

Secrets of the Song, Had Gadya Mysteries of Divine Judgment

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Taken from the Sephardic Hagadah, Orah Haim, by the Ben Ish Hai

Hagadah

Blessed is He who keeps His promise to Israel, blessed be He! For the Holy One, blessed be He, calculated the end [of the bondage], in order to do as He had said to our father Abraham at the "Covenant between the Portions," as it is said: "And He said to Abraham, 'You shall know that your seed will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and they will enslave them and make them suffer, for four hundred years. But I shall also judge the nation whom they shall serve, and after that they will come out with great wealth.'"



Ben Ish Hai

Now understand the grace of blessed God when He said, "in a land that is not theirs." He did not specifically mention the name of Egypt. In this way, Pharaoh became guilty for enslaving them intentionally. He could not say that the Holy One, blessed be He ordained for him to enslave them, and what could he do, for he could not violate [what came forth] from the Mouth of God. For the Holy One, blessed be He did not ordain anything specific, rather the was a generality. Who then would dare get involved with this, to subjugate God's children? No one other than one who has a bad heart and is great in wickedness. This is why Pharaoh was found guilty. This is why [the children of Israel] were redeemed from Egypt before the time [of the end of 400 years].

This is why we recite the song Had Gadya (Un Cavretico in Ladino) on Passover night after the Seder.

(See the Ladino and English translations below).

It appears that the cat acted inappropriately when it ate the kid. Therefore, that the dog came and bit (ate) the cat seems appropriate. Then the stick that came and hit the dog acted inappropriately, and the fire that burned the stick was appropriate. Thus it would follow through the rest of the song. If this is so, then it would appear that, God forbid, the Holy One, blessed be He, acted inappropriately. How could this be possible? ...

It is true that the cat did not act appropriately to eat the kid, but, nevertheless, the dog is still guilty of sin here for biting (eating) him. Why did the dog get involved [in the first place] to become "the avenger of blood" for the kid [that the cat ate]? Who made him [the dog] the cat's judge? Why did the dog get involved with something that was none of his business?

Therefore, because of this did the stick come and beat [the dog]. The stick, therefore, acted appropriately when it beat the dog. Now, being that the stick was acting appropriately to beat the dog, it is the fire that was acting inappropriately to burn the stick. And thus it is through the end of the song. Therefore, the Holy One, blessed be He did act appropriately. We find that this whole song is built upon this premise, that the dog was guilty because it stuck its nose into none of its business.

This is how it was with Pharaoh and Egypt. Granted, Israel, by Divine decree was to become subject to servitude. However, who said that the Egyptians should get involved with this to execute judgment? Why did they desire to get involved with this more than anyone else, being that they had no direct interests in this matter. Israel are God's children, if He so ordains something for them, He knows what do to. So what place did this strange and foreign man [Pharaoh] have to get himself in the middle of an issue between the [Heavenly] father and his [Earthly] son?

If the Holy One, blessed be He specifically ordained that the servitude should be in Egypt, then there would be no room for objection. But being that the language was vague, and not specific, this reveals to us an element of Divine grace.

Not only was this of value to our ancestors in their exodus from Egypt, this is also of benefit to us in all our years of exile. For the Holy One, blessed be He did not ordain that Israel be exiled specifically under Pharaoh, so that Pharaoh would not later have an excuse before God saying that Heaven so ordained this. Rather, God ordained exile in general. Therefore, each and every king should have said, 'who got me involved with this?' to become equally guilty, as was Pharaoh.

Properly then did the author of the Hagadah quote the verse, 'your seed will be strangers in a land that is not theirs.' And then proceeded with, 'This is what has stood by our fathers and us!' This is the great thing that the Holy One, blessed be He did for the good of Israel. He never mentions that name of those under whom they were ordained to be subservient.

And He who stood up for our fathers in Egypt, to bring them forth from there before their time, and then judged Pharaoh and the Egyptians, will do the same for us now, in our present exiles. For those who oppress us now are equally guilty as was Pharaoh.

Hagadah

This is what has stood by our fathers and us! For not just one alone has risen against us to destroy us, but in every generation they rise against us to destroy us; and the Holy One, blessed be He, saves us from their hand!

Had Gadya

There was a kid goat that my father bought with two levanim, with two levanim.

Then came the cat and ate the kid goat that my father bought with two levanim, with two levanim.

Then came the dog and bit the cat that ate the kid goat that my father bought with two levanim, with two levanim.

Then came stick and hit the dog that bit the cat that ate the kid goat that my father bought with two levanim, with two levanim.

Then came the fire and burned the stick that hit the dog that bit the cat that ate the kid goat that my father bought with two levanim, with two levanim.

Then came the water and extinguished the fire that burned the stick that hit the dog that bit the cat that ate the kid goat that my father bought with two levanim, with two levanim.

Then came the ox and drank the water that extinguished the fire that burned the stick that hit the dog that bit the cat that ate the kid goat that my father bought with two levanim, with two levanim.

Then came the butcher and beheaded the ox that drank the water that extinguished the fire that burned the stick that hit the dog that bit the cat that ate the kid goat that my father bought with two levanim, with two levanim.

Then came the Angel of Death and killed the butcher who beheaded the ox that drank the water that extinguished the fire that burned the stick that hit the dog that bit the cat that ate the kid goat that my father bought with two levanim, with two levanim.

Then came THE HOLY BLESSED ONE and tied down Death who killed the butcher who beheaded the ox that drank the water that extinguished the fire that burned the stick that hit the dog that bit the cat that ate the kid goat that my father bought with two levanim, with two levanim.

UN CAVRITICO (Had Gadya in Ladino)

UN CAVRITICO QUE COMPRO MI PADRE POR DOS LEVANIM, POR DOS LEVANIM.

I vino el gato y comio al cavrítico que compro mi padre por dos levanim por dos levanim.

I vino el perro y mordio al gato que comio el cavrítico que compro mi padre por dos levanim por dos levanim.

I vino el palo y pego al perro que mordio al gato que comio el cavrítico que compro mi padre por dos levanim por dos levanim.

I vino el fuego y quemo el palo qua pego al perro que mordio al gato que comio al cavrítico que compro mi padre por dos levanim por dos levanim.

I vino el agua y apago el fuego que quemo al palo que pego al perro que mordio al gato que comio el cavrítico que compro mi padre por dos levanim por dos levanim.

I vino el buey y bevio el agua que apago el fuego que quemo al palo que pego al perro que mordio al gato que comio el cavrítico que compro mi padre por dos levanim por dos levanim.

I vino el shuhet y degollo al buey que bevio el agua que apago el fuego que quemo al palo que pego al perro que mordio al gato que comio al cavrítico que compro mi padre por dos levanim por dos levanim.

I vino la muerte i mato al shuhet que degollo al buey que bevio el agua que apago el fuego que quemo al palo que pego al perro que mordio al gato que comio al cavrítico que compro mi padre por dos levanim por dos levanim.

I vino EL SANTO BINDICHO EL, y afasto a la muerte que mato al shuhet que degollo al buey que bevio el agua que apago el fuego que quemo al palo que pego al perro que mordio al gato que comio al cavrítico que compro mi padre por dos levanim por dos levanim.