

Pour Out Your Wrath – Redemption and the Confrontation of Evil

In Memory of Eli Resnikoff, z"l and Edith Schickman, z"l
Shabbat HaGadol 5782

<p>1. Mishnah Pesachim 10:7</p> <p>They poured for the leader the third cup of wine, and he recites the blessing over his food. Next, they pour him the fourth cup. He completes hallel over it and he also recites the blessing of the song at the end of hallel over the fourth cup.</p>	<p>משנה מסכת פסחים פרק י משנה ז</p> <p>מזגו לו כוס שלישי מברך על מזונו רביעי גומר עליו את ההלל ואומר עליו ברכת השיר</p>
<p>2. Passover Haggadah</p> <p>Pour out Your wrath upon the nations that do not acknowledge You, and upon the kingdoms that do not call upon Your name. For they have devoured Jacob and laid waste his habitation. Pour out Your indignation upon them, and let the wrath of Your anger overtake them. Pursue them with anger, and destroy them from beneath the heavens of the Lord.</p>	<p>הגדה של פסח</p> <p>שָׁפֹךְ חֲמַתְךָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִדְעוּךָ וְעַל-מַמְלָכוֹת אֲשֶׁר בְּשִׁמְךָ לֹא קָרְאוּ. כִּי אָכַל אֶת-יַעֲקֹב וְאֶת-נְהוּגוֹ הִשְׁמִי. שָׁפֹךְ עֲלֵיהֶם זַעֲמֶךָ וְחֲרוֹן אַפֶּךָ יִשְׁיגֵם. תִּדְרֹף בְּאֵף וְתִשְׁמַדֵּם מִתַּחַת שָׁמַי ה'</p>
<p>3. On the Invisible Side of the Passover Haggadah (Or Why I Do Indeed Say "Pour Out Your Wrath" on Seder night?), April 25, 2011 by Marit Gatz Ben Israel https://maritbenisrael.wordpress.com/2011/04/25/the-invisible-hagada/</p> <p>I do not like texts that are smooth, sanitized and censored, let alone castrated. The kibbutzim, for example, tried to do this. They composed an alternative, synthetic, and ideologically pure haggadah for themselves. It was as nice as any shiny new toy, but it wasn't long before the zeitgeist changed a bit and the kibbutz haggadah aged and became anachronistic. The facade crumbled, and there was nothing behind it, nothing to hold on to. The traditional haggadah is like a character to me; it's a hoarder, it's childishly avant-garde, it's fond of shapes and games, it's black box theater, it's ceremonial to the point of OCD, it's a theater of images, it's a perennial experience with layers, sediments, ideas and skeletons in and out of the closet. That's what makes it so durable and interesting, the ability to listen to all sorts of frequencies.</p> <p>Lore and memory are always full of cracks and contradictions, and it's better to stumble into them than to seek the perfect message and forcibly cram in all the things that stick out, or to cut them out because they do not belong.</p>	<p>על הצד הבלתי נראה של ההגדה של פסח (או למה אני כן אומרת "שפוך חמתך" בליל הסדר?), אפריל 25, 2011 על-ידי מרית ג"ץ בן ישראל</p> <p>אני לא אוהבת טקסטים מטהרים ומוחלקים ומצונזרים, שלא לומר מסורסים. הקיבוצים למשל, ניסו את זה. הם חיברו לעצמם הגדה אלטרנטיבית, סינתטית, טהורה ואידאולוגית. זה היה נחמד כמו כל צעצוע חדש ונוצץ, אבל לא עבר זמן רב, הרוח קצת השתנתה וההגדה הקיבוצית הזדקנה ונהייתה אנכרוניסטית, פני השטח התפוררו ולא היה כלום מתחת, שום דבר שבו אפשר להאחז. ההגדה המסורתית היא כמו דמות בשבילי; אספנית, ילדותית-אוונגרדית, חובבת צורות ומשחקים, טקסית עד כדי OCD ותיאטרון חפצים, רבת ימים ושכבות ומשקעים ואידאות ושלדים בארון ומחוצה לו. זה מה שעושה אותה כל כך עמידה ומעניינת, האפשרות להקשיב לכל מיני תדרים.</p> <p>מיתוסים וזכרונות הם תמיד מלאי סדקים וסתירות, וטוב למעוד לתוכם מאשר לחפש את המסר המושלם ולדחוס אליו בכוח את כל הדברים שמשתרבים, או לקצץ אותם כי הם לא שייכים.</p>
<p>4. Machzor Vitri (student of Rashi, c. 1100)</p> <p>One pours the fourth cup for Hallel. Then he recites, "Pour out Your wrath on the heathens." The great Hallel follows.</p>	<p>מחזור ויטרי הלכות פסח (עמ' 254-310) סימן צז</p> <p>ומוזגין כוס רביעי להלל. ויאמר שפוך חמתך על הגויים. הלל הגדול.</p>
<p>5. Daniel Goldschmidt, Kiryat Sefer p. 120 n. 82*</p> <p>Dr. Daniel Goldschmidt was known as a leading research scholar of the history and text of the Passover Haggadah. The first one he edited was brought out by the Schocken publishing house of Berlin in 1936.</p> <p>The attacks against the Gentiles are well understood in light of the situation of despair in which the Jews found themselves in the Middle Ages in the Christian countries, and they could not respond to the continuous persecutions by means of an army or power, but turned to their Heavenly Father that He repay their persecutors in kind, and take Israel out of the slavery and darkness. Such harsh expressions as found here are a spontaneous reaction to all the ill they suffered, a rection based upon broken-heartedness and bitterness of soul, fitting to the deep [...] piety of their authors. One who expresses surprise at their sharpness and cruelty, must not forget in what period and under what conditions they were written.</p>	

<p>6. Asa Kasher, "Pour Out Your Wrath" or "Dayenu"?, Maariv - Weekly Column Asa Kasher (Hebrew: אסא כשר, born June 6, 1940) is an Israeli philosopher and linguist working as a Professor at Tel Aviv University and at Shalem College, Israel.</p> <p>I understand these verses. I can imagine for myself the depth of destruction that led to their transfer from the Tanach to the Passover Haggadah. I am able to identify with the anger, the suffering, and resentment they express. And still, in my Haggadah, "Pour out Your wrath on the nations" is a verse from the past, from the memories and from the nightmares, it is not a verse from the future, from our hopes and dreams. [...] In my world, "Pour out Your wrath" is a verse from the past and not from the future, primarily because that is the way I want to view it in my world. I want to see it in my ancestors' past, because they are <i>there</i>, I want to see it in a museum inside my heart, because they are in it, but I don't want to see it in my children's future, because I want the very best for them. I want to see their future clean and untouched from the pouring of blood and the outpouring of wrath. I want to see their future build upon the foundations of justice and peace, meaning, longevity, and goodness.</p>	<p>אסא כשר, "שפוך חמתך" או "דיינו"? , מעריב - טור שבועי</p> <p>אני מבין את הפסוקים הללו. אני יכול לתאר לעצמי את עומק החורבן שהעביר אותם מן התנ"ך אל ההגדה של פסח. אני מוכן להזדהות עם הזעם והסבל והתסכול שהם מביעים. ובכל זאת, בהגדה שלי, "שפוך חמתך אל הגוים" הוא פסוק מן העבר, מן הזכרונות, מן הסיוטים, לא פסוק מן העתיד, מן התקוות, מן החלומות. [...] בעולמי, "שפוך חמתך" הוא פסוק מן העבר ולא מן העתיד, בעיקר מפני שכך אני רוצה לראות אותו בעולמי. אני רוצה לראות אותו בעבר של אבותיי, מפני שהם שם, אני רוצה לראות אותו במוזיאון שבתוך ליבי, מפני שהם בו, אבל אני לא רוצה לראות אותו בעתיד של ילדיי, מפני שאני רוצה בטובתם. את העתיד שלהם אני רוצה לראות נקי, גם משפיכות דמים וגם משפיכות חימה. את העתיד שלהם הייתי רוצה לראות נבנה מיסודות של צדק ושלוש, משמעות ואריכות ימים טובים.</p>
<p>7. R. Yom Tov ben Avraham Assevilli (Ritva), (c. 1260 – 1320)</p> <p>The reason it was ordained to recite "Pour out thy wrath" on the fourth cup is because the four cups are arranged to correspond to the four cups of tribulation that the Almighty will serve to the nations of the world. On this final cup we declare that the time has come for God to give them to drink from the cup of His wrath, the poisonous cup, as it is written, "Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, who dwells in the land of Uz; upon you also shall the cup pass, you shall become drunk and vomit" (Lamentations 4:21). And what's more, the principle of our redemption is dependent upon the destruction of their kingdom as it says in the Midrash: <i>After 2300 evenings and mornings, then the sanctuary shall be cleansed</i> (Daniel 8:14). Said R. Yitzhak: When night falls upon the kingdom of the other nations, then the sanctuary will be cleansed. Similarly, the prophet teaches, "For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and a gross darkness the kingdoms, and the Lord shall shine upon you, and His glory shall appear over you" (Isaiah 60:2).</p>	<p>ריטב"א, הגדה של פסח</p> <p>ומה שתיקנו לומר על כוס רביעי פסוק שפוך חמתך על הגוים, הוא מפני כי לפי שקיימנו מצות ד' כוסות כנגד ד' כוסות של פורענות שעתידי הקב"ה להשקות לאומות העולם, אנו אומרים על כוס האחרון שיגיע אותו הזמן שישקה אותם ה' כוס חמתו הוא כוס התרעלה כדכתיב (איכה ד': כ"א) שישו ושמחי בת אדם וכו' גם עליך תעבור כוס, ולא עוד אלא שעיקר גאולתנו תלויה בחורבן קרן מלכותם כדאמרין בבראשית רבה (פרשה כ"א) עד ערב בוקר אלפים ושלוש מאות ונצדק קדש (דניאל ח': י"ד), אמר רבי יצחק כשיעשה ערב בקרן של אומות העולם אז ונצדק קדש, וכן הנביא אומר (ישעיהו ס': ב') כי הנה החשך יכסה ארץ וערפל לאומים ועליל יזרח ה' וכבודו עליך יראה במהרה בימינו אכ"ל.</p>
<p>8. Yisroel Yuval, <i>Two Nations in Your Womb</i> (2005) p. 95* Israel Jacob Yuval (born October 1, 1949 in Beit She'an) is an Israeli academic who is Professor of Jewish History at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.</p> <p>The dominant view in Ashkenaz saw the annihilation of the [heretical] Gentiles as a principal component of the messianic vision. This is a notion that wishes to correct history retroactively, assigning to vengeance the role of correcting the past before a new world order can be established.</p>	
<p>9. Laura Levitt , <i>Reflections on Shefoch Chamatcha: Pour Out Your Wrath</i> Laura Levitt is Professor of Religion, Jewish Studies, and Gender at Temple University. She is the author of <i>American Jewish Loss After the Holocaust</i> and <i>Jews and Feminism: The Ambivalent Search for Home</i>.</p> <p>These are not verses that I remember reciting at past seders. In the seders I remember, we opened the door and sang "Elijah the Prophet." And yet, as I read these disturbing verses, I am struck by their power. They are a visceral reminder that part of the experience of oppression is the anger it produces in those of us who have been oppressed.</p> <p>Revenge is not pretty; it is even embarrassing. And yet, these passages acknowledge that anger and the desire for revenge are a part of our legacy. They seem to suggest that before the Messiah can come, we must be able to express our rage at what has been done to us.</p> <p>As I reread these passages from the haggadah, I am keenly aware of the necessity as well as the difficulty of expressing anger. As feminist poet Audre Lorde reminds us, anger is loaded with information and energy. It is not something to shy away from or to be afraid of. This is why the author of these verses devotes so much of his text to expressing his rage. Although those violent passages are difficult to read and recite aloud, I believe they need to be spoken.</p>	

Audre Lorde argues for the eventual translation of anger into “action in service of our vision and our future” but first demands that we claim our anger. There can be no final time, no messianic era unless we first acknowledge these brutal desires. If they cannot be expressed, we may never know a better future. And, for those of us less inclined to imagine this ritual as a step toward a distant messianic future, the expression of such emotions may simply enable us to live more fully in the present.

Although these brutal biblical passages express a real desire for revenge, it is important to remember that they are revenge fantasies—creative, imaginative interventions. They are to be recited, not acted out. For those of us who have been brutalized, whose lives have been threatened, who have known oppression in our bodies, these fantasies can be truly liberating only if we find the courage to fully express our indignation, our pain, and our fury.

10. Tomer Persico

Tomer Persico serves as the Academic Director at Kolot. His fields of expertise include contemporary spirituality, Jewish modern identity, and forms of secularization and religiosity in Israel.

The images from the areas liberated from Russian occupation are atrocities in the simple sense of the term. The peak of human cruelty.

It is important to face this. To be present. To bear witness.

It is important to face the evil that human beings inflict on human beings.

Knowing that until a few days ago, the bodies were people.

Whole lives. Worlds. Names and faces.

Families. stories. [...]

Russia is committing crimes against humanity in Ukraine. Images are emerging from occupied areas, which if they had been replicated across the whole of Ukraine, would have been considered attempted genocide.

תומר פרסיקו

התמונות מהאזורים ששוחררו מהכיבוש הרוסי הן זועת עולם כפשוטו. שיאים של אכזריות אנושית.

חשוב לעמוד מול זה. להיות נוכחים. להיות עדים.

חשוב לעמוד מול הרוע שבני אדם מעוללים לבני אדם.

לדעת שהגופות היו עד לפני כמה ימים אנשים. חיים שלמים. עולמות. שמות ופנים. משפחות. סיפורים. [...]

רוסיה מבצעת באוקראינה פשעים נגד האנושות. במקומות שנכבשו מתגלות סצנות, שאילו היו משוכפלות לרוב כל אוקראינה, היו נחשבות לניסיון לרצח עם.

11. Abigail Pogrebin, A Seder Shouldn't be Flat as Matzo — Try This at Home

<https://forward.com/opinion/216926/a-seder-shouldnt-be-flat-as-matzo-try-this-at-h/>

Abigail Pogrebin (born May 17, 1965) is an American writer, journalist, podcast host.

One question I added to my haggadah is the controversial section (added in the Middle Ages) which many Jews have excised, known as “Pour Out Your Wrath” (Shfoch Chamatcha).

It exhorts God to take revenge upon the nations that have mistreated the Jewish people: “Pour out Your wrath upon the nations that do not know You...may Your blazing anger overtake them.” It always provokes an important conversation about whether revenge has a place in the Passover ethic of compassion.

Rabbi Green chooses to include it in his seder, “though some of my guests are scandalized when I do,” he admits. “It’s a piece of Jewish history; I think we have room to be angry at what was done to us.”

But he stresses that we have to turn the same mirror on ourselves. “It’s not just, ‘Pour out your wrath upon the gentiles’ – it doesn’t say that. It says, ‘Pour out your wrath upon those nations who have not known you.’ Sometimes we Americans or we Jews or we Israelis act as if we don’t know the will of God. Then we too deserve that wrath.”

12. Elisha Wiesel, Feb. 4, 2022

Elisha Wiesel (born June 6, 1972) is the only child of Holocaust survivor, author, professor, and Nobel Peace Prize recipient Elie Wiesel.

Last night my world was shaken.

It hit me, as though it were a fresh wound, that my father, Elie Wiesel, really was gone.

It hurt terribly when he first passed five years ago. But I also found peace and awakening as I grieved. I had this sense from the very moment he passed that he would be with me always, in ways I would never be able to explain. I felt I understood clearly what he had wanted from his life, and what he dreamed of for me, and that as long as I lived, he would too — as would my ancestors.

This feeling deepened over the years that followed as my year of Kaddish ended and I still found myself drawn to Shabbat

peace, to morning Tefillin, to the intention of a minyan gathered to pray, to the stories of our people in ancient texts. I felt the wholeness of history, of the chain of which he had always wanted me to feel a crucial part, which he so keenly felt himself. And although I miss him and think of him daily, my footsteps have never been so sure as they have since he passed. But last night I had to stop and catch my breath as I realized the depth of my loss, our loss.

Because last night was the opening of the Beijing Olympics and the world tuned in. Because the world doesn't care that the host country is simultaneously terrorizing its Uyghur citizens.

I saw one or two hundred brave souls rally yesterday afternoon in Times Square, on a rainy Thursday. In the gray neon light, the young leaders called on each other and passersby via megaphones whose charge could not keep up with the urgency of the message: Turn off the Olympics, and close the concentration camps in Xinjiang. It should have been the whole city turning up to honor their message.

I know now that we have failed my father in this regard. He did not fail us. He spoke of how he always felt he had to answer to the dead: Did he do enough? And yes. He did.

He was there to speak up against atrocities in Darfur, Bosnia, Cambodia, Rwanda. He tried with everything he had to tell us. And all the words he spoke and wrote could not change the fact that five years after his death, one million people are reportedly in concentration camps, because of their race and religion, in the grip of a totalitarian regime. And this regime is honored today to host the world's nations!

Where are the men and women of conscience, why are they not reaching out to their managers at the corporations which sponsor the Olympics? Why are they not respectfully but insistently calling for a CEO-level firmwide conversation on what our responsibility is when we hear -- but are prevented from investigating -- survivors' reports of genocide on the part of the Chinese government?

There are brave leaders, like Steve Simon of the Women's Tennis Association, who canceled a lucrative tournament in China when the WTA's demands for Peng Shuai's safety and freedom went unanswered. There are others who are showing bravery in challenging the Chinese Communist Party. But they are still too few.

Have I, blessed to live in this country which stands for freedom, done enough?
Shame on Xi Jinping, shouted the determined young people in Times Square last night.
And I think: Shame on me, if we can't find some way to help.
Shame on us.

13. BT Pesachim 118a-118b

They pour the leader of the seder the fourth cup and he completes hallel over it, and he recites the blessing of the song at the end of hallel over that cup. What is the blessing of the song? Rav Yehuda said: "All Your works shall praise You, Lord, our God." And Rabbi Yohanan said that one also recites: "The soul of every being."

תלמוד בבלי מסכת פסחים דף ק"ח עמוד א -
דף ק"ז עמוד ב

רביעי גומר עליו את ההלל ואומר עליו ברכת השיר.

מאי ברכת השיר? רב יהודה אמר: יהללך ה' אלהינו, ורבי יוחנן אמר: נשמת כל חי

14. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik (1903-1993), Days of Deliverance 77*

And on Passover night, after we speak of Jewish redemption over the first three cups, we recite the great universal hymn of "Nishmat Kol hai," of the salvation of mankind, of every living soul. A Jew is not satisfied with his redemption unless everybody will be redeemed with him; the Jew feels the beat of the heart of the universe. The Jew prays even for the cosmos. Once a month, he prays that God shall restore the diminution of the moon. The Jewish experience is all-inclusive, all-embracing, sympathetic to all. What the poet Virgil keenly described as the "tears for what men bear" (*lacrimae rerum*; *Aeneid* I.462) is transformed into "light and gladness and joy and honor" (8:16).

*I am indebted to R. Yosie Levine for sources 5, 8, and 14. R. Levine's exploration of this topic can be found here <https://images.shulcloud.com/634/uploads/Shabbat-Hagadol-2017-Cup-of-Wrath-Web-Edition.pdf>