

Fill Your Own Cup – Year Two

Pesach II – Start with the Negative and End with the Positive

1) Mishna Pesachim Chapter 10 Mishna 4

<p>They pour the second cup. And here the child asks their parent, and if the child does not have the ability – their parent teaches them, Why is this night different from all other nights? On all other nights we eat both leavened bread as well as Matzah, on this night, we eat only Matzah. On all other nights we eat all kinds of vegetables, on this night we eat Maror. On all other nights we eat meat that is roasted, or boiled, on this night we eat only roasted meat. On all other nights we dip only once, on this night we dip twice. According to the understanding of the child, that is how the parent teaches them. One starts with the negative and ends with the positive. And one expounds on the verses from “My father was a wandering Aramean” until the end of the section.</p>	<p>מזוגו לו כוס שני וכאן הבן שואל אביו ואם אין דעת בן אביו מלמדו מה נשתנה הלילה הזה מכל הלילות שבכל הלילות אנו אוכלין חמץ ומצה הלילה הזה כולו מצה שבכל הלילות אנו אוכלין שאר ירקות הלילה הזה מרור שבכל הלילות אנו אוכלין בשל צלי שלוק ומבושל הלילה הזה כולו צלי שבכל הלילות אנו מטבילין פעם אחת הלילה הזה שתי פעמים</p> <p style="text-align: right;">ולפי דעתו של בן אביו מלמדו מתחיל בגנות ומסיים בשבח</p> <p>ודורש מארמי אובד אבי עד שיגמור כל הפרשה כולה:</p>
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2) Babylonian Talmud Tractate Pesachim 116a

<p>Begin with the negative and end with the positive What is the meaning of the term: Negative? Rav said that one should begin by saying: At first our forefathers were idol worshippers. And Shmuel said: <i>Avadim Hayinu</i> - We were slaves.</p>	<p>מתחיל בגנות ומסיים בשבח. מאי בגנות? רב אמר: "מתחלה עובדי עבודה זרה היו אבותינו." [ושמואל] אמר: "עבדים היינו".</p>
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3) Deuteronomy 6:20-35 [Wise Son's Question]

<p>(20) When, in time to come, your children ask you, “What mean the decrees, laws, and rules that the LORD our God has enjoined upon you?” (21) you shall say to your children, “We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt and the LORD freed us from Egypt with a mighty hand. (22) The LORD wrought before our eyes marvelous and destructive signs and portents in Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his household; (23) and God freed us from there, that God might take us and give us the land that God had promised on oath to our fathers. (24) Then the LORD commanded us to observe all these laws, to revere the LORD our God, for our lasting good and for our survival, as is now the case. (25) It will be therefore to our merit before the LORD our God to observe faithfully this whole Instruction, as God has commanded us.”</p>	<p>כִּי־שִׁאֲלֶךָ בְנֶךָ מָחָר לֵאמֹר מַה הַעֲדֹת וְהַחֻקִּים וְהַמִּשְׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֲתָכֶם: וְאָמַרְתָּ לְבְנֶךָ עֲבָדִים הָיִינוּ לְפַרְעֹה בְּמִצְרָיִם וַיֹּצִיאֵנוּ יְהוָה מִמִּצְרָיִם בְּיַד חֲזָקָה: וַיִּתֶּן יְהוָה אוֹתוֹת וּמֹפְתִים גְּדֹלִים וְרַעִים בְּמִצְרָיִם בְּפָרְעֹה וּבְכָל־בֵּיתוֹ לְעֵינֵינוּ: וְאוֹתֵינוּ הוֹצִיא מִשָּׁם לְמַעַן הָבִיא אֶתְנוּ לְתֵת לָנוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לְאַבְרָהָם: וַיַּצַּנְנוּ יְהוָה לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־כָּל־הַחֻקִּים הָאֵלֶּה לְיִרְאָה אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ לְטוֹב לָנוּ כְּלֵה־יָמִים לְחַיֵּינוּ כְּהַיּוֹם הַזֶּה: וַיִּצְדָּקָה תְּהִיָּה־לָנוּ כִּי־נִשְׁמָר לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־כָּל־הַמִּצְוָה הַזֹּאת לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ כְּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּנוּ: { ס }</p>
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4) Deuteronomy 26:1-11[Section Mishna requires]

<p>When you enter the land that your God is giving you as a heritage, and you possess it and settle in it, you shall take some of every first fruit of the soil, which you harvest from the land that your God is giving you, put it in a basket and go to the place where your God will choose to establish the divine name. You shall go to the priest in charge at that time and say to him, “I acknowledge this day before your God that I have entered the land that God swore to our fathers to assign us.” The priest shall take the basket from your hand and set it down in front of the altar of your God. You shall then recite as follows before your God: “My father was a wandering Aramean. He went down to Egypt with meager numbers and sojourned there; but there he became a great and very populous nation.</p>	<p>וְהָיָה כִּי־תָבוֹא אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לָךְ נַחֲלָה וַיִּרְשָׁתָהּ וַיִּשְׁבַּת בָּהּ: וְלָקַחְתָּ מֵרֵאשִׁית אֶת־כָּל־פְּרִי הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר תִּבְרֵא מֵאֲרָצְךָ אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לָךְ וְשָׂמַתָּ בַטֶּנָא וְהִלַּכְתָּ אֶל־הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשָׁבוֹן שְׁמוֹ שָׁם: וּבָאתָ אֶל־הַכֹּהֵן אֲשֶׁר יְהִיָּה בַיּוֹם בַּיּוֹם הַהוּם וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו הִגְדַּתִּי הַיּוֹם לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ כִּי־בָאתִי אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע יְהוָה לְאַבְרָהָם לֵאמֹר לָנוּ: וְלָקַח הַכֹּהֵן הַטֶּנָא מִיָּדְךָ וְהִנִּיחוֹ לִפְנֵי מִזְבֵּחַ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ: וְעָנִיתָ וְאָמַרְתָּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲרָמִי אֲבָד אָבִי וַיֵּרֵד מִצְרָיִם וַיְהִי שָׁם בְּמִתֵּי מֵעַט וַיְהִי־שָׁם לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל עָצוּם וְרַב:</p>
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<p>The Egyptians dealt harshly with us and oppressed us; they imposed heavy labor upon us. We cried to God, the God of our ancestors, and God heard our plea and saw our plight, our misery, and our oppression. God freed us from Egypt by a mighty hand, by an outstretched arm and awesome power, and by signs and portents,</p> <p>bringing us to this place and giving us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. Wherefore I now bring the first fruits of the soil which You, God, have given me.” You shall leave it before your God and bow low before your God. And you shall enjoy, together with the [family of the] Levite and the stranger in your midst, all the bounty that your God has bestowed upon you and your household.</p>	<p>וַיַּרְעוּ אֶתְנּוֹ הַמִּצְרַיִם וַיַּעֲנוּנוּ וַיִּתְּנוּ עָלֵינוּ עֲבָדָה קָשָׁה: וַיִּצְעַק אֱלֹהֵי הַזֶּה אֶתְנּוֹ וַיִּשְׁמַע יְהוָה אֶת קִלְנוֹ וַיִּרְא אֶת־עַנְוֵנוּ וְאֶת־עַמְלָנוּ וְאֶת־לַחְצָנוּ: וַיִּצְאָנוּ יְהוָה מִמִּצְרַיִם בְּיַד חֲזָקָה וּבְזֶרַע נְטוּיָה וּבְמִרְא גָדֹל וּבְאֹתוֹת וּבְמִפְתֵּיִם: וַיִּבְאֵנוּ אֶל־הַמִּקְוֹם הַזֶּה וַיִּתְּרֵנוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת אֶרֶץ זָבַת חֶלֶב וְדָבָשׁ: וַעֲתָה הִנֵּה הֵבֵאתִי אֶת־רֵאשִׁית פְּרִי הָאֲדָמָה אֲשֶׁר־נָתַתָּה לִּי יְהוָה וְהִנְחִיתוּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ הַשְּׂחִיתוּיָת לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ: וְשִׂמַחְתָּ בְכָל־הַטּוֹב אֲשֶׁר נָתַתְּ לָךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ וּלְבֵיתְךָ אִתְּהּ וְחַלּוּי וְהִגֵּר אֲשֶׁר בְּקִרְבְּךָ: {ס}</p>
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5) Joshua 24:1-8 [Rav's requirement]

<p>Joshua assembled all the tribes of Israel at Shechem. He summoned Israel's elders and commanders, magistrates and officers; and they presented themselves before God.</p> <p>Then Joshua said to all the people, "Thus said the ETERNAL, the God of Israel: In olden times, your ancestors—Terah, father of Abraham and father of Nahor—lived beyond the Euphrates and worshiped other gods. But I took your ancestor Abraham from beyond the Euphrates and led him through the whole land of Canaan and multiplied his offspring. I gave him Isaac, and to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. I gave Esau the hill country of Seir as his possession, while Jacob and his children went down to Egypt.</p> <p>"Then I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt with [the wonders] that I wrought in their midst, after which I freed you—</p> <p>I freed your ancestors—from Egypt, and you came to the Sea. But the Egyptians pursued your ancestors to the Sea of Reeds with chariots and riders.</p> <p>They cried out to GOD, who put darkness between you and the Egyptians; then [God] brought the Sea upon them, and it covered them. Your own eyes saw what I did to the Egyptians.</p> <p>"After you had lived a long time in the wilderness, I brought you to the land of the Amorites who lived beyond the Jordan. They gave battle to you, but I delivered them into your hands; I annihilated them for you, and you took possession of their land.</p>	<p>וַיִּאסְפוּ יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אֶת־כָּל־שִׁבְטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׂכֵמָה וַיִּקְרָא לְזִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וּלְרָאשֵׁי וּלְשֹׁפְטָיו וּלְשֹׁטְרָיו וַיִּתְּצֵבּוּ לִפְנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים: וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוֹשֻׁעַ אֶל־כָּל־הָעָם כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּעֶבֶר הַנָּהָר יָשְׁבוּ אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם מֵעוֹלָם תָּרַח אֲבִי אַבְרָהָם וְאֲבִי נְחוֹר וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים: וַאֲשַׁח אֶת־אַבְרָם אֶת־אַבְרָהָם מֵעֶבֶר הַנָּהָר וְאוֹלָךְ אֹתוֹ בְּכָל־אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן (וְאַרְב) (וְאַרְבַּה) אֶת־זֶרְעוֹ וַאֲתָרְלוּ אֹתִי־צַחֲק: וְאֶתְנוּ לִיצְחָק אֶת־יַעֲקֹב וְאֶת־עֵשָׂו וְאֶתְנוּ לַעֲשׂו אֶת־הַר שֵׁעִיר לְרֵשֶׁת אוֹתוֹ וַיַּעֲקֹב וּבְנָיו יָרְדוּ מִצְרַיִם: וְאֲשַׁלַּח אֶת־מֹשֶׁה וְאֶת־אַהֲרֹן וְאֶגְפוּ אֶת־מִצְרַיִם כַּאֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי בְּקִרְבּוֹ וְאַחַר הוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם: וְאוֹצִיא אֶת־אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם וְתִבְאוּ הַיָּמָה וַיִּרְדּוּ מִצְרַיִם אַחֲרָי אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם בְּרֶכֶב וּבַפָּרָשִׁים יָם־סוּף: וַיִּצְעֲקוּ אֱלֹהֵיהֶם וַיִּשְׂם מִאֲפֵל בֵּינֵיכֶם וּבֵין הַמִּצְרַיִם וַיִּבְא עָלֵינוּ אֶת־הַיָּם וַיִּכְסְהוּ וַתִּתְרַאֲיֵנָה עֵינֵיכֶם אֶת־אֲשֶׁר־עָשִׂיתִי בְּמִצְרַיִם וַתִּשְׁבוּ בְּמִדְבָר יָמִים רַבִּים: (וְאַבְחָה) (וְאַבְיָא) אֶתְכֶם אֶל־אֶרֶץ הָאֲמֹרִי הַיּוֹשֵׁב בְּעֶבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן וַיִּלְחַמוּ אֶתְכֶם וְאֶתְנוּ אוֹתְם בְּיַדְכֶם וַתִּירְשׁוּ אֶת־אֶרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־אֲשַׁמְדִם מִפְּנֵיכֶם:</p>
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Why Tell the Negative At All?

6) Telling the Real Story, Rabbi Dena Weiss, Pesah 5778

https://mechonhadar.s3.amazonaws.com/mh_torah_source_sheets/CJLVWeissPesachTellingtheRealStory5778.pdf

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 hayinu, 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.

7) Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman, The Secret of This Year's Seder, March 26, 2021
<https://blog.lawrenceahoffman.com/2021/03/26/the-secret-of-this-years-seder/>

The Talmud discusses “degradation.” In one opinion, degradation came from slavery in Egypt: it was externally enforced. There are degrees of enslavement however: not just actual slavery, as in America until the Civil War, but a modified form of terror under Jim Crow afterward – and still going on today. People worldwide are oppressed from without, victimized by the color of their skin, by their gender, their tribe, their immigrant status, their caste, their religion. Others are externally oppressed by disease that weighs them down; and, for mental illness, say, they are further oppressed by society’s attitude toward them.

But there is also the second opinion: degradation from self-imposed attachment to idolatry: degradation, that is, that we bring upon ourselves. Even those of us who are externally free, may be internally enslaved: by addictions, unhealthy relationships, wanting always to please others, and uncritically believing of ourselves whatever others say about us.

The point of redemption is that we all need it, from one thing or another, and the older I get, the more I recognize this escape from degradation (external and internal) is what we mean by the word “miracle.” The odds that America will come to grips with its inherent racism are not very high; the chances that society will embrace those who are mentally ill are not much better. How many people celebrating a seder feel the crush of old age or chronic illness, as if they will open the door for Elijah and admit the angel of death instead. Overcoming poverty, racism, prejudice, illness, addiction, traumatic relationships, or the bleakness of a life that seems to be going nowhere, are not run-of-the-mill probabilities. When, in fact, we do rise above such circumstances, it is a miracle. And the point of Passover is that such miracles do happen.

Miracles are not exceptions to nature’s certainties; they are unusual combinations of those certainties that somehow work for us rather than against us. A crippling disease suddenly turns around; out of nowhere, we discover a way out of financial crisis; we end an abusive marriage; find a new job, wake up one fresh morning and feel empowered rather than beaten down.

It is the possibility of redemption that ultimately prompts hope when all seems hopeless. That is why we need to reclaim the last third of the rabbinic recipe for a successful seder: Yes, start with degradation, Israel’s of old, and your own and others’ today; let your lips form the natural response to seeing freedom’s possibilities, praiseful gratitude; and sum it all up with the acknowledgement that redemption is possible. It happened once; it can happen again.