

B'KHOL DOR VADOR - בְּכָל־דּוֹר וָדוֹר

“In Every Generation”

Throughout the Haggadah there is a tension between the particular and the universal. The particular sees, with Ibn Janah, the story as primarily about God redeeming us, Israel, bringing us to the land that was promised to our ancestors. The universal message elevates the idea of freedom from oppression, enabling the story of Pesach to have become the universal story of freedom in western culture. If we are to take on the values of the God who frees, then we must seek universal freedom from oppression for all, whilst never forgetting how that impulse comes from our particular story. As the Pesach narrative is rendered personal memory by this passage, we should not forget the power of the particular to inspire the values that lead us to campaign for the freedoms and rights of others.

Daniel Lichman, Mazkir of RSY-Netzer

Sitting down together and reading the Pesach Haggadah is one of Judaism's oldest traditions. We are instructed to remember the story as if we ourselves had experienced it; that we ourselves were once slaves. In the same way, the state of Israel was built on the principle of remembrance, safeguarding the rights that we were deprived in our past. Yet, in Israel today there are many members of society who face discrimination for various reasons: Ethiopians, Muslims, migrant workers, refugees and more. How ironic it is that we have protected our own rights but forgotten to protect others from the atrocities we once were victims of. Especially on Pesach it is our role as progressive Jews to insure that Israel is guided by the morals and ideals of our ancestors. We may no longer be slaves, but how can we comfortably sit at our Seder tables telling the story knowing that there are people in Israel whose freedoms are under threat?

Noa Marom, Shlichah of Liberal Judaism and LJY-Netzer

The recent elections in Israel provide serious challenges to the attainment of building a state that ensures “complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; (and) guarantees freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture”. Proposed policies and discriminatory rhetoric that the recent elections brought into the foreground threaten the basic democratic rights of Israeli-Arab Citizens. The foundations of this *realpolitik* are based upon factors, both internal and external, which promote the spectre of insecurity and enhance inequality; this is a severe threat to the concept of the Jewish State. The extreme right-wing policies are, to quote the great Zionist thinker, Ahad Ha'am, “(seducing) us from our loyalty to spiritual greatness” and are leading us down the wrong path of “glory in the attainment of...political dominion”. Learning, as we have done this Seder night, that we must remember that it is as if we were once slaves in Egypt, demonstrates that the policies which directly threaten peoples' freedom breaks, as Ahad Ha'am concludes “the thread that unites us with the past, undermining our historical basis”. Zionism must be based on a reaffirmation of Jewish values as the basis of the Jewish State. On this Seder night let us show our support to those groups, like the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism, who are working towards achieving this. Israel's story is an inspiration, and long may it continue to be so. This is something we must all work towards. *Lo alecha hamlach ligmor v'lo at bein chorin l'hibateil mimena* - it is not our duty to finish the work, but neither are we free to desist from it.

Charlie Gluckman, co-Chair of Pro-Zion

Every people can be chosen for a history, for a share in the history of humanity. Each is a question which God has asked, and each people must answer. But more history has been assigned this people than to any other people. God's question speaks stronger here... The word of the One God penetrated this people from its beginning. When the commandment of God awakes in man, freedom also opens its eyes; and where freedom commences, history begins.

Leo Baeck



Supporting Progressive Judaism
in Israel
Promoting Israel
in Progressive Judaism



Produced by Pro-Zion, the Zionist Movement for Progressive Judaism, LJY-Netzer and RSY-Netzer, the Zionist Youth Movements for Progressive Judaism in the UK.

As Pesach approaches - and the State of Israel prepares to celebrate its 61st anniversary - it is appropriate to reflect that amongst the State of Israel's greatest achievements is the absorption of an unprecedented number of immigrants including more than a million Soviet Jews released from economic and religious oppression and more recently numbers of Darfuris fleeing Sudan via Egypt. The welcoming of Jews under the Law of Return and of other refugees escaping persecution roots the Jewish people - and the State of Israel - in the Biblical story of a motley crew of Hebrew slaves and others fleeing slavery in Egypt, crossing the Reed Sea, and heading for a promised but unknown land. The Midrashist (Megillah 10b) reminds us that as the Israelites reached the dry shore the ministering angels wanted to sing a song of praise but God restrained them saying: 'My creatures are drowning in the sea and you would sing before me!'

The modern State of Israel is made up of indigenous Jews, immigrants, and indigenous Israeli Palestinians, and each of these groups must play - and be assisted to play - its full role in a Jewish democratic state. Israel's very Declaration of Independence itself envisages that 'The State of Israel will be based on freedom, justice and peace as conceived by the Prophets of Israel ... will uphold the full social and political of all its citizens...'

It is no easy task to absorb large numbers of immigrants and to balance their interests with those of two indigenous peoples but, as the angels at the Reed Sea were rebuked by God who demanded of them care and compassion for each human being, so shall the merit of the State of Israel be earned by its just and generous treatment of each and every one of its citizens regardless of origin or faith.

Rabbi Danny Rich, Chief Executive of Liberal Judaism

The Haggadah, which tells the story of our ancestors' journey from slavery to freedom, was written when Jews had lost their freedom and were struggling with Roman occupation. That struggle endured for 1900 years but, in my own lifetime (only just!), a radical change has taken place. The dream of being *am chofshi b'arzeinu*, a free people in our own land, has been realised.

I was in Israel very recently. As always, I was amazed and inspired by the creativity and vitality of *am Yisrael*. But I was also aware of the intolerable pressures created by the violent opposition to our presence in our own land. The pressures are so real that they are making some people forget the purpose for which Israel was reborn and the values which Judaism taught the world. We must remind ourselves of those values and of our obligation, here in the Diaspora, to stand shoulder to shoulder with Israel in defence of Jewish values whatever the provocation and however great the threat. Here are four questions that we must address at the Seder and in the coming year:

Q How do we maintain our respect for the Arab population of Israel, the West Bank and Gaza? How do we resist the racist attitudes? As it says in Israel's Declaration of Independence: “[Israel] will devote itself to developing the land for the good of all its inhabitants. It will maintain complete equality of social and political rights for all its citizens, without distinction of creed, race or sex. It will guarantee freedom of religion and conscience, of language, education and culture.”

Q How do we continue to reach out to our neighbours inside and outside Israel and engage with them? How do we maintain our security but not build walls of separation? As it says in Israel's Declaration of Independence: “We extend the hand of peace and good-neighbourliness to all the states around us and to their peoples, and we call upon them to co-operate in mutual helpfulness with the independent Jewish nation in its land. The State of Israel is prepared to make its contribution in a concerted effort for the advancement of the entire Middle East.”

Q How do we maintain our democratic tradition and values in the face of a flawed electoral system and a yearning for 'strong leadership'? As it says in the Haggadah: It happened that Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Yehoshua, Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria, Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Tarphon were recounting the story of the departure from Egypt [debating what it meant in their own times and what they should do in pursuit of freedom].” Debate and respect for different views, *l'shem Shamayim*, for the sake of Heaven, is a cornerstone of our tradition.

Q How do we eliminate poverty, make poverty history, amongst our own people when the gulf between rich and poor is growing alarmingly? As it says in the Haggadah: “Whoever is hungry, let them come and eat.” Poverty is a characteristic of slavery. It has no place amongst “a free people in our own land.”

Rabbi Tony Bayfield, Head of the Movement for Reform Judaism

...in regard to cruelties committed in the name of a free society, some are guilty, while all are responsible.

Abraham Joshua Heschel

Keren B’Kavod is the humanitarian aid project of The Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism (IMPJ). Guided by Jewish values, remembering that we were once slaves in Egypt, and were once a wandering people, the IMPJ provides food packages to those in Israel who are in serious need. The programme is administered by the Israel Religious Action Centre (IRAC), the legal and public advocacy arm of the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism.

The project is run by volunteers from IMPJ congregations, Noar Telem the IMPJ’s Youth Movement, and the IMPJ pre-army programme, the Mechina. There is one food package distribution each month to roughly 200 families. In addition, food package distribution takes place around the major holidays—Pesach & Easter, Rosh Hashanah & Id-ul-fiter, and Christmas). The biggest holiday food package distribution is at Pesach. The programme is called Kimcha De Pascha, and approximately 2000 food packages are distributed. The festivals project involves people handing out food packages to people of different faiths to their own.

In emergency situations, Keren B’Kavod coordinates with the government’s emergency response office. During the recent conflict this involved door-to-door and bomb shelter deliveries in S’derot and Ashkelon. In addition to food packages, Keren B’Kavod organizes fun activities for the children from needy families. Keren B’Kavod will host their annual Passover seder at IMPJ congregation Beit Daniel in Tel Aviv for foreign workers and refugees alongside regular congregants.

Ibn Janah on Exodus 13:8 .הַיְיָ This [Pesach] is because of what the Eternal did for me when I left Egypt.

Ibn Ezra on Exodus 13:8 .הַיְיָ Ibn Janah maintained that the expression “because of this” ought to be turned around and understood as “this is because”... But the meaning of the passage is entirely the opposite. We do not partake of Matzah because of that... rather it was for the purpose of observing this service -- partaking of the Matzah and refraining from chametz - that God performed for us wonders until God brought us out of Egypt. In other words, God only brought us out of Egypt for the purpose of serving God...

Do you agree with Ibn Janah that the story of Pesach is all about what God did for us - the Jewish people or with Ibn Ezra that it is about what we can do to serve God?

Alongside eating matzah and refraining from chametz, what other ways of serving God that we can recall in each generation are suggested by the Pesach story as a whole?

The Hebrew words connecting the generations (dor va-dor) appear three times in the traditional haggadah. The first time reminds us that evil is a presence for every generation of Jews. And here the rabbis say that in every generation, Jews must experience the Exodus as their own journey from slavery to freedom. Heschel tells us that freedom brings responsibility: we cannot revel in our own security from evil while others are suffering it. And how much more are we failing in our duty to relive the Exodus experience if we condone cruelty being perpetrated in our midst, perhaps even in our name?

Recognition of our duty to fight against oppression is Pesach’s core message. Only by doing this will we bring closer the time when all will share freedom, and only then can we sing, in the words of Nishmat, that God’s name will ‘...be praised from generation to generation’.

Rabbi Pete Tobias, Elstree Liberal Synagogue

It is of paramount importance that we...examine our own attitudes and behaviour and the ways in which these can result in discrimination, either consciously or unconsciously. Too often we labour under the misconception that because we have suffered and to some extent continue to suffer discrimination, we cannot ourselves be guilty of its practice. For some of us this will not be an easy task, for it requires a profound philosophical shift from seeing ourselves as victims only (a self-concept deeply and for good reason embedded in many of us) to a new self-concept which encompasses both victim and perpetrator.

Edie Friedman, Jewish Council For Racial Equality

Does the Haggadah ask us “In each generation” to make that shift, to see ourselves as both victims and perpetrators?

What does it mean to recognise ourselves and Jews elsewhere as both victims and perpetrators?

בְּכָל־דּוֹר וָדוֹר חַיֵּב אָדָם לְרַאוֹת אֶת־עַצְמוֹ, כְּאִלּוּ הוּא יוֹצֵא מִמִּצְרַיִם, שְׁנֵאִמְרָה: וְהִגַּדְתָּ לְבִנְךָ בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֵאמֹר: בַּעֲבוּר זֶה עָשָׂה יְיָ לִי, בְּצֵאתִי מִמִּצְרָיִם. לֹא אֶת־אֲבוֹתַיִנִי בַלְבַּד, נֶאֱלַל הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא, אֲלֵא אִף אוֹתֵנִי נֶאֱלַל עִמָּכֶם, שְׁנֵאִמְרָה: וְאוֹתֵנִי הוֹצִיא מִשָּׂם, לְמַעַן הִבִּיא אֹתֵנִי, לְתֵת לִנְי אֶת־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַע לְאֲבוֹתַיִנִי.

In every generation a person is obligated to regard themselves as if they had come out of Egypt, as it is said: "You shall tell your child on that day, it is because of this that God did this for me when I left Egypt." (Exodus 13:8) The Blessed One, redeemed not only our ancestors from Egypt, but also redeemed us with them, as it is said: "It was us that God brought out from there, in order to bring us to the land that was sworn to our ancestors." (Deut 6:23).

The Haggadah asks every participant at the Seder to grapple with the tension between oppression and freedom. A few minutes earlier, when we raised our glasses and sang, ve-hi sh’amdah, we declared that in every generation enemies have tried to wipe us out. Yet a few minutes after reciting b’chol dor va dor, we will sing psalms of praise and drink the cup of redemption. Later still we will pour a cup of wine and open the door for Elijah,

the prophet whose arrival signals the beginning of the Messianic era. And on the very next page, near enough, we pour out our anger in a prayer for redemption from the people who persecute us today!

The question we must ask ourselves, from generation to generation, and from year to year, is about where it is correct to find the balance within our identity-between slavery and freedom. When I read b’chol dor va dor, am I reading it as someone who is grappling, now, with persecution in my life? As one who has just narrowly escaped from Egypt, or who, even perhaps, expects to go back? Is my life dominated by the experience of oppression? Or is actual, real persecution, a part of my collective memory? And if it is, should I be concentrating instead, on the reality that we have truly left Egypt behind, a long way behind; and it is my duty, today, to think about the obligations that spring from the experience, not of slavery, but of freedom.

Rabbi Shulamit Ambalu, Milton Keynes and District Reform and North London Progressive Jewish Community

Keren B’Kavod’s packages are distributed to needy families that have been identified by a variety of partner welfare organizations. This includes, but is not limited to: Branco Weiss School for At-Risk Youth in Ramle, the Domari Centre in Jerusalem, the Ethiopian Community of the Katomonim (neighbourhood of Jerusalem), the municipality of S’derot, the municipality of Lod, the Mesila organization for children of migrant workers and refugees in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, the Jerusalem Methadone Clinic, and the list goes on. Packages are provided for an entire family, not just the individual identified through the partner organisations.

The project always needs more support. To find out how you can support this project, please visit www.irac.org/donate.aspx.