

## A Perspective on Suffering for the Pesach Seder

*Based on the weekly Shmuess given by HaRav Shaya Cohen, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshiva Zichron Aryeh*

לעילוי נשמת גיטל בת הרב אליעזר מנוח | הרב יוסף חיים בן מאיר | רפאל חיים דוב בן בן-ציון שלום | ר' ברוך בן ר' יהודה | שרה בת ר' יחזקאל | ראובן יוסף בן יהושע | דב בעריש בן פסח צבי  
לרפואה שלמה יוסף בן מלכה מטל | יעקב אליעזר בן חנה נשא

In Parshas Vaera, the Pasuk (7:3) states, “And I will harden the heart of Pharaoh, and I will increase my signs and wonders in Mitzrayim.” The Ralbag comments on this Pasuk, “The second benefit is to let us know the stages in how Hashem acted towards Pharaoh when He wanted him to send out Klal Yisrael... First, Hashem commanded them to perform a miracle in Pharaoh's presence that would be painless - this was transforming the staff into a snake. Afterwards, Hashem commanded them to perform in front of him a miracle that would damage him a little bit - this was turning the water into blood. During this Makkah they were only able to find water to drink with great difficulty. Afterwards, He commanded them to perform a miracle that was more damaging - which was sending frogs.” The Ralbag continues and details how each Makkah increased in severity.

From this Ralbag, we can derive an important insight in regards to pain and suffering. Klal Yisrael was enslaved in Mitzrayim for 210 years. Under their rule, they were abused daily and treated with extreme cruelty. This horrific behavior extended to killing Jewish babies! The wickedness of Pharaoh and the Egyptians cannot be overstated. Yet, despite all this wickedness, we find that when Hashem wanted to take Klal Yisrael out of Mitzrayim, He wanted Pharaoh to do it willingly without force. Furthermore, the first step was no pain, and the pain only increased gradually if the previous Makkah was not effective. If Hashem is so calculated and measured in the pain he metes out to Rashaim, how much more so to His children, Klal Yisrael! This insight can help a person cope with suffering, as the more a person realizes that nothing is random, and every ounce of suffering is carefully calculated, he will begin to find meaning in his suffering.

This insight is relevant to the Pesach Seder in light of what is written by a student of Reb Chaim Volozhin. He writes that a person does not fulfill his Mitzvah of Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim unless he also addresses the suffering of the righteous. Part of what interferes with seeing the Chesed Hashem is all the suffering in the world, therefore, it is critical to properly frame that suffering

within the context of the Chesed Hashem.

One perspective on suffering that can help a person view suffering through the lens of Hashem's Chesed, can be found in the commentary of the Tosofos Rid on the Haggadah. In the Haggadah it states, “From the beginning, our ancestors were idol worshippers. And now, HaMakom (Hashem) has brought us close to His worship, as it is stated (*Yehoshua 24:2-4*), Yehoshua said to the whole people, so said Hashem, over the river did your ancestors dwell always, Terach the father of Avraham and the father of Nachor, and they worshiped other gods.” Tosfos Rid in his commentary addresses the question of why the Haggadah mentions our blemished past as being descendants of idol worshippers. He explains that in truth we can ask why are we praising Hashem for taking us out of the suffering of Mitzrayim? And why are we thanking Hashem for granting us freedom? If He wouldn't have put us in Mitzrayim in the first place He wouldn't have had to free us?

It is this question that the Haggadah is answering by mentioning our blemished past. The Haggadah is saying that Hashem wanted to give us Shabbos, the Torah and the Beis Hamikdash. However even with all of His mercy and compassion, our descension from idol worshippers, left a genetic imperfection that made us undeserving of these gifts. Therefore, Hashem had to subject us to the suffering of Egypt, so that He would be able to have compassion on us, and bestow upon us the greatest gifts ever given to mankind.

We can glean from this Tosfos Rid a powerful insight in regards to suffering. Suffering should cause us to ask, what good does Hashem have in store for us? Often Hashem wants to give us unimaginable good, however we are undeserving, possibly due to no fault of our own. He then sends suffering upon us as a means to entitle us to this good. The Pesukim tell us that the miracles of the final redemption will completely overshadow those of the exodus of Egypt. Perhaps it is these miracles that he is preparing us with the suffering of the Galus.



## Shir HaShirim Insights

*In loving memory of Mr. Marvin Halpern*

For the message of *Hashem's* omnipotence to truly penetrate, it must be expressed through actions, specifically during a *Chag*, a festival, when we refrain from work and other mundane matters, so we focus on absorbing the Divine message conveyed by the many different *Mitzvos* of *Pesach*.

First, there comes the cleaning the house of all *Chometz*, followed by the various *Mitzvos* of the *Seder*, primary among them the eating of the *Matzah*, all of which help us to actually relive our history. By eating the same *Matzah* they ate and being deprived of *Chometz* just as they were, we are reminded of the speed with which the redemption came. Although 210 years of slavery had already elapsed, we were rushed out of *Mitzrayim* without even enough time to bake a loaf of bread.

This is a palpable, powerful demonstration of *Hashem's* love for His people. And so it is with every aspect of the *Seder* night, all of which place us back in *Mitzrayim* and make us realize that we, too, were redeemed along with the rest of our nation.

But, perhaps the most powerful *Mitzvah* of all is the one in which the *Torah* commands us, "And you should tell your child on that day..." When a man relates the *Pesach* story to his child, he becomes linked to a heritage that goes straight back to that glorious day, 3335 years ago.

This is the very same story his father told him, which he heard from his father, and upward through the ages, and that's enough to fill him with an overwhelming sense of pride in being Jewish. Is there another people on earth that can claim such continuous transmission of their national story and such tenacious devotion to an ideal? There is none.

This alone is an unparalleled source of pride in our Judaism. It is enough to make us and our children ecstatic over our amazing good fortune in simply being Jews, members of a nation unique within mankind.



## ELIEZER INSTITUTE Emunah Highlights

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We can decipher the precision with which we commit ourselves to *Pesach* by understanding the ultimate meaning and message of *Pesach*. The *Ramban* writes that until the Jews witnessed the miracles of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, the human race had never directly seen G-d's all-encompassing creative powers. Many people had used their intellect to recognize G-d and His involvement in the affairs of mankind, but never was the reality of *Hashem's* total mastery of all so clear and palpable, and on such a large scale.

But, as human experience bears out, faith in *Hashem* is not acquired once and forever; instead, it requires ongoing reinforcement. This, the *Ralbag* explains, is why the Jewish people sang the *Shira* after the splitting of the sea. Even after seeing miracles of such magnitude, their faith needed the strengthening that only the spiritually uplifting experience of the *Shira* could provide.

And so, too, does *Pesach* serve for us as a present day song of praise to reaffirm what we know to be true about *Hashem's* mastery of the world. By recalling the redemption in all its splendor, from the power that was displayed during *Makas Bechoros* to the love that was expressed through the *Ananei Hakavod* in the desert, the Jewish people reawaken and rejuvenate their faith and trust in G-d.

When we relate to our children the intricate details of the *Makkos* and the amazing precision with which they were meted out -- a glass of blood in the hands of an Egyptian becoming water when touched by a Jew, or Jews walking about in sunlight at the very moment a thick darkness paralyzed their Egyptian neighbors -- these events clearly illustrate *Hashem's* constant control over nature. They drive home that every occurrence is a direct result of *Hashem's* will; and when we need help, there is but one direction to turn.