a מצות יום, a *mitzva* of the day.

Night and day are not merely two alternating periods of time, but represent two phenomenological frames of reference and two realms of human perception. The *Sippur Yetziyat Mitzrayim* is equated by the Rambam with the Kiddush of Shabbat. As is well-known, Kiddush on Erev Shabbat is עדות, a testimony of our belief in God as creator of the world. The *Sippur Yetziyat Mitzrayim* is apparently also a testimony, namely of our faith in the Almighty as our historical redeemer, as our גואל. And of course, *Keriyat Shema of Shaḥarit* is an act of testimony, of our belief in the basic tenets of Judaism, beginning with the Oneness of God. *Sippur Yetziyat Mizrayim* is our עדות לילה, our testimony of night. *Keriyat Shema of Shaḥarit* is our עדות יום, our testimony by day. What is the essence of these עדויות, these absolute statements?

They are קבלת עול מלכות שמים, accepting God's Kingdom, at nighttime and by day. Indeed, night represents the challenge and test of travail and stress, whereas day represents the challenge of influence, wealth and power.

Throughout history and in our daily experiences, we face continuously these dual

נסיונות, tests. The *nisiyonot* of pogroms and persecutions, of poverty and suffering is represented by night, by *Sippur Yetziyat Mitzrayim*. We must overcome this test of our commitment and steadfastness. Indeed, the symbol of night is the very essence of the Egyptian experience — of agony and travail which ultimately led to a redemption. On the other hand, we have been faced during our long history, and ever more so today, with the demands placed upon us by the glorious world of human achievement, in the glitter of Madison Avenue and in an environment of material affluence. Our response to this test of עושר and גבורה, of wealth and strength, is the *Keriyat Shema of Shaḥarit*, the קבלת על מלכות שמים, accepting God's Kingdom. Indeed, at Pesach, one cannot but remember the haunting HaZa"l⁴:

בקשו מלאכי השרת לומר שירה. אמר הקב"ה מעשה ידי טובעין בים ואתם אומרים שירה.
At the time of crossing the Reed Sea, the ministering angels wished to sing God's praises. Said the Holy One, Blessed be He, "My creations are drowning in the sea, and you will sing praises?"

The Exodus from Egypt — even the moment of redemption — is not free of stain and blemish. It is tarnished by the absolute punishment wrought upon the oppressive Egyptians. For after all, their failure to willingly release the Jews resulted in mass death and punishment. The redemption from Egypt was one of דין, justice, of cataclysmic, inexorable justice, freeing the oppressed and crushing the oppressor. Even the angels, created to sing praise, had to be silent at this awesome, terrifying moment. Thus, this redemption, symbolized by the starkness and blackness of nighttime is not a ריח ניחוח, is not a sweet, pleasant fragrance as are the other sacrifices.

Pesach is a redemption by struggle — of suffering both for the oppressor and for the redeemed, as represented by the vision of מעשי ידי טובעים בים, "My creations are drowning in the sea."

With this notion, we can understand a remarkable ordinance in the Rambam vis-a-vis the עולה, the burnt sacrifice. The Rambam states⁵ that before burning the sacrifice on the *mizbe'ah*, the kohen should remove the גיד הנשה, the sciatic nerve, which is forbidden to be eaten and cannot be part of the ritual הקטרה, offering. Nevertheless, in the roasting of the Paschal Lamb, the Rambam states⁶ that the roasting proceeds even with the *gid hanasheh* still within the lamb. Why this difference?

The *gid hanasheh* represents the travail and pain of Yaakov in his struggle with the archangel of Esav. Thus, herein is represented the problem of evil in the world and Yaakov's struggle with it. Righteous Yaakov is confronted by the endemic, rife forces of worldly evil and suffers from them:

יותר יעקב לבדו ויאבק איש עמו עד עלות השחר; וירא כי לא יכל לו ויגע בכף ירכו ותקע כף ירך יעקב בהאבקו עמו.⁷

Yaakov was left alone and an (evil archangel) wrestled with him until the morning, and when he saw that he (the archangel) could not overcome him, he dislocated his (Yaakov's) thigh as he wrestled with him.

Yaakov's lonely struggle at night was the fight against evil, illustrating the bitter paradox of the co-existence of good with evil and of their eternal struggle.

The *gid hanasheh* is left in the roasting of the *Korban Pesach* according to the Rambam (though opposed by the Rabad) since Pesach, as well, is the very symbol of good and evil and their struggle for supremacy — מעשי ידי טובעים בים.

Now we understand more deeply the Maimonidian link of Kiddush to the Haggada. Even though silent awe fills the universe and even the angels are silent when heavenly justice is wrought at the Reed Sea, when Good triumphs over Evil, Yisrael DOES sing! Even though we suffer through misery and pain, we Jews do rise above the inexplicable to praise God for everything He has wrought; for our ultimate redemption and salvation on Pesach night.

This paradoxical experience is at the heart of *Sippur Yetziyat Mitzrayim*. At dawn, though, begins a different experience and testimony, the acceptance of God's Kingdom of *Keryat Shema of Shaḥarit*. "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One." This oneness refers to לעתיד לבא, to the eschatological vision of the Messianic Era (viz. Rashi's interpretation in Chumash). At that future time, at the moment of ultimate redemption, no more paradoxes will exist to blemish and tarnish our song. All of nature, from fish to fowl, from plant to angel, will join Yisrael as Goodness and only Goodness will exist.

During the service of Rosh haShana, we come across two phrases, seemingly contradictory: וכל הרשעה בעשן תכלה, "You shall destroy all wickedness as smoke", and יכירו וידעו כל יושבי תבל, "All inhabitants of the earth shall recognize (Thee)." How are these two prayers reconcilable? Our mentor, haRav haGaon Yosef Dov haLevi Soloveitchik, Shlita, responded to this question, that there are two visions of redemption, of גאולה. The visions are exemplified by Yishayahu:

כי את על סבלו ואח מטה שכמו שבת הנגש בו החתת כיום מדין כי כל סאון סאן ברעש ושמלה מגוללה ברמים והיתה לשרפה מאכלת אש.⁸

For Thou hast broken the yoke of his burden and the staff of his shoulder and the rod of his oppressor as in the day of Midyan. For every boot stamped with fierceness and every cloak rolled in blood shall be for burning for fuel of the fire.

This is the redemption of Justice, of דיין אמת, and of בעור הרע, the destruction of evil, as symbolized by the night redemption of *Yetziyat Mitzrayim*. But there is also the eschatological vision of Yishayahu:

כי מלאה הארץ דעה את יי כמים לים מכסים.⁹
And the world shall be filled with the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea.

This is the redemption of תקן הטוב, of pure Goodness engulfing the earth.

These two notions of redemption are represented by the *Sippur Yetziyat Mitzrayim* and the *Keriyat Shema of Shaḥarit*. This is the transition from the night of *Sippur Yetziyat Mitzrayim* to the morning of *Shaḥarit*—from the imperfect redemption of Egypt to the perfect redemption of the future *Geula* when God's name will be perfectly One throughout the world.

הערות

1. הגדה של פסח.
2. רמב"ם משנה תורה הלכות חמץ ומצה פרק ז הלכה א.
3. הנצי"ב על פרשת בחקתי.
4. מגילה י ע"ב.
5. רמב"ם שם הלכות מעשה הקרבנות פרק ו הלכה ד.
6. שם הלכות קרבן פסח פרק ט הלכה א.
7. בראשית לב, כה-כו.
8. ישעיהו ט, ג-ד.
9. שם יא, ט.