



“And this is what has stood by our ancestors and us” On the Seder Night We Must Also Thank Hashem for the Survival of Yisrael throughout All the Galuyos which Is Even More Miraculous than Yetzias Mitzrayim

As the festival of Pesach approaches auspiciously, I would like to focus on a profound message conveyed by our holy sages. When they arranged the passages of the Pesach Haggadah, they chose to juxtapose two special passages. The first passage is a berachah addressed to HKB”H for keeping His promise to Avraham Avinu made at the historic Covenant of the Parts—Bris bein HaBesarim—concerning the galus and the geulah from Mitzrayim:

“ברוך שומר הבטחתו לישראל ברוך הוא, שהקדוש ברוך הוא חשב את הקץ לעשות כמה שאמר לאברהם אבינו בבית בין הבתרים, שנאמר ויאמר לאברהם ידוע תדע כי גר יהיה זרעך בארץ לא להם, ועבדום וענו אותם ארבע מאות שנה, וגם את הגוי אשר יעבדו דן אנכי ואחרי כן יצאו ברכוש גדול.”

Blessed is He Who keeps His promise to Yisrael. Blessed is He. For HKB”H calculated the end (of their galus), to do as he had said to Avraham Avinu at the Bris bein HaBesarim, as it is stated (Bereishis 15, 13): “He said to Avram, ‘Know for sure that your offspring will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and they will enslave them and afflict them four hundred years. But also that nation whom you shall serve, do I judge, and afterwards they shall go forth with great possessions.’”

Immediately, in the very next passage, they praise and express gratitude to HKB”H for protecting Yisrael in all future galuyos and in every generation from all enemies that rise up against them:

“והיא שעמדה לאבותינו ולנו, שלא אחד בלבד עמד עלינו לכלותינו, אלא שבכל דור ודור עומדים עלינו לכלותינו, והקדוש ברוך הוא מצילנו מידם.”

And it is this (promise) which stood by our fathers and by us, for not just one has risen up against us to destroy us, but in every single generation, they rise up against us to destroy us, and HKB”H delivers us from their hand.

All of the Rishonim—including the Ritva, the Avudraham, the Rashbatz, the Raavan, and others—explain that **“this which stood by our fathers and us”** refers to the promise mentioned in the preceding passage: **“ברוך שומר הבטחתו לישראל”**—the promise made to Avraham Avinu at the Bris bein HaBesarim. It is that promise that has protected Jews in every subsequent generation from their wicked assailants, who aim to exterminate them. At first glance, however, the promise made to Avraham does not mention this divine protection of Yisrael in future generations.

Indeed, the Ritva offers an explanation in relation to the passuk written in connection with the Bris bein HaBesarim (ibid. 12): **“והנה אימה חשיכה גדולה נופלת עליו”**—**and behold—a dread, great darkness fell upon him.**” They expounded in the Midrash (B.R. 44, 17): **“A dread”** refers to Bavel; **“darkness”** refers to Madai; **“great”** refers to Yavan; **“fell upon him”** refers to Edom. In a similar vein, in another passage in the Midrash (ibid. 19), they explain: **“But also the nation that they will serve, I shall judge.”** The passuk should have simply said **“also.”** So, why does it say, **“And also”**? Rather, it comes to teach us that **“also”** refers to Mitzrayim, while **“and”** refers to the four oppressive regimes. Thus, HKB”H actually revealed all of the galuyos to Avraham Avinu, and with regards to all of them,

HKB”H promised him: **“But also the nation that they will serve, I shall judge.”**

Additionally, in Sha’ar HaPesukim (Ki Seitzei), the Arizal explains why our blessed sages only mention the four subsequent galuyos in this Midrash—**Bavel, Madai, Yavan, and Bavel**—and neglect to also mention galus Mitzrayim along with them. He explains that these four exiles are individual entities; each one of them opposes one of the four letters of the blessed name Havaya. **Bavel corresponds to the letter “yud,” Madai corresponds to the first “hei,” Yavan corresponds to the letter “vav,” and Edom corresponds to the second “hei.”** In contrast to the other exiles, galus Mitzrayim was a general, all-encompassing exile. It included all of the other exiles wrapped up in one. For, it corresponds to the tip of the letter “yud”—**“kotzo shel yud.”** “Kotzo shel yud” incorporates all four letters of the name Havaya. For this reason, Chazal only mention the four individual exiles and omit galus Mitzrayim—which is not a novelty in and of itself, but rather encompasses all of the exiles.

Based on this explanation, the Bnei Yissaschar (Nissan 4, 2) explains a teaching in the Yerushalmi (Pesachim 68b). It teaches that the reason Chazal instituted the practice of drinking four cups of wine on the Seder night is to commemorate the four expressions of geulah (Shemos 6, 6): **“והוצאתי, והצלת, וגאלתי, ולקחתי”**. Since galus Mitzrayim incorporated the other four galuyos, it follows that the geulah from Mitzrayim also encompassed all four future galuyos. Therefore, HKB”H mentioned in the Torah four expressions of geulah corresponding to the four geulos from the four galuyos that were included in galus Mitzrayim. This is meant to fortify our belief and make us extremely confident that if HKB”H freed us from the galus in Mitzrayim, which incorporated the other four galuyos, all the more so that He will redeem us from each of the individual galuyos.

We can now better appreciate the connection between the passage: **“ברוך שומר הבטחתו לישראל ברוך הוא”** and the following passage: **“והיא שעמדה לאבותינו ולנו”**. In the first passage, HKB”H promises Avraham Avinu at the Bris bein HaBesarim to take Yisrael out of the all-encompassing galus of Mitzrayim; hence, this promise

also applied to the four, subsequent, individual galuyos. Then, in the following passage in the Haggadah, we express our gratitude to Hashem for this promise—**“והיא”**. **“It”** has provided us with protection in each and every generation from those who planned to exterminate us; **“והקב”ה מצילנו מידם”**—and HKB”H has rescued us from them every single time.

Ramban: The Purpose of Sipur Yetzias Mitzrayim Is to Inculcate in Us the Belief that All Natural Phenomena Are Actually Miracles

Following the lead of the exalted Rishonim, I would like to propose an explanation for why the authors of the Haggadah inserted in the middle of the recounting of the events of the exodus—“sipur yetzias Mitzrayim”—the expression of gratitude to Hashem: **“והיא שעמדה לאבותינו ולנו, שבכל דור ודור עומדים עלינו”** **“והיא שעמדה לאבותינו ולנו, שבכל דור ודור עומדים עלינו”**. We will refer to an important principle taught by the Ramban in his commentary on the Torah towards the end of parshas Bo (Shemos 13, 16). It behooves us to teach and review this principle especially on the Seder night. All of the supernatural feats HKB”H performed for us during the exodus from Mitzrayim were designed to help us recognize even the miracles disguised as natural phenomena. Here are his sacred words:

“ומן הניסים הגדולים המפורסמים, אדם מודה בניסים הנסתרים שהם יסוד התורה כולה, שאין לאדם חלק בתורת משה רבינו, עד שנאמין בכל דברינו ומקרינו, שכולם ניסים אין בהם טבע ומנהגו של עולם, בין ברבים בין ביחיד, אלא אם יעשה המצוות יצליחנו שכרו, ואם יעבור עליהם יכריחנו ענשו, הכל בגזירת עליון כאשר הזכרתי כבר”.

Through the great, open miracles, a person recognizes the concealed miracles, which are the foundation of the entire Torah. For, a person has no portion in the Torah of Moshe Rabeinu until he believes that everything we do and experience, everything is a miracle; they are not due to nature or natural causes, whether they benefit the general public or an individual. If a person abides by the mitzvos, His reward will ensure his success. If, however, he violates them, His punishment will cause his extinction. Everything is decreed from above, as I have already explained.

ויתפרסמו הניסים הנסתרים בענין הרבים, כאשר יבוא ביעודי התורה בענין הברכות והקללות, כמו שאמר הכתוב ואמרו כל הגוים על מה עשה ה' ככה לארץ הזאת, ואמרו על אשר עזבו את ברית ה' אלקי אבותם, שיתפרסם הדבר לכל האומות שהוא מאת ה' בעונשם, ואמר בקיום וראו כל עמי הארץ כי שם ה' נקרא עליך ויראו ממך".

The concealed miracles performed on behalf of the public come to be known as is mentioned in the assurances of the Torah on the subject of the Berachos and klalos, as it states (Devarim 29, 23): "And all the nations will say, 'For what reason did Hashem do so to this land?' . . . And they will say, 'Because they forsook the covenant of Hashem, the G-d of their fathers.'" Thus, it will become known to all nations that their punishment came from Hashem. And of the fulfillment of the mitzvos, it says (Vayikra 26, 11): "And all the nations of the earth will see that the name of Hashem is called upon you, and they will fear you."

It is apparent that the comments of the Ramban coincide magnificently with the sacred words of the Noam Elimelech (Likutei Shoshanah) interpreting the passuk (Shemos 14, 29): "ובני ישראל הלכו כיבשה בתוך הים"—**and Bnei Yisrael went on dry land in the midst of the sea.** He points out that there are tzaddikim who perceive miracles and extraordinary feats, similar to the splitting of the sea, even when they are walking on dry land. Here are his sacred words:

"על דרך שפירשתי ובני ישראל הלכו כיבשה בתוך הים, דהנה ישראל בשעת קריעת ים סוף ראו נפלאותיו יתברך שמו ורוממותו וגדולתו, ויש צדיקים שהולכים תמיד בדביקות, ולבם תמיד ברוממות אל ובגדולתו אף שלא בשעת קריעת ים סוף, שגם כיבשה רואין נפלאותיו, איך הם עד אין קץ וערך בכל דבר ודבר הנמצא בעולם. וזהו הפירוש ובני ישראל הלכו כיבשה בתוך הים, פירוש שכיבשה הלכו בזה הרוממות אל כמו בים".

At Krias Yam Suf, Yisrael witnessed the greatness and exaltedness of the Almighty. There are tzaddikim who constantly live with this heightened level of devotion. They recognize His wondrous feats even on dry land. There is no end to the miracles of Hashem that surround us in our daily lives. This is the message conveyed by the passuk: Even on dry land, they walked with the same exalted attitude and appreciation as they did in the sea.

Thus, we learn a valuable lesson from the comments of the Ramban. On the Seder night, when we chronicle the miraculous, supernatural events of

"yetzias Mitzrayim" in great length and detail, it is important to remember: The goal of the recounting is to appreciate that even every day, mundane, natural occurrences are actually miracles and supernatural. Therefore, just as we praise and thank Hashem for the miraculous, supernatural feats performed on our behalf during the geulah from Mitzrayim, we must also thank Him for the survival of Yisrael in galus, which is no less of a miracle. As we have learned in the Gemara (Yoma 69b):

"אמר רבי יהושע בן לוי, למה נקרא שמן אנשי כנסת הגדולה, שהחזירו עטרה ליושנה, אתא משה אמר האל הגדול הגיבור והגורא, אתא ירמיה ואמר נכרים מקרקרין בהיכלו איה גוראותיו, לא אמר גורא, אתא דניאל אמר נכרים משתעבדים בבניו איה גבורותיו, לא אמר גיבור. אתו אינהו ואמרו, אדרבה זו היא גבורותיו שכוּבש את רצונו שנותן ארך אפים לרשעים, ואלו הן גוראותיו שאלמלא Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: Why were they called the "Men of the Great Assembly"? Because they restored the crown of G-d's glory to its original luster. Moshe came and said (Devarim 10, 17): "The great, powerful and awesome G-d." Then Yirmiyah came and said: Strangers are croaking in His Sanctuary! Where is His awesomeness? Therefore, he did not mention "awesome" in his prayer. Then Daniel came and said: Strangers are enslaving His children! Where is his power? Therefore, he did not say "powerful" in his prayer. Then they (Anshei Kenesses HaGedolah) came and said: On the contrary! This is His magnificent display of power; for, He restrains His will in that He exhibits tolerance toward the wicked. And these are indeed displays of His awesomeness, because if not for the awe of the nations for HKB"H, how could one nation survive among the many nations of the world?

Inspirational Words from the Brilliant Rabbi Yaakov Emden

We will now introduce the fascinating, incredible words of the brilliant Rabbi Yaakov Emden, ztz"l, in his commentary on his siddur Beis Yaakov. It behooves us to review his words of inspiration annually and especially on the Seder night. Here are his sacred words: "מי שיעיין ביחוד ענייננו ומעמדנו בעולם, אנחנו האומה הגולה, שה מזורח, אחר כל מה שעבר עלינו מהצרות והתמורות אלפים מהשנים, ואין אומה בעולם נרדפת כמונו. מה רבים היו צרינו, מה עצמו נשאו ראש הקמים

עלינו מנעורינו, להשמידנו, לעקרנו, לשרשנו, מפני השנאה, שסיבתה הקנאה, רבת צררונו, גם לא יכלו לנו לאבדנו ולכלותנו. כל האומות הקדומות העצומות, אבד זכרם, בטל סברם, סר צלם, ואנו הדבקים בה' כולנו חיים היום, לא נפקד ממנו בכל תוקף אריכות גלותנו, אפילו אות וניקוד אחד מהתורה שבכתב, וכל **Anyone who contemplates our unique existence and situation in the world will recognize that we are the people in exile, a lost sheep. We have endured thousands of years of suffering, and there is no beleaguered nation like ours. Our troubles have been countless. Powerful forces have dared to rise up against us from our early beginnings to destroy us and uproot us due to hatred arising from jealousy. Despite their many efforts, they failed to annihilate us. All of the mighty, ancient nations have come and gone and have been forgotten. Yet, we, who cling to Hashem, remain alive today, despite the lengthy galus. Not a single letter or vowel of the written Torah has been lost, and all the words of our sages are extant . . . The hand of time has not prevailed over them and have not destroyed them.**

In light of this reality, the Ya'avetz expresses his fervent amazement concerning the phenomenon of Yisrael's survival throughout all its exiles. I hope that his moving words resonate in the heart and brain of every Jew:

"חי נפשי, כי בהתבונני בנפלאות אלה, גדלו אצלי יותר מכל ניסים ונפלאות שעשה השי"ת לאבותינו במצרים ובמדבר ובארץ ישראל, וכל מה שארך הגלות יותר, נתאמת הנס יותר, ונודע מעשה תקפו וגבורתו, בשגם כל הנביאים כבר ראו עומקו, והתאוננו והתלוננו על אריכותו הנפלא בטרם היותו, והנה לא נפל מכל דבריהם ארצה".

By my life, when I consider these wonders, they seem greater to me than all the miracles and extraordinary feats that Hashem, blessed is He, performed on behalf of our forefathers in Mitzrayim, in the midbar, and in Eretz Yisrael. The longer the galus lasts, the more the miracle is evident . . .

We find a similar account in the Midrash Tanchuma (Toldos 5). When the Roman Emperor Hadrian saw that the Jewish people were still alive and in existence even after thousands of years of terrible persecutions, he could not help but express his astonishment to the holy Tanna Rabbi Yehoshua: **Hadrian said to Rabbi Yehoshua: "Great is the sheep that can**

survive among seventy wolves." **And he (Rabbi Yehoshua) responded: "Even greater is the shepherd who rescues, protects, and destroys the wolves surrounding her." Therefore, it is written (Yeshayah 54, 17): "Any weapon formed against you will not succeed."**

I have struggled for a long time to comprehend the fervent, inspiring words of the brilliant Ya'avetz, ztz"l. Without a doubt, it is quite clear that the survival of Yisrael throughout all the galuyos—akin to a single sheep surrounded by seventy wolves—is an incredible miracle. Nevertheless, where did this brilliant scholar deduce this fantastic chiddush from—that the survival of the Jewish people throughout their thousands of years of exile is more miraculous than all the miracles and extraordinary feats that Hashem, blessed is He, performed on behalf of our forefathers in Mitzrayim, in the midbar, and in Eretz Yisrael?

Concealed Miracles Emanate from a Higher Place than Overt Miracles

After researching the matter, it is apparent that the source of the Ya'avetz's chiddush is the teachings of the great luminary, the Maharal, ztz"l, in his sefer Ohr Chadash on the Megillah (end of introduction). There, he explains why the name of HKB"H is not mentioned explicitly in the entire Megillas Esther. It is because the miracle of Purim was a hidden miracle disguised as a series of natural events. Furthermore, a concealed miracle is greater than an overt miracle and emanates from a higher source. This is alluded to by the name of the main character involved in the miracle—Esther. Her name is related to the word "hester," meaning concealment. Hence, she was modest, and the miracle of Purim and the salvation were concealed.

I would like to point out another clear-cut source for this in the writings of the Bnei Yissaschar, in the sefer Reiach Duda'im on Maseches Megillah. He explains at length that all overt miracles stem from the last two letters of the name Havaya—the letters "**vav-hei**." In contrast, concealed miracles stem from the first two letters of the name Havaya—"**yud-hei**." This is alluded to in the passuk (Devarim 29, 28): "הנסתרות" **לה' אלקינו והגלות לנו ולבנינו—the hidden things are for Hashem, our G-d, but the revealed things are for**

us and for our children. The Tikunei Zohar (Tikun 22) interprets this as follows: "הנסתרות לה' אלקינו י"ה"—that which is hidden and concealed are from Hashem from the letters "**yud-hei**"; "והנגלות לנו ולבנינו"—but that which is revealed to us is from the letters "**vav-hei.**" This is alluded to by the word "והנגלות", which can be broken down to ו"ה נגלות—meaning that the letters "**vav-hei**" are associated with that which is overt—"nigleh."

It appears that we can support this wonderful concept with a teaching in the Gemara (Eiruvin 18b): "מיום שחרב בית המקדש דיו לעולם שישתמש בשתי אותיות, שנאמר כל הנשמה י"ה—**from the day the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed, it is enough for the world to use the two-letter name of G-d, as it states** (Tehillim 150, 6): "**Let all souls praise י"ה**" ("yud-hei")." Let us provide an explanation in keeping with our current discussion. While the Beis HaMikdash was extant, concealed miracles were performed on behalf of Yisrael from the letters "**yud-hei**" and also overt miracles from the letters "**vav-hei.**" Thus, the sacred Tetragrammaton was complete with all four of its component letters.

As we know, however, the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed on account of our sins, we were exiled from our land, and we remain in galus surrounded by seventy nations that hate Yisrael. As a consequence, the overt miracles emanating from the letters "**vav-hei**" ceased. Surprisingly, specifically then were the concealed miracles from the letters "**yud-hei**" revealed even more so than they had been while the Beis HaMikdash was extant. Since we are like a solitary sheep surrounded by seventy wolves wishing to devour us, HKB"Y watches over us and protects us with concealed miracles and hidden feats. This is the meaning of the statement in the Gemara: "**From the day the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed, it is enough for the world to use the two-letter name of G-d, as it states: "Let all souls praise י"ה."**"

This enlightens us as to the profound intent of our holy sages who arranged the Haggadah of Pesach. First, they instituted a berachah thanking HKB"Y for keeping his promise to Avraham Avinu: "ברוך שומר הבטחתו לישראל ברוך הוא"—for releasing us from bondage in Mitzrayim with supernatural signs and feats. Yet, since we are now in galus among the seventy nations of the world, we

might think erroneously that He no longer performs miracles for us like He did during the exodus.

To avoid this mistaken belief, the sages instituted an expression of praise and gratitude to be recited immediately after this berachah. It is for the hidden miracles performed for us in galus, which are even greater than the miracles performed during periods of geulah: "והיא שעמדה לאבותינו ולנו, שלא אחד בלבד עמד עלינו לכלותינו, אלא שבכל דור ודור עומדים עלינו לכלותינו, והקדוש ברוך הוא מצילנו מידם." This is the fervent message delivered by the Ya'avetz: "**By my life, when I consider these wonders, they seem greater to me than all the miracles and extraordinary feats that Hashem, blessed is He, performed on behalf of our forefathers in Mitzrayim, in the midbar, and in Eretz Yisrael. The longer the galus lasts, the miracle is more evident . . .**"

The same applies today. After the terrible devastation the Jewish people experienced in World War II, and after the miraculous revival of Torah and mitzvos among Jews all over the world, we still see the intense hatred that burns in the hearts of the descendants of Eisav and Yishmael for anything Jewish. We are still a lone sheep surrounded by seventy wolves. We have no one to lean on except our Father in Heaven. Hence, we must always remember the response of the holy Tanna Rabbi Yehoshua to the Roman emperor Hadrian: "**Great is the shepherd who rescues her, protects her, and obliterates them for her.**"

On the Seder Night We Must Also Thank Hashem for the Galus that Prepared for the Geulah of Yisrael from Mitzrayim

In light of what we have learned, we can begin to comprehend a surprising teaching found in our sacred sefarim related to "sipur yetzias Mitzrayim." When we read the Haggadah and thank Hashem for the miraculous geulah from the galus in Mitzrayim, we must also thank Him for the galus itself. For, it definitely benefited Yisrael. Without the galus in Mitzrayim, Yisrael would not have been worthy to receive the Torah and to ascend the spiritual ladder they climbed due to "yetzias Mitzrayim."

In this vein, the Sefas Emes (Pesach 5647) explains the rationale for eating maror at the seder

to commemorate the galus. This is surprising, since “sipur yetzias Mitzrayim” is about the geulah. He explains that the bitterness endured by our forefathers in Mitzrayim served as a preparation and salvation to help us survive the lengthy galus. Hence, it behooves us to praise the Blessed One for the galus in Mitzrayim itself, which prepared us for our future exiles and for the geulah, which was a preparation for all the geulos to follow. This is the rationale for eating both matzah and maror. The matzah commemorates the geulah, while the maror commemorates the galus. So, when we say “והיא שעמדה לאבותינו ולנו”, it applies to both the galus and the geulah; both were essential for the perpetual existence of the Jewish people.

It is fitting at this point to introduce a precious gem found in the commentary Chasdei David on the Haggadah, authored by the esteemed author of Keren L'David, ztz"l. He explains the significance of the following teaching in the Mishnah (Pesachim 116a): “רבן גמליאל היה אומר, כל שלא אמר שלשה דברים אלו בפסח לא יצא ידי חובתו, ואלו הן פסח מצה ומרור.” **Rabban Gamliel used to say: Whoever did not say these three things on (the night of) Pesach, has not fulfilled his obligation. And these are them: Pesach (the korban), matzah, and maror.** Now, the **Pesach offering** and the **matzah** commemorate the geulah of Yisrael from Mitzrayim, whereas the maror commemorates the galus in Mitzrayim. Clearly, the galus preceded the geulah. So, why did Rabban Gamliel mention maror last?

He explains that it is essential to extol the praises and kindnesses of the Omnipresent not only for the geulah but also for the galus that we suffered. For, in retrospect, it is evident that it was for our benefit. On account of the galus in Mitzrayim—which refined us and purified us like gold in an iron crucible—we became worthy and privileged to be His chosen

people. Were it not for galus Mitzrayim, we would not have been privileged to receive the Torah and to be His chosen people to this very day. Thus, Rabban Gamliel's pronouncement makes perfect sense. Merely mentioning the **Pesach** and **matzah** does not suffice; **maror** must also be mentioned. For, if someone does not understand that he must also give thanks for the galus, he is missing the point. It would have been preferable had we not been in Mitzrayim at all and would not have required a geulah.

Let us also introduce what the author of the Aruch HaShulchan wrote on this subject in Leil Shimurim on the Haggadah. He explains the teaching in the Gemara (ibid.): “מתחיל בגנות ומסיים בשבח, מאי בגנות, רב אמר מתחלה “**the narrative begins with defamation** (denigration and belittling of Yisrael) **and concludes with praise** (of Yisrael). **What is the defamation? Rav said: Initially our ancestors were idol worshippers. And Shmuel said: We were slaves . . .**

He explains: **In truth, someone could ask: Why is “yetzias Mitzrayim” such a big deal? Seemingly, it would have been better had we not gone down to Mitzrayim at all. If Reuven incarcerates Shimon and then releases him from the jail, is Shimon obliged to thank him? After all, he (Shimon) can say to him (Reuven), “I am not interested neither in the bad you have to offer nor in the good (help) you have to offer.” Now, if we claim that galus Mitzrayim was definitely for our benefit, then it is imperative that we thank Hashem both for the galus and the geulah. This is what the author of the Haggadah is teaching us: From our disgrace, it becomes evident that the galus was for our benefit; it could not have been otherwise!**

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