



PARSHAS VAEIRA - YITZCHOK LANDAU

The Power of Wine and the Mysterious Fifth Cup

Perek 6 (6) "Therefore, say to the Bnei Yisroel, I am Hashem, and **I shall take you out** from under the burdens of Egypt. **I will rescue you** from their service. **I will redeem you** with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. (7) **I will take you to Me** for a nation, and I shall be a G-d to you; and you shall know that I am Hashem your G-d, Who takes you out from under the burdens of Egypt. (8) **I will bring you** to the land which I have raised my hand to give to Avrohom, Yitzchok and Yaakov, and I shall give it you as a heritage – I am Hashem"

The first four expressions of redemption (pesukim 6-7 above) are famously represented by the four cups of wine we drink at the seder. What is the reason however, why we use wine rather than anything else for this purpose?

Additionally, we must account for the mysterious fifth cup which sits on the seder table during Hallel and which represents the expression "I will bring you etc" – posuk 8 above. The gemara tells us to recite Hallel over this cup, and yet we do not drink it and its presence at the Seder table is considered halachically optional. If this cup belongs to Hallel, why should it not be mandatory?

A stronger question can be raised in respect of the fifth expression itself; how could Hashem promise to bring the Bnei Yisroel to Eretz Yisroel when in fact the generation to whom this was being addressed all died out (with the exception of the Shevet Levi and the women) and it was only their *descendants* who entered the land? Moreover, this problematic promise is compounded by Hashem using the word "Therefore" at the beginning of posuk 6, a word which Chazal tell us is an expression used to represent an oath!

The Netziv explains that Chazal wanted us to appreciate another dimension of our redemption – a factor so important that it explains why the four expressions of redemption were not just welcome manifestations of Hashem's love for us, but integral parts of the process of redemption. The purpose of Yetzias Mitzrayim was to bring the Bnei Yisroel to Har Sinai. However, a nation of slaves would be unable to reach the level required to receive the Torah and nor could it hope to live by its expectations.

The four expressions of redemption trace the path of inner change that turned slaves into fitting recipients of the Torah. In the first stage, Hashem "took them out of the burdens of Egypt". In other words, He freed them from their mind- and spirit-numbing physical labour. This happened at some point during the plagues (the Netziv says it was during Arov – wild animals) when the weight of the Bnei Yisroel's hard labour was lifted.

At this stage though, they were still technically slaves, fully obligated to do whatever was demanded of them. This changed with the plague of borod (hail) when Paroh for the first time made some begrudging concessions to Moshe's demands, albeit while struggling to maintain his authority over them. This was the second stage, as represented by the second expression of redemption, in which Hashem "rescued them" from their work.

They won their complete freedom with makas bechoros, achieving the third stage in their reconstruction ("I will redeem you"). Finally, entering into a covenant with Hashem at Sinai – "and I will take you to Me as a nation" - they arrived at the fourth stage, thereby achieving the ultimate aim of Yetzias Mitzrayim.

It is now understandable why Chazal chose to illustrate these changes which the Bnei Yisroel underwent, by using wine to remind us about the four expressions. When people drink wine, their conduct and state of mind changes rapidly, and in different ways. It is the perfect substance with which to mark the transformation of the state of mind of a person or nation.

As to the fifth cup / expression "and I will bring you to the land" and Hashem's apparent problematic oath, the Ohr Hachaim points out that it is separated from the other four expressions with the words "and you shall know that I am Hashem your G-d, Who takes you out etc" (posuk 7). As such, it is of a different nature to the other expressions and is *conditional* rather than being a direct promise like the other four expressions. Interpreting the posuk according to the word order, Hashem is essentially telling the Bnei Yisroel that, having fulfilled His part of the bargain so to speak, by redeeming them from Mitzraim, they needed to demonstrate that they had internalised the message that this was so and that they were now duty bound to fulfil His commandments. Only then would the conditional promise of "I will bring you to the land . . ." be fulfilled.

tragically, through their many acts of rebellion in the midbar, this condition was not met and thus, the promise made to that generation in Egypt was only fulfilled in respect of those who did fulfil these conditions, namely Shevet Levi and the women. As to the rest of the Bnei Yisroel, it was only the *succeeding* generations who merited to see the land.

This is a lesson for us today too. Whilst we daven every day for the end of our golus, we cannot expect Hashem to answer our tefillos if we do not demonstrate that we are doing more than paying lip service to our tefillos. As with the generation who came out of Mitzrayim, we need to internalise the message that "Ein od milvado – There is no-one or anything beside Hashem" who can help us and that we are duty bound to keep His Torah and Mitzvos.

In light of what we said above regarding the power and effect of wine, perhaps we can suggest through this through this slightly more esoteric reading, that among the reasons the fifth cup remains optional and un-drunk at the seder, is that Hashem is hinting to us what we need to do and what we have failed to do until now in order to bring an end to our golus; namely to alter our state of mind and truly internalise Hashem within all aspect of our lives.