

## WAS THE PESACH MITZRAIM A JOYOUS CELEBRATION? OR...

Apropos of the statement in the Haggadah:

בְּכֹל-דּוֹר וָדוֹר חִיֵּב אָדָם לְרֹאוֹת אֶת-עַצְמוֹ כְּאִלּוּ הוּא יֵצֵא מִמִּצְרַיִם

I've written this short account of 'Historical Possibility'.

You perhaps have a different version? Write it! Send it to me at [bmy777@yahoo.com](mailto:bmy777@yahoo.com), please!

We join the action PRECISELY at five minutes to midnight, 15 Nisan, 2448...

...when the Egyptians are in their temples, screaming "Almighty Amun! TALEH! Now we serve you naked! But HaShem has declared war on you at midnight, the time of your holy ascendant moment. Over the past nine months, HaShem has beaten all the other gods, month after month, and laid waste to the Great Society of your servants. But you are the most powerful! Vanquish Him at midnight! And our armor, whips, chains, cudgels, torches, and swords are all prepared in the outer chamber. We will don them and rush over to Goshen to avenge your honor. And if there is one single heretic Jew left alive at 15 minutes AFTER midnight, he will *WISH* he were dead!"

MEANWHILE, ACROSS TOWN...

... in Goshen, the Jews have just finished the most gut-wrenching meal of their lives, and are bathed in the stench of sweat, praying, "Almighty God. We have done our best, to the last man, to follow what you have asked of us, to restore your honorable *Bechorah* back to You, its rightful possessor. Please, please do not destroy Your faithful people when You pass through in the next 5 minutes. Please *PLEASE* do not let our harsh Egyptian Masters torture and kill us afterwards. We are in Your hands, and Your hands alone."

[How would a Jewish slave who is almost-- but not-quite-free-- experience the Gilui Shechinah taking place all around him-- except in his very own home...?

I took my lead from Midrashim and the Gilui Shechinah of Eliyahu haNavi on Har Chorev in Melachim I 19 (after all, he'll be visiting our Seder right after bentching!!)—else I wouldn't have had the guts to put it down on paper...]

...We had finished our roasted sheep, were staring at it in silence. What remained of its carcass glared back at us in accusation. Prominently displayed on the table centerpiece, *upon matzos and merrorim*, was either— our passport *home*, a home we've never seen, but oft yearned for, a land *flowing with milk and honey*—or our death sentence. We were bursting from what was after all an unaccustomed feast, but our bellies churned in faint nausea nevertheless, from fear and angst regarding all we had just spent the day doing. We made sure to finish before *Chatzos*, and then we waited silently, each "celebrant" around the table, silent with his own thoughts, preoccupied with his own silent prayers. In our rude homes we did not have the fine, accurate timepieces which our Egyptian Masters had in their opulent temples, so we waited in silence, sweat pouring

from our faces, from our bodies, gluing what just this afternoon had been our most distinguished finery, to our now sticky torsos. All of us sat silent, waiting for the precise moment of *Chatzos*, which would arrive without our knowledge. Outside all was deadly silent, inside all that was heard was the occasional drop of sweat as it hit the floor, the barest scratching of subvocalized *tefilos*, and our slow, measured breathing.

The first thing was the dogs. Nearly all of us bore souvenirs of the guard dogs' cruel fangs in our flesh, especially our little ones. All at once, the silence was broken by ferocious snarling, vicious barking. Not just the dogs posted on our block, but all over the entire neighborhood, the whole city-- they all erupted together in a raucous frenzy. My little one whimpered and crawled into my lap where she huddled in terror. We had never heard them so frantic before, all together as if someone had flipped a switch rendering them all simultaneously crazy berserk.

Then the wind picked up, its sudden howling drowning out even the tumult of the dogs, threatening to rip apart our fragile shack. The ground trembled, matched only by the uncontrollable shaking of my daughter as she buried her face against my chest and her nails dug deeply into my side. Dust poured out from the rafters of our mud shack, but miraculously the walls and ceiling held firm against the violent quaking of the earth. The dishes from our recent feast danced across the table and clattered to the floor. Outside were explosions, the sounds of large objects, perhaps whole buildings, temples, tumbling to the ground, the odor of scorched wood and stone dust from outside suddenly overpowering the delicious aroma still emanating from this afternoon's barbecue, and even the fetid smell of the decades-old dust shaking from our walls and ceilings.

It seemed to draw on forever, as if the whole world suddenly had gone mad. But in reality it must have only lasted for a few moments, three, four, five minutes, who could tell? And then as abruptly as it started, it was over, and the sounds of silence once again crowded out all the commotion.

But a very short lived silence. Abruptly could be heard— felt really— the footfalls of hundreds, thousands of people as they ran throughout the sun-baked walkways, bare feet, sandals, boots, all slapping the earth each with their own timbre and cadence. Doors crashed open and slammed shut with bangs. Commotion returned, but this time all of human origins.

And with the frantic footfalls came the screams. Horrible screams, inhuman agony, or perhaps inhuman rage, nonstop keening. Thousands upon thousands of voices screaming— but screaming *what*? We could not tell. Agony? Pain? Grief? Anger? It all blended together. All was confusion.

Misery for sure— but *who* was screaming? Was it the Egyptians giving voice to *their* pain, and mourning their dead? Or was it the blood-curdling screams of our brothers being hacked to pieces by our cruel Masters; our wives, daughters, sisters violently gang-raped, in retribution for our planned and precisely executed insurrection, our affront to their god.

Their god...our dinner.

As with HaShem's plague itself, we dared not look. We sat paralysed, frozen to our seats, our drenching sweat of seconds ago suddenly icy cold against our flesh. And the screams went on and on.

And on...

And then there is the knock at the door. That *insane*, blood-stained door, freshly 'painted'— by me— just this afternoon— now an eon ago.

A knock.

A tentative knock!

NOT a kick from a hob-nailed boot which splinters the door asunder.

And on the other side are the beaten Egyptians who are left after the Makeh, Their postures suddenly submissive—*submissive!*-- Something we'd never witnessed in them, ever before!

They stood there, hunched, shaking for a long moment, suddenly struck mute. They stood there, eyes cast downward, unable to meet our determined gazes, a veneer masking the fear within. Then, slowly, they looked up and we saw their faces, mud-caked and filthy. Stunned, ashen, their faces now deeply etched like ours— etched in but a brief moment— as if by *years* of crushing adversity.

Asking us to please *please* leave (words we'd *never* heard emerge from their mouths before, and with tones of awe and respect we'd never experienced) and here, take the silver, the **gold**, the **CLOTHING OF THE MASTERS**, as a going-away present.

But please, PLEEEASE leave—Leave NOW!-- we are beaten, horribly beaten! We can't take anymore... HaShem is Supreme, and He chooses *YOU* as His servants...

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