

## **Divine Wrath in Haggadah: A Trajectory of Theodicy**

Wittgenstein famously put it, '*Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muss man schweigen*' [Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent].<sup>18</sup>

*Set me at the head of all the dying  
with a greeting, a message from You.*

*The desolate call to You, and You don't come.  
So send me, and any others You might choose.*

*I cannot curse as justly as did Jeremiah.*

*People are poor, weak; and it seems to me  
that their guilt is Yours;  
their sins, Your crimes.*

*You are meant to help here, Oh God!*

*But You are silent, while needs shriek.*

*So help me to help! I'll fulfill Your duty,  
pay Your debts.*

“Help” A J Heschel<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "The Ineffable Name of God," trans. by Morton M. Leifman, Continuum: 2005, 33

The dramatic moment during the Haggadah when we open the door to Elijah, welcoming him into our homes and fill the fifth cup of wine for him. We follow it with a prayer containing some of the most vindictive language uncharacteristic of the temper of the evening, thanks and gratitude, after which we close the door. I would like to suggest that this late addition to the Seder has a complicated history and by careful examination of the prooftexts it makes use of, and the underlying midrashim that are implied, we can plot a trajectory of theological protest and comfort based on the theology of Eicha Rabba. We can then speculate and project where this might help us in our post Holocaust theology.

The text reads as follows:

*Pour your wrath upon the nations that did not know You and upon the kingdoms that did not call upon Your Name! Since they have consumed Ya'akov and laid waste his habitation ([Psalms 79:6-7](#)). Pour out Your fury upon them and the fierceness of Your anger shall reach them ([Psalms 69:25](#))! You shall pursue them with anger and eradicate them from under the skies of the Lord ([Lamentations 3:66](#)).*

The three prooftexts cited, have different formulations of the word **שָׂפָד** as follows:

### Prooftexts:

**שָׂפָד תִּמְתָּד** עַל־הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יָדְעוּךָ וְעַל־מְשַׁפְּחוֹת אֲשֶׁר בְּשִׁמְךָ לֹא קָרְאוּ כִּי־אָכְלוּ אֶת־יַעֲקֹב וְאָכְלָהוּ וַיִּכְלְהוּ וְאֶת־בְּנוֹהוּ (הַשְּׂמוֹ: פ)

Pour out Your wrath on the nations who have not heeded You, Upon the clans that have not invoked Your name. “For they have devoured Jacob, Have devoured and consumed him, And have laid desolate his homesteads.”

*Jeremiah 10:25*

**שָׂפָד תִּמְתָּד** אֶל־הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יָדְעוּךָ וְעַל־מַמְלָכוֹת אֲשֶׁר בְּשִׁמְךָ לֹא קָרְאוּ:

Pour out Your fury on the nations that do not know You, upon the kingdoms that do not invoke Your name,

כִּי אָכַל אֶת־יַעֲקֹב וְאֶת־בְּנוֹהוּ הַשְּׂמוֹ:

for they have devoured Jacob and desolated his home.

*Psalm 79:6-7*

שָׂפָה עֲלֵיהֶם וְעָמָה וְחָרוֹן אַפָּי יִשִּׁיגָם:

Pour out Your wrath on them; may Your blazing anger overtake them;

*Psalm 69:2*

*The midrash in each setting amplifies the dramatic desire to see the divine pour His anger on others even when we are deserving of it:*

The word שָׂפָה is then used by various midrashim to define who is in anger, where should the anger be directed and why the anger has not been poured on the appropriate targets.

## Midrashic Source Materials

- A. **Midrash Eicha Rabba** begins (as is customary in the exposition of a midrashic pericope) with a verse from Zechariah,

וְשִׁפְכֵתִי עַל-בֵּית דָּוִד וְעַל יוֹשְׁבֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם רֹחַ חַן וְתַחֲנוּנִים וְהִבִּיטוּ אֵלַי אֶת אֲשֶׁר-דִּקְרוּ וְסִפְדוּ עָלָיו כְּמִסְפֵּד עַל-הַיָּחִיד וְהִמָּר עָלָיו פֶּה-הַבְּכוֹר:

*But I will fill the House of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem with a spirit of pity and compassion; and they shall lament to Me about those who are slain, wailing over them as over a favorite son and showing bitter grief as over a first-born.*

*Zechariah 12:10*

There are four types of pouring out for good and four for bad. שְׂפִיכוֹת לְרָעָה. אַרְבַּע שְׂפִיכוֹת לְטוֹבָה, שְׂנֵאָמַר bad.

(זכריה יב, י):

אֲשַׁפֹּךְ אֶת רוּחִי עַל כָּל בָּשָׂר "וְהָיָה אַחֲרַי כֵּן (וּוּאֵל ג. א), וְשִׁפְכֵתִי עַל בֵּית דָּוִד וְעַל יוֹשְׁבֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם רֹחַ חַן וְתַחֲנוּנִים וְהִבִּיטוּ אֵלַי אֶת אֲשֶׁר-דִּקְרוּ וְסִפְדוּ עָלָיו כְּמִסְפֵּד עַל-הַיָּחִיד וְהִמָּר עָלָיו פֶּה-הַבְּכוֹר: (יחזקאל לט, כט), וגו' וגם על העבדים ועל השפחות בנימים ההמה אֲשַׁפֹּךְ אֶת רוּחִי וְיִשְׁפַף עָלָיו חֲמָה: (ישעיה מב, כה) שְׂפִיכֵתִי אֶת רוּחִי עַל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל נְאֻם אֲדֹנָי אֱלֹהִים. וְאַרְבַּע שְׂפִיכוֹת לְרָעָה, שְׂנֵאָמַר שְׂפִיכֵתִי עָלָיו חֲמָה, וְהִדִּין: (איכה ב, ד) בְּשִׁפְכֵתִי אֶת חֲמָתִי עַל יְרוּשָׁלַם, וְכָתִיב: (יחזקאל ט, ח) אֲפֹ, וְבִיחֲזָקָאֵל כְּתִיב מִזְמוֹר לְאַסָּף אֱלֹהִים בָּאוּ גוֹיִם בְּנַחֲלָתִי, לָא: (תהלים עט, א) כִּלְהָה' אֶת חֲמָתוֹ שְׂפִיכֵת חָרוֹן אַפּוֹ. וְנִצַּת אִשׁ בְּצִיּוֹן, כְּתִיב הִנֵּה קָרָא צָרִיד לְמִימַר אֵלָּא בְּכִי לְאַסָּף, נְהִי לְאַסָּף, קִינָה לְאַסָּף, וּמָה אוֹמֵר מִזְמוֹר לְאַסָּף,

אֵלָא מְשַׁל לְמַלְךְ שְׁעֵשָׂה בֵּית חֲפָה לְבָנָה וְסִיָּדָה וְכִיָּרָה וְצִיָּרָה, וְיָצָא בְּנֵי לְמַרְבּוֹת רְעָה, מִיַּד עָלָה הַמֶּלֶךְ לְחֲפָה וְקָרַע אֶת הַיִּלְאוֹת וְשָׁבַר אֶת הַקְּנִיִּים, וְנָטַל פְּדָגוּג שְׁלוֹ אִיבּוּב שְׁלֵ קָנִיִּים וְהִיָּה מְזַמֵּר. אָמְרוּ לוֹ, הַמֶּלֶךְ הִפְךָ חֲפָתוֹ שֶׁל בְּנֵי וְאֵת יוֹשֵׁב וּמְזַמֵּר, אָמַר לָהֶם מְזַמֵּר אֲנִי שֶׁהִפְךָ חֲפָתוֹ שֶׁל בְּנֵי וְלֹא שֶׁהִפְךָ חֲמָתוֹ עַל בְּנֵי.

כִּף אָמְרוּ לְאַסָּף הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא הַחֲרִיב הַיְכָל וּמְקַדֵּשׁ וְאֵתָה יוֹשֵׁב וּמְזַמֵּר, אָמַר לָהֶם מְזַמֵּר אֲנִי שֶׁשִּׁפְךָ הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא חֲמָתוֹ עַל הָעֲצִיִּים וְעַל הָאֲבָנִים וְלֹא שֶׁהִפְךָ חֲמָתוֹ עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל, הֲדָא הוּא דְכָתִיב: וַיִּצֵּת אֵשׁ בְּצִיּוֹן וַתֹּאכַל יְסוּדֵתֶיהָ.

(כִּלְהָ יִהְיֶה אֶת-חֲמָתוֹ שֶׁהִפְךָ חֲרוֹן אַפּוֹ וַיִּצֵּת-אֵשׁ בְּצִיּוֹן וַתֹּאכַל יְסוּדֵתֶיהָ: ס)

The LORD vented all His fury, poured out His blazing wrath; He kindled a fire in Zion Which consumed its foundations.

Lam 4:11

Rabbi said: "There are four 'pouring out' for good and four 'pouring out' for evil. The four for good: "And I will pour out upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplications. ([Zechariah 12:10](#))", "And it shall come to pass afterwards that I will pour out My spirit upon all flesh ([Joel 3:1](#))", "And even upon the slaves and the maidservants in those days will I pour out My spirit ([Joel 3:2](#))", "And I shall no longer hide My face from them, for I shall have poured out My spirit upon the House of Israel ([Ezekiel 39:29](#))". The four for evil: "And He poured out upon them the fury of His anger ([Isaiah 42:25](#))", "When You pour out Your fury on Jerusalem ([Ezekiel 9:8](#))", and it is written:

"**He poured out his anger like fire ([Lamentations 2:4](#))**" and here: "**Hashem has spent His fury, He has poured out His fierce anger** (Lamentations 4:11)".

"**He kindled a fire in Zion**": It is written: "A psalm of Asaph. O God, heathens have entered Your domain ([Psalm 79:1](#))":

This verse should not have said "psalm", but rather a "lament" of Asaph, a "mourning song" of Asaph, an "elegy" of Asaph, so why does it say, "a psalm of Asaph"?

## MASHAL

Rather it is a parable about a king who made a huppah for his son and its foundation and its wall and its decoration, and his son went out and did evil debauchery, and so the king went up to the huppah and tore up the curtains and smashed the supports and his tutor (*paidogogos*) went and made a flute of the support and was playing music. They said to him: "The king overturned his son's huppah and you are sitting playing music?" and he said to them: "I am playing music because he overturned his son's huppah and did not **"pour out his anger"** on his son.

## NIMSHAL

So they said to Asaph: "The Holy One, blessed be He, has destroyed the Temple and you are sitting and playing music?" and he said to them: "I am playing music because the Holy One, blessed be He, **"poured out his anger"** on wood and stone and did not **"pour out his anger"** on Israel. See! It is written: **"He kindled a fire in Zion which consumed its foundations"**.

#### *Lam Rabba 4:14*

The parable of the king and his son is a dramatic example of the shame experience by the father on the day his son is getting married. The debauchery triggers his rampage, tearing down the chuppa. Along comes the royal tutor who paradoxically plays music during this bedlam. When questioned he responds that it could have been worse, the king. Might have harmed his son instead his anger was displaced on the chuppa instead. The explication is symmetrical. The nimshal has the psalmist Asaf singing a hymn instead of a lament for the same reason. God has destroyed Zion but not His Children.

## **B: Midrash Tehillim**

In the next midrash, the 6<sup>th</sup> psalm is for anyone suffering from sickness or distress or for the state of the Kingdom of Israel while suffering through oppression.

א. למנצח בנגינות, על-השמינית; מזמור לדוד

1 For the Leader; with string-music; on the **Sheminith**. A Psalm of David.

ב. יהוה, אל-באפך תוכיחני; ואל-בחמתך תיסרני

2 O LORD, rebuke me not in Thine anger, neither chasten me in Thy wrath.

(דניאל ב לב) דבר אחר למנצח על השמינית. על ארבע מלכיות שהם שמונה ואדום היא השמינית. הדא הוא דכתיב ראשיה די דהב טב ידוהי ודרעוהי תרין. מעוהי וירכתיה תרין. שקוהי תרין. ורגלוהי תרין. הרי שמונה שהן ארבעה. בבל וכשדים מדי ופרס ויון ומקדון אדום וישמעאל. הרי שמונה מלכיות. לכך נאמר על השמינית.

רבי איבו אמר אמרה כנסת ישראל לפני הקב"ה רבונו של עולם אנו מקלסין אותך בשעה שאתה מציל אותנו משמונה והיה ביום ההוא יוסיף ה' שנית ידו לקנות. וגו' לכך נאמר על השמינית. (ישעיה יא יא) מלכיות שנאמר

כי את (משלי ג יב) ר' יודן בשם ר' אמי אמר אמרה כנסת ישראל לפני הקב"ה רבונו של עולם אף על פי שכתוב בי אשרי הגבר אשר תיסרנו יה. אל בחמתך (תהלים צד יב) אשר יאהב ה' יוכיח. אל באפך תוכיחני. ואף על פי שנאמר תיסרני.

**א"ר יוחנן משל** למלך שהיו לו שני קוסטנרין רעים וכל מדינה שכועס עליה הוא רודה אותה בהן. פעם אחת סרחה עליו מדינתו ובקש לשלוח עליה אותן שני קוסטנרין לרדותה התחילו מבקשין ממנו אדוננו המלך בכל מה שאתה מבקש רדה אותנו חוץ מאלו

. **כך** אמרו ישראל רבוננו של עולם אל באפך תוכיחני ואל בחמתך תיסרני. אמר להן אם כן למה לי אף וחימה. אמרו לו **(מיכה ה יד)** שפוך חמתך אל הגוים אשר לא ידעוך. ואף הקב"ה מקבל מהם ואומר (יש לך למי לשלוח) (שם עט ו) לא אעשה חרון אפי. **(הושע יא ט)** ועשיתי באף ובחמה נקם את הגוים. אבל בישראל מה כתיב

**א"ר אליעזר** משל למלך שכעס על בנו ובידו חרב הנדית ונשבע שהוא מעבירה על בנו על ידי שהכעיס לאביו. אמר המלך אם אני מעבירה על צואר בני אין לו חיים ואחר כך מי ירש אותי ומלכותי. וגם כן לבטל את גזירתי אי אפשר. מה עושה המלך הכנים החרב לנרתיקה והעבירה על ראשו. נמצא לא הזיק את בנו וגם כן לא ביטל את גזירתו.

**ר' חנינא** אמר [משל] למלך שכעס על בנו היתה לפניו אבן גדולה ונשבע המלך שהוא זורקה בו. אמר המלך אם אני זורקה בו עוד אין לו חיים. מה עשה המלך כתתה ועשאה צרורות קטנות והיה זורקה בו אחת אחת. נמצא לא הזיק את בנו ולא ביטל את גזירתו.

**ורבנן אמרי** משל למלך שכועס על בנו ונשבע שהוא מכה אותו מאה חבלים. אמר המלך אם אני מכה אותו עוד אין לו חיים. מה עושה נטל את החבל ונתנה על צוארו. לכך אמר אל בחמתך תיסרני

In a wonderful trope off the psalmist who asks God to spare His wrath, the *bal hamidrash* plays off the word “eight”<sup>2</sup> to redirect His wrath against the nations who torture the exiles. He discovers a lament of the 4 exiles and 8 kingdoms Israelites were subjected to. Citing Daniel 2:31-33<sup>3</sup> to list them, he then cites Rabbi Aibu who comforts with the prophecy from Isa 11:11 in which the Lord will recover the remnants of Israel. On that day the psalm to the eighth will be sung because it represents the eight kingdoms we survived.

This is followed by a series of dramatic parables as each attempting to deflect the divine wrath away from the son, and, by implication from Israel. The trajectory of the midrash is to stretch the psalmist’s plea further by showing the divine where the true of object of His wrath should be directed towards.

<sup>2</sup> The reference “the singer of the eighth” can also be found in Eruchin 13b

דתניא רבי יהודה אומר כנור של מקדש של שבעת נימין היה שנאמר (תהלים טז, יא) שובע שמחות [את] פניך אל תיקרי שובע אלא שבע ושל ימות המשיח שמונה שנאמר (תהלים יב, א) למנצח על השמינית על נימא שמינית של עולם הבא עשר שנאמר (תהלים צב, ד) עלי עשור ועלי נבל עלי הגיון בכנור ואומר (ב) הודו לה' בכנור בנבל עשור זמרו לו שירו לו שיר חדש, (תהלים לג

It says that according to Rabbi Yehudah, the כנור of the Beis HaMikdash had 7 strings, but during Yemos Moshiach, it will have 8 strings and in Olam HaBah, 10 string.

According to the Maharsha, the strings here represent שירה, with each additional string representing an additional שירה that we will do. In this world, all the קדושות occur in groups of seven, seven days of the week, shvi'is, yovel the sefiros. (Perhaps these are the 7 שירים that were said in the Beis HaMikdash). During Yemos Moshiach, an additional שירה will be said.

<sup>3</sup> The king saw a gigantic statue made of four metals, from its gold head to its feet of mingled iron and clay; as he watched, a stone “not cut by human hands” destroyed the statue and became a mountain filling the whole world. Daniel explained to the king that the statue represented four successive kingdoms beginning with Babylon, while the stone and mountain signified a kingdom established by God which would never be destroyed nor given to another people.

the ordinances of  
2. A different interpretation of *For the leader; with string-music; on the Sheminith* ("the eighth"): The phrase *on the Sheminith* alludes to the four dispersions of Israel under eight kingdoms, Edom being the eighth. Of the eight kingdoms it is written *Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This image, which was mighty, and whose brightness was surpassing, stood before thee; and the appearance thereof was terrible. As for this image, its head was of fine gold, its breast and its arms of silver, its belly and its thighs of brass, its legs of iron, its feet part of iron and part of clay* (Dan. 2:31-33). By *arms* is meant two kingdoms; by *thighs*, two kingdoms; by *legs*, two kingdoms; and by *feet*, two kingdoms—eight in all: Babylon, Chaldaea, Media, Persia, Greece, Macedon, Ishmael,<sup>17</sup> and Edom.

According to R. Aibu, the congregation of Israel says to the Holy One, blessed be He: On the day when Thou wilt have gathered us out of the eight dispersions, on the day of which it is said *The Lord will set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people, that shall remain from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea* (Isa. 11:11), on that day we shall sing a Psalm of praise unto Thee. And because eight kingdoms are named in this verse, therefore it is said *For the leader; with string-music; on the Sheminith* ('eight').

Concerning another interpretation of *on the Sheminith*, two Amoraim differed. One said: The phrase refers to eight laws: six laws that were given to Adam, as intimated by the verse

*And the Lord God commanded Adam, saying: of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat (Gen. 2:16);*<sup>18</sup> a seventh law that was given to Noah, forbidding the eating of flesh cut from a living animal;<sup>19</sup> and an eighth law that was given to Abraham, concerning circumcision.<sup>20</sup>

The other Amora maintained: The phrase *on the Sheminith* refers to circumcision which is obligatory on the eighth day after an infant's birth.

*O Lord, rebuke me not in Thine anger, neither chasten me in Thy wrath (Ps. 6:2).* R. Yudan taught in the name of R. Ammi: The congregation of Israel says to the Holy One, blessed be He: Master of the universe! Although it is written "Whom the Lord loveth, He rebuketh" (Prov. 3:12), *rebuke me not in Thine anger*; and although it is written "Happy is the man whom Thou chastenest" (Ps. 94:12), *chasten me not in Thy wrath*.

Hereto, R. Johanan told the parable of a king who had two cruel inquisitors. Whenever the king was angry at a province he used to chastise it with them. One day the king's own province provoked his displeasure, and as he was about to summon his inquisitors to chastise it, the people of the province began to plead with him: "Our lord, O king, we beseech thee, chastise us in any way thou desirest to chastise us, other than with those two." Even so, the people of Israel say to the Holy One, blessed be He: "Master of the universe, *Rebuke me not with Thine anger, neither chasten me with Thy wrath.*" But the Holy One, blessed be He, replies: "If not, what am I to do with anger and with wrath?" Thereupon the people of Israel say: "Thou hast nations upon whom to pour these out, as it is written *Pour out Thy wrath upon the nations that know Thee not, and upon the kingdoms that call not upon Thy name (Ps. 79:6).*" And heeding the people of Israel, the Holy One, blessed be He, declares: *I will execute vengeance in anger and wrath upon the nations (Micah 5:14).* Of Israel, however, what does Scripture say? *I will not execute the fierceness of Mine anger. I will not return to destroy Ephraim . . . and I will not come in wrath (Hos. 11:9); Wrath is not in Me (Isa. 27:4).*



## PSALM SIX

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R. Eleazar said: With whom may God in His punishment [of Israel] be compared? With a king who became angry at his son, and at that moment, holding in his hand an unsheathed Indian sword, swore that he would whip it across his son's head. But then the king softened and said: "If I whip it across my son's head, his life will go, and there will be no one to inherit my kingdom. And yet it is impossible for me to revoke my royal word." What did the king do? He put the sword back into its sheath, and then whipped it across his son's head, and so his son was spared, and his royal word was kept.

R. Hanina taught: God may be compared with a king who became angry at his son, and seeing at that moment a large stone before him, swore that he would throw it at his son. But then the king said: "If I throw it at my son, then his life will go." What did the king do? He ordered that the stone be broken up into small stones and that these be thrown, one by one, at his son, so that the king spared his son and yet kept his royal oath.

R. Simeon ben Lakish said: God may be compared with a king who became angry at his son, and there being at that moment a rope near him, swore that with the rope in his hand he would give his son a hundred blows. But then the king said: "If my sons receives a hundred blows, then his life will go." What did the king do? He coiled the rope a hundred times and struck his son once with the coiled rope, so that he spared his son and yet kept his royal word.

The Rabbis taught: The king took the rope and wrapped it gently around his son's neck. By these comparisons may we interpret the verse *O Lord, rebuke me not in Thine anger, neither chasten me in Thy wrath.*

<sup>4</sup> William Braude, *Midrash on Psalms*, Yale University press 1959, 96-98

In all these parables the king is asked to channel his anger from using cruel inquisitors to some other instrument, or in the nimshal, displace his wrath upon other nations as in Psalm 79:6 **שפוך** ...חמתך אל הגוים אשר לא ידעוך

## C: Mechilta deRabbi Yishmael Beshalach (Shira) 6

In the Mechilta, however, the biggest source material for the Haggadah is found.

**ש'פוך** עליהם זעמך וגוי' (שם סט) ואומ' תשלח חרונוך, שלחת חרונוך אין כתיב כאן אלא תשלח חרונוך לעתיד לבא שני' (ירמיה י'): 'שפוך חמתך על הגוים מפני מה כי אכלו את יעקב וגו'

It is not written "You **have** sent forth Your wrath," but "You **will** send forth Your wrath" — in time to come. ([Psalms 69:25](#)) "Pour Your wrath upon them, etc." ([Jeremiah 10:25](#)) "Pour Your wrath upon the nations": Why? (Ibid.) "For they have consumed Yaakov, etc"

Mechilta 15:7<sup>5</sup>

מפני מה כי לא יבינו אל פעולות ה' ואל ([תהלים נח](#)) תהרוס קמין הרסת קמין אין כתיב כאן אלא תהרוס קמין לעתיד לבא שני' אלהים הרס שינמו בפניו <sup>5</sup> מעשה ידיו יהרסם ולא יבנם (שם כח) יהרסם בעולם הזה ולא יבנם לעולם הבא: ([Exodus 15:7](#)) It is not written "You have destroyed those who rose up against You," but "You will destroy ('taharos') those who rise up against You" — in the future, viz. ([Psalms 58:7](#)) "O G d, smash ('haras') their teeth in their mouth." Why? (Ibid. 58:5) "For they do not consider the deeds of the L rd and His handiwork. He will tear them down ('yeharsem') and not rebuild them": He will tear them down in this world and not rebuild them in the world to come.

תשלח חרונוך, שלחת חרונוך אין כתיב כאן אלא תשלח חרונוך לעתיד לבא שני' שפוך עליהם זעמך וגוי' (שם סט) ואומ' שפוך חמתך על הגוים מפני מה כי אכלו (ירמיה י'): את יעקב וגו'

It is not written "You have sent forth Your wrath," but "You will send forth Your wrath" — in time to come. ([Psalms 69:25](#)) "Pour Your wrath upon them, etc." ([Jeremiah 10:25](#)): Pour Your wrath upon the nations": Why? (Ibid.) "For they have consumed Yaakov, etc"

ואומר ביום ההוא אשים את ([עובדיה א](#)) יאכלמו קש, אכלמו קש אין כתיב כאן אלא יאכלמו קש לעתיד לבא שני' והיה בית יעקב אש ובית יוסף להבה כל העצים כשהן דולקין אין קולן הולך אבל הקש כשהוא דולק קולו הולך כך היה קולן של מצרים ([זכריה יב](#)) 'אלופי יהודה ככיוור אש וכעצים וכלפיד אש וגו' הולך מפני הפורענות שהבאת עליהם, כל העצים כשהן דולקין יש בהן ממש אבל הקש כשהוא דולק אין בו ממש לפי שני' ויקח שש מאות רכב בחור וגו' שומע אני שהיה בהם ממש ת"ל יאכלמו קש מה הקש כשהוא דולק אין בו ממש כך המצריים כשהיו דולקין לא היה בהן ממש מפני הפורענות שהבאת עליהם וכן ללמדך שלא היתה מלכות ירודה משל מצרים אלא שנטלה שררה לשעה בשביל כבודן של ([ישעיה מג](#)) הוא אומר יחדו ישכבו כל יקומו דועכו כפשתה כבו ([יחזקאל ל"ג:גא](#)) ואומר ואנכי השמדתי את האמורי מפניכם ) ישראל וכשהוא מושל את המלכות אינו מושל אותם אלא בארזים שנאמר הנה אשור ארז בלבנון וכשהוא מושל את המצרים אינו מושלם אלא בקש שני' יאכלמו קש כשהוא מושל את ([דניאל ד](#)) 'ואומר אילנא די חזית וגו' ([עמוס ב](#)) אשר כגובה ארזים גבהו המלכות אינו מושלם אלא בכסף וזהב שני' צלמא ראשיה דידהב טב (שם ב) וכשהוא מושל את המצרים אינו מושלם אלא בעופרת שני' צללו כעופרת כשהוא ([שה"ש](#)) מושל את המלכות אינו מושלם אלא בחיות שני' וד' חיון רבובן (שם ז) וכשהוא ממשל את המצרים אינו מושלם אלא בשועלים שני' אחזו לנו שועלים שאל אנטונינוס את רבינו הקדוש אני מבקש לילך לאכסנדריא שמה יעמוד מלך וינצחני אמר לו איני יודע מכל מקום כתוב לנו שאין ארץ מצרים יכולה. ([יחזקאל ל](#)) להעמיד לא מלך ולא שר שני' [ונשיא מאר' מצ' לא יהיה עוד מן הממלכות תהיה שפלה ולא תתנשא עוד על הגוים והמעטתים לבלתי רדות בגוים] ([יחזקאל ל](#)) (שם כט).

It is not written ([Exodus 15:7](#)) "He has consumed them as stubble," but "He will consume them as stubble" — in time to come, viz. ([Ovadiah 1:18](#)) "And the house of Yaakov will be fire, and the house of Joseph, flame, and the house of Esav, stubble, and they will ignite them and consume them, etc." And it is written ([Zechariah 12:6](#)) "On that day I will make the chieftains of Judah like a stove — fire (burning) wood, torch (burning) sheaf, etc." All woods, when they burn, their sound is not heard; but stubble, when it burns, it crackles and is heard. Thus, did the sound of Egypt, in its destruction, make itself heard. All woods, when they burn, leave a trace; but stubble, when it burns, leaves no trace. And the L rd said ([Isaiah 43:17](#)) "They (the chariots of Egypt) all lie together, never to rise, snuffed out like flax" — to teach that there was no kingdom so abject as that of Egypt, but it seized power for the moment towards the aggrandizement of Israel. When the (other) kingdoms are symbolized, they are symbolized as cedars, viz. ([Ezekiel 31:3](#)) "Behold, Ashur, a cedar in the Levanon," and ([Amos 2:9](#)) "And I destroyed the Emori from before them, whose height was as the height of cedars, etc.", and ([Daniel 4:17](#)) "The tree (Bavel) that you have seen, etc." And when Egypt is symbolized, it is symbolized only as stubble, viz. "He will consume them as stubble." And when the (other) kingdoms are symbolized, they are symbolized as silver and gold (Ibid. 2:32) "This statue, its head of fine gold, etc." And when Egypt is

In comparing the language of the midrash and Haggadah the subtle differences will betray an underlying difference in theological trajectory of each. The Mechilta follows the prior midrashim we cited in Lamentations Rabba and midrash to the psalms inasmuch as the text proposes the divine displace His anger on the nations who oppress the exiles because there has already been enough suffering. Any divine displeasure for the sins of the nation have been surely exhausted. So why are we still suffering? The implied protest in the parables comes out in full force. What kind of a king has such a rage attack against his son that he might kill him in the process? The theological trajectory of Mechilta in using the prooftexts from Psalm 69 and Jeremiah 10 which speak of “pouring out wrath” **שִׁפְךָ** is now displaced to the future vengeance. Where the past foreshadows the future just as now the restored exiles from Babylon ...so too God will save us from future exiles. *“Look at how God brought down Nebuchadnezzar and restored the exiles from Babylon. If God intervened then, he can will do so again”*

Haggadah	Mechilta
<p><b>שִׁפְךָ</b> חַמְתָּךְ אֶל־הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר לֹא יָדְעוּךָ וְעַל־מַמְלָכוֹת אֲשֶׁר בְּשִׁמְךָ לֹא קָרְאוּ.          .כִּי אָכַל אֶת־יַעֲקֹב וְאֶת־נְוֵהוּ הִשְׁמִי          .שִׁפְךָ־עֲלֵיהֶם וְזַעַמְךָ וְחַרוֹן אַפְּךָ יֵשִׁיגֵם.          '.תִּרְדֹּף בְּאֵף וְתִשְׁמַדֵּם מִתַּחַת שָׁמַי ה</p> <p>Pour your wrath upon the nations that did not know You and upon the kingdoms that did not call upon Your Name! Since they have consumed Ya'akov and laid waste his habitation (<a href="#">Psalms 79:6-7</a>). Pour out Your fury upon them and the fierceness of Your anger shall reach them (<a href="#">Psalms 69:25</a>)! You shall pursue them with anger and eradicate them from under the skies of the Lord (<a href="#">Lamentations 3:66</a>).</p>	<p>תשלח חרוןך, שלחת חרוןך אין כתיב כאן אלא תשלח חרוןך לעתיד לבא שנ' שפוך עליהם זעמך וגו' (שם סט)          ואומ' שפוך חמתך על הגוים מפני מה כי אכלו את יעקב (<a href="#">ירמיה י'</a>):</p> <p>It is not written "You have sent forth Your wrath," but "You will send forth Your wrath" — in time to come. (<a href="#">Psalms 69:25</a>)</p> <p>"Pour Your wrath upon them, etc." (<a href="#">Jeremiah 10:25</a>):</p> <p>“Pour Your wrath upon the nations”: Why? (Ibid.) "For they have consumed Yaakov, and depleted his home”</p>

symbolized, it is symbolized only as lead, viz. ([Exodus 15:10](#)) "they sank as lead." And when the (other) kingdoms are symbolized, they are symbolized as beasts, viz. ([Daniel 7:3](#)) "and four immense beasts, etc." And when Egypt is symbolized, it is symbolized only as a fox, viz. ([Song of Songs 2:15](#)) "Seize for us the foxes, etc." Antoninus asked Rabbeinu Hakadosh: I want to go to Alexandria. Is it possible that a king will arise there who will beat me? He answered: I do not know. In any event, we have it in writing that Egypt is incapable of establishing either a king or a governor, viz. ([Ezekiel 29:15](#)) "Of all the kingdoms it (Egypt) will be the lowest, and it will not exalt itself again among the nations. And I will diminish them, so that they not dominate the nations."

Let us examine the version in the Haggadah to discover what underlying polemic is being used by seeing the differences in text. David Arnow has compared the two texts and suggested the following contrasts:<sup>6</sup>

Because the Haggadah does not quote the Mekhilta verbatim, but simply uses much of its biblical material, the case for a link between the Haggadah and the midrash requires further justification. The argument rests on several considerations. First, it seems that the Mekhilta is the only source in the standard midrashic corpus in which two verses that begin with the word *sh'fokh* ("pour") have been brought together (Psalm 69:25 and Jeremiah 10:25 in the midrash, versus Psalm 79:6 and 69:25 in the Haggadah).<sup>22</sup>

He notes the following changes from midrash to Haggadah text:

1. Changed the order of verses:  
In Midrash...Ps79---69—Lam3 compared with Haggadah Ps 69—Jer 10.
2. Haggadah substituted Ps 79 for Jer 10
3. Midrash Added lamentations verse 3:66<sup>7</sup>

The Lamentations verse:

<p>סו תרדף בָּאֵף וְתִשְׁמַדֵּם, מִתַּחַת כַּף פ } שְׁמַי יְהוָה.</p>	<p><b>66</b> Thou wilt pursue them in anger and destroy them from under the heavens of the LORD. {P}</p>
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Has been appropriated from its context in lamenting the first exile to Babylon and resituated in the Midrashic world of post Hurban Palestine.

Why add the Lamentations verse to the Haggadah? Here Arnow puts the historical perspective in plain view:

1. Lamentations/Eicha refers to destruction of first Temple, whereas
2. It appears in Mechilta after the second Temple
3. Refers to future hope after the Crusades. Using comparative piyyutim after the Crusades he proposes the use of the Eicha citation might be a response to the First and Second Crusades.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Sh'fokh Hamatkha in the Mechilta of Rabbi Ishmael and the Passover Haggadah: A Search for Origins and Meaning Conservative Judaism, Vol. 65 No. 1-2 Fall-Winter 2013-2014

<sup>7</sup> Some Haggadot did quote Jeremiah for instance Ri, Ritva, and Rashbets.

<sup>8</sup> First 1095-1099, Second 1147-1149

The Machzor Vitry makes use of the passage for the first time and thereafter. combination of biblical verses. *"The earliest mention of this custom is probably the version of the Haggadah found in Machzor Vitry (p. 296). In this version, we find an additional six verses before the final verse from Lamentations: five from Psalms and one from Hosea. This version seems to be a later addition to the Machzor Vitry as there is no mention of this custom in the description of the Seder attributed to Rashi in this same work (p. 2.87.). It is difficult to determine when this addition was incorporated into the Machzor Vitry. The earliest appearance of these verses that can be dated with some certainty is in the work of Eliezer ben Judah of Worms. He mentions them as an aside, considering them an accepted custom. There is, as yet, no evidence for the recital of these verses outside of Germany or France earlier than this, although they have been interpolated into one of the manuscripts of the siddur of R. Amram Gaon."*<sup>9</sup>

The Piyutim composed after these horrors made use the same metaphors, As we see in the Haggadah. Arnow refers us to the Chronicles of Solomon bar Samson (1140) referring to the Jews of Rhineland.<sup>10</sup>

As Arnow suggests: *"these responses illustrate the yearning to the return of an interventionist God"*

*"the historical details differed between the Mechilta and the Crusade period, but in both the sense of God's absence offered a particularly painful contrast with God's palpable presence to the biblical exodus, the paradigm of Jewish hope for redemption: Please intervene now like YOU did then...."*

In fact, Reb Eliezer of Worms had custom to add Psalm 17 7

הַפְּלֵה חֲסִדֶיךָ מוֹשִׁיעַ חוֹסִים לְמַתְקוֹמְמִים בְּיַמֶּיךָ:

*"Display Your faithfulness in wondrous deeds, You who deliver with Your right hand those who seek refuge from assailants."*

Adding to the pathos of **שְׁפָךְ**.

If we may accept the introduction of **שְׁפָךְ** as a late addition the honored Seder and we accept the trajectory of theological projection used by the *paytanim* as they struggled to make sense of the horrors experienced in the Crusader period, then our task is to extend this plot line to our times.

What kind of a king could sit silently by as a million babies are murdered?

We are left with the most daring challenge theologically found in Talmud (Gittin 56b)

מי כמוך חסין יה מי כמוך חסין וקשה שאתה שומע ניאוצו וגידופו של אותו רשע (תהלים פט, ט) אבא חנן אומר מי כמוכה באלים ה' מי כמוכה באלמים (שמות טו, יא) ושותק דבי רבי ישמעאל תנא

**Abba Hanan says:** The verse states: **"Who is strong like You, O Lord?"** ([Psalms 89:9](#)).

<sup>9</sup> JPS Commentary on the Haggadah, Joseph Tabory, 2008 pp 53-4

<sup>10</sup> Arnow op cit p50

**Who is strong and indurate like You, as You hear the abuse and the blasphemy of that wicked man and remain silent.** Similarly, the school of Rabbi Yishmael taught that the verse: **“Who is like You, O Lord, among the gods [elim]”** ([Exodus 15:11](#)), should be read as: **Who is like You among the mute [ilmim]**, for You conduct Yourself like a mute and remain silent in the face of Your blasphemers.

Utterly incapable of speech even in the face of Israel’s suffering. This word game, in true midrashic style, adding only a single syllable to the word “elim” the pantheon of gods, becoming “ilmim” mute, in the face of suffering.

Isaac Bar Shalom (1146) writes in his piyut after the Second Crusade:

There is none like You among the dumb,  
Keeping silent and being still in the face of those who aggrieve us.  
Our foes are many; they rise up against us,  
As they take council together to revile us.  
“Where is your King?” they taunt us.  
But we have not forgotten You nor deceived You.  
Do not keep silent!<sup>46</sup>

“arise Your mighty power,  
That once smote the monster of the Nile,  
Do not keep silent”

The last line referring to Psalm 83:2

אֱלֹהִים אֵל-דָּמִי-לֵךְ; אֵל-תַּחֲרֹשׁ ב  
וְאַל-תִּשְׁקֵט אֵל 2 O God, **keep not Thou silence**; hold not Thy peace, and  
be not still, O God.

*One interpretation, however, does more than vitiate the implicit polytheism of the verse. It re-punctuates the noun **elim** to rebuke God's intolerable silence in periods of persecution. Remember, the Torah scroll contains only consonants. The vowels are assigned by tradition, but omitted. Hence, without changing a consonant the word **elim** could be read as **eeleim**, i.e., someone who is mute. Making it plural we get **ilmim**, meaning, "Who is like You, O Lord, among the mute?" The author of this interpretation elaborates - "beholding the humiliation of Your children yet keeping silent." The barb is palpable. God's patience is beyond human endurance. How much savagery is God prepared to tolerate? This interpretation changes Moses's exultation into a lament. God's past intervention into the course of human events provides no assurance for the future.<sup>11</sup>*

Though left unexplained, its import is bitterly clear. To be long-suffering can often manifest itself as callous indifference.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.jtsa.edu/accounting-for-gods-silence>, Ismar Schorsch

*“the interchangeability of **eilim** and **ilmim**, of celestials and those who neither hear nor speak, became the currency of protest and lament. In the Hebrew elegies composed in Ashkenazi after the First and Second Crusades and recited in the synagogue, the accusatory query resurfaces. Indeed, these poems are fraught with many other expressions of doubt and dismay. When history challenged faith, Judaism sanctioned calling God to account. A genuine covenant needs to be observed by both partners. To dispute with God is a sign of a living relationship.”<sup>12</sup>*

I leave with the poem by Hopkins:

**“ELECTED Silence, sing to me  
And beat upon my whorlèd ear,  
Pipe me to pastures still and be  
The music that I care to hear.”<sup>13</sup>**

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<sup>12</sup> Schorsch op cit.

<sup>13</sup> Gerard Manley Hopkins