Beyond the Red Sea: Defining a New Redemption

R. Ayal Robkin – robkin@hadar.org

July Learning Seminar 5786/2026

Divrei Negidim on Pesach Haggadah	**דברי נגידים על הגדה של פסח**
One must ask why the *Matzah* is called "bread of poverty," and behold it is possible that it is fine like the *Matzah* of a rich person, and on account of what is the *Matzah* called bread of poverty, for there is no matter of poverty in the place of the wealth of the redemption.	ויש לשאול למה נקרא המצה לחם עוני והרי אפשר שהיא נאה כמצה של עשיר ועל שם מה נקראת המצה לחם עוני דאין ענין עניות במקום עשירות הגאולה.
However, the explanation of the matter is that the *Matzah* is called bread of poverty, the opposite of rich matzah, for when there is oil and honey in it, it is called rich, because this thing enriches the bread. And this is because the poor person has no wealth, only himself and his body. And the matzah also, when there is nothing in it but the essence of the dough, for the essence of the dough is the water and the flour, and this is the essence of dough, and in this it is bread of poverty.	אמנם פי׳ הדבר כי המצה נקראת לחם עוני היפך מצה עשירה שכאשר יש בה שמן ודבש נקראת עשירה כי הדבר הזה מעשיר הלחם. וזה כי העני שאין לו ממון רק עצמו וגופו. והמצה ג״כ כאשר אין בה רק עצם העיסה שעצמות העיסה הוא המים והקמח וזהו עצמות עיסה ובזה הוא לחם עוני.
And if there is sourdough (*Seor*) or leaven (*Hametz*) in it, the taste of the sourdough and the leaven is an addition to the essence of the dough, and this is richer than rich *Matzah*, for rich *Matzah*, because there is liquid in it, this is its richness. And however, a dough that has sourdough or leaven in it has departed further from the matter of poverty, in that there is leaven in the body of the dough, and therefore the *Matzah* is bread of poverty.	ואם יש בו שאור או חמץ טעם השאור והחמץ הוא נוסף על עצם העיסה וזה הוא יותר עשיר מן מצה עשירה כי מצה עשירה בשביל שיש בה משקה זה עשירות שלה. ואמנם עיסה שיש בה שאור או חמץ יצאה יותר מענין העוני ממה שיש בגוף העיסה חמץ ולכך המצה היא לחם עוני.
And perhaps it will be difficult for you, what is the	ואולי יקשה לך מה ענין העניות אל

[connection] of poverty to freedom, and behold they are two opposites, freedom and poverty. But this matter is no difficulty, for poverty itself is an indication of the redemption, for the matter of redemption is only when one goes out to stand completely in his own domain, and he has no connection to another. Not like the slave, who does not stand in his own domain and has a connection to another, which is the master.

החירות והלא שני הפכים הם החירות והעניות. אבל דבר זה אין קשיא כי העניות בעצמה הוראה על הגאולה שאין ענין הגאולה רק כשיוצא להיות עומד לגמרי ברשות עצמו ואין לו שום צירוף אל זולתו. לא כמו העבד שאינו עומד ברשות עצמו ויש לו צירוף אל זולתו הוא האדון.

Therefore, the thing that has wealth does not stand on its own, but rather it has a connection to its possession, and there is no redemption in this. But the thing that has poverty and has no possession, but rather stands on its own, redemption belongs to it. And therefore we were commanded to eat bread of poverty, which is the matzah, on the night of the exodus, because there is nothing in the *Matzah* but the essence of the bread, and nothing of sourdough is connected with it. And it is like a poor person. In order that there shall not be found at all any connection on the night in which is the redemption, and through this the redemption is acquired, which is the removal of the connection.

לכך הדבר שיש בו עשירות אינו עומד בעצמו רק יש לו צירוף אל קנינו ואין בזה גאולה. אבל הדבר שיש בו עניות ואין לו קנין רק עומד בעצמו שייך בו גאולה. ולפיכך נצטוינו לאכול לחם עוני שהוא המצה בליל היציאה בעבור שאין במצה רק עצם הלחם ולא יצטרף בו דבר מן שאור. והוא כמו עני. כדי שלא יהיה נמצא כלל שום צירוף בלילה שבו הגאולה ועי״ז נקנה הגאולה שהוא סלוק הצירוף.

And from this you will understand that the scripture is according to its plain meaning, "Seven days you shall eat upon it *Matzot*, bread of poverty, for in haste you went out from the land of Egypt." Meaning, that you shall eat bread of poverty, which is the bread that stands on its own and has no connection to another. And why shall you eat this bread? For in haste you went out from Egypt. And the matter of the haste is speed, and there is in it no delay or continuation of the connection of time. For just as they went out in the first month because the first month is fitting for the redemption specifically for the reason that was explained, that there is no redemption except when there is no attachment present. And this is the first month,

ומזה תבין כי הכתוב הוא כפשוטו שבעת ימים תאכל עליו מצות לחם עוני כי בחפזון יצאת מארץ מצרים. פי׳ שתאכל לחם עוני שהוא הלחם העומד בעצמו ואין לו הצטרפות אל זולתו. ולמה תאכל זה הלחם כי בחפזון יצאת ממצרים. וענין החפזון הוא מהירות ואין בו עכוב והמשך של צירוף הזמן. כי כשם שיצאו בחדש ראשון מפני שראוי חדש הראשון אל הגאולה דוקא מטעם שנתבאר כי אין גאולה רק כאשר אין כאן צירוף. וזהו חדש ראשון שהוא ראשון ולא היה כאן

חבור וצירוף חדשים כיון שנצרך להגאולה הסתלקות הצירוף והחבור. וכך בשביל טעם זה בא הלחם עוני ואכילה בחפזון:

that it is first, and there was no joining and attachment of months present, since the removal of the connection and the attachment is necessary for the redemption. And so, for this reason, came the bread of poverty and eating in haste.

ועוד תדע איך המצה שהיא לחם עוני שייכה אל הגאולה. וזה כי העני הוא שאין לו דבר וזה ענין פשיטות כאשר הוא עומד בעצמו. ודבר זה אף שהוא לחסרון נחשב בעולם הזה שהוא עולם ההרכבה ומעלתו בהרכבה. מ״מ הפשוטות מעלה הוא מצד עולם הפשוט שאין בו הרכבה.

And further you should know how the *Matzah*, which is bread of poverty, is connected to the redemption. And this is because the poor person is one who has nothing, and this is a matter of simplicity as he stands on his own. And this thing, even though it is considered a deficiency in this world, which is the world of composition and its value is in composition, nevertheless, simplicity is a value from the perspective of the simple world, which has no composition in it.

ובלילה הזה היו צריכים אל הגאולה שלא מצד העולם הזה שהוא עולם המורכב רק מצד עולם העליון הפשוט. ולפיכך צוה לאכול מצה לחם עוני שהוא לחם הפשוט שהרי אין בו דבר רק עצם פשוט כי לשון מצה בא על דבר שהוא פשוט. כמו שנקרא העור שהוא פשוט דלא מליח ולא קמיח ולא עפיץ והוא עור פשוט בשם מצה.

And on this night, they needed the redemption, not from the perspective of this world, which is the composite world, but rather from the perspective of the upper, simple world. And therefore He commanded to eat *Matzah*, bread of poverty, which is the simple bread, for behold there is nothing in it but a simple essence, because the term "*Matzah*" is applied to a thing that is simple. Just as the hide which is simple—which is not salted, and not floured, and not treated with gallnuts, and it is a simple hide—is called by the name "*Matzah*".

דמיון זה כ״ג משמש בכל ימי השנה בבגדי זהב וביום הכפורים בבגדי לבן לפני ולפנים. וזהו בשביל שהוא קונה מדרגה עליונה שהרי היה נכנס לפני ולפנים. יש לו להסתלק ממדרגות עולם הזה שמדרגתו אינו פשוט. ולכך יש לו לשמש בכל השנה בבגדי זהב בחוץ. אבל כשנכנס לפני ולפנים

This is analogous to the High Priest, who serves during all the days of the year in golden garments, and on Yom Kippur in white garments in the innermost sanctuary. And this is because he acquires an elevated level, for behold, he would enter into the innermost sanctuary. He must remove himself from the levels of this world, whose level is not simple. And therefore, he must serve throughout the year in golden garments outside. But when he enters into

יש לו לשמש בבגדי לבן לפי מעלת המדרגה שנכנס לשם כי בגדי לבן הם פשוטים. וזהו פי׳ הכתוב שבעת ימים תאכל עליו מצות לחם עוני כי בחפזון יצאת מארץ מצרים. כי מה שהיו יוצאי׳ בחפזון בלי המשך זמן מורה שיצאו במדרגה ובמעלה עליונה. והפעל שבא משם נעשה בלי זמן. לא כדברים הטבעיים שכל פעולתם בהמשך זמן. אבל כאן היה גאולתם שלא בטבע. ולכך היה בחפזון בלי זמן. ולכך ראוי שיאכלו לחם עוני הוא לחם הפשוט מבלי הרכבה:

the innermost sanctuary, he must serve in white garments according to the excellence of the level he enters there, because white garments are simple. And this is the explanation of the verse: "Seven days you shall eat *Matzot* with it, the bread of poverty (*Lehem Oni*), for in haste you came out from the land of Egypt." For the fact that they were leaving in haste without a duration of time indicates that they left at an elevated level and excellence. And the action that came from there was done without time, unlike natural things, whose entire activity is through a duration of time. But here, their redemption was supernatural. And therefore it was in haste without time. And therefore it is fitting that they eat the bread of poverty, which is the simple bread without composition.

דברי נגידים על הגדה של פסח

Divrei Negidim on Pesach Haggadah

ולפיכך הם במספר ארבע כוסות. כי הגאולה הוא באה מעולם העליון לעולם הזה שהוא עולם הרבוי. וכל דבר שהוא בא מעולם הנבדל לעולם הזה יש בו רבוי מחולק לארבע. כי מספר זה הוא מספר הריבוי שהוא נגד ארבע צדדין המחולקים ועל אלו הדברים מורים הארבע לשונות של גאולה. וסוד הזה הוא מבואר בתורה ונהר יוצא מעדן להשקות וגו׳ ומשם יפרד והיה לארבעה ראשים. שמזה מבואר לך כי כל דבר שבא מעולם הנבדל כמו הנהר שהוא יוצא מעדן להשקות הגן כשהוא בא אל עולם הטבע שהוא עולם הרבוי יפרד לארבעה ראשים כי זהו נגד הפירוד והרבוי שהוא בעולם הרבוי.

And therefore they are four cups in number. For redemption comes from the upper world to this world, which is the world of multiplicity. And everything that comes from the separate world to this world has within it a multiplicity divided into four. For this number is the number of multiplicity, which corresponds to the four divided sides, and these things are indicated by the four expressions of redemption. This secret is explained in the Torah: "And a river goes out of Eden to water..." etc., "and from there it divides and becomes four heads." From this it is clear to you that everything that comes from the separate world, like the river that goes out of Eden to water the garden, when it comes to the world of nature, which is the world of multiplicity, divides into four heads, for this corresponds to the separation and multiplicity that is in the world of multiplicity.

The Insecurity of Freedom **by Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel**

When the Voice of God spoke at Sinai, it did not begin by saying, "I am the Lord your God Who created heaven and earth." It began by saying, "I am the Lord your God Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." Judaism is not only deliverance from external slavery, but also freedom from false fears and false glories, from fashion, from intellectual will-o'-the-wisps. In our souls we are subject to causes; in our spirits we are free, beholding the uncompromising.

The most commanding idea that Judaism dares to think is that freedom, not necessity, is the source of all being. The universe was not caused, but created. Behind mind and matter, order and relations, the freedom of God obtains. The inevitable is not eternal. All compulsion is a result of choice. A tinge of that exemption from necessity is hiding in the folds of the human spirit.

We are not taught to feel accused, to bear a sense of boundless guilt. We are asked to feel elated, bred to meet the tasks that never end.

Every child is a prince; every man is obliged to feel that the world was created for his sake, Man is not the measure of all things, but the means by which to accomplish all tasks.

As a free being the Jew must accept an enormous responsibility. The first thing a Jew is told is: You can't let yourself go; get into harness, carry the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven. He is told to bear loads of responsibility. He is told to abhor self-complacency, to enjoy freedom of choice. He has been given life and death, good and evil, and is urged to choose, to discriminate. Yet freedom is not only the ability to choose and to act, but also the ability to will, to love. The predominant feature of Jewish teaching throughout the ages is a sense of constant obligation.

Freedom is the liberation from the tyranny of the self-centered ego. It comes about in moments of transcending the self as an act of spiritual ecstasy, of stepping out of the confining framework of routine reflexive concern. Freedom presupposes the capacity for sacrifice.

Although all men are potentially free, it is our sacred duty to safeguard all those political, social, and intellectual conditions which will enable every man to bring about the concrete actualization of freedom which is the essential prerequisite of creative achievement.

The shock of radical amazement, the humility born in awe and reverence, the austere discipline of unremitting inquiry and self-criticism are acts of liberating man from the

routine way of looking only at those features of experience which are similar and regular, and opening his soul to the unique and transcendent. This sensitivity to the novel and the unprecedented is the foundation of God-awareness and of the awareness of the preciousness of all beings. It leads from reflexive concern and the moral and spiritual isolation which is the result of egocentricity to a mode of responding to each new and unique experience in terms of broader considerations, wider interests, deeper appreciation and new, as yet unrealized values.

As the object of divine transitive concern *man is*; knowing himself to be the object of divine concern and responding through acts of his own transitive concern *he is free*.

The meaning of freedom is not exhausted by deliberation, decision, and responsibility, although it must include all this. The meaning of freedom presupposes an openness to transcendence, and man has to be *responsive* before he can become *responsible*.

For freedom is not an empty concept. Man is free to be free; he is not free in choosing to be a slave; he is free in doing good; he is not free in doing evil. To choose evil is to fail to be free. In choosing evil he is not free but determined by forces which are extraneous to the spirit. Free is he who has decided to act in agreement with the spirit that goes beyond all necessities.