

# Parsha Ponders

Pesach | April 13, 2022 | 13 Nissan 5782

## *Different forms of wealth<sup>1</sup>*

אילו הרג את בכוריהם ולא נתן לנו את ממונם, דיינו

If Hashem had only killed their firstborns, and not given us their riches, it would have been enough<sup>2</sup>

One of the classic Pesach songs that is enjoyed by all at the *Sefer* is “Dayeinu”. It proceeds to walk through the entire Exodus story, culminating in us receiving the Torah and entering the Land of Israel. One of the stanzas has the line: “If Hashem had only killed their firstborns, and not given us their riches, it would have been enough”. Upon observation, this seems to be a problematic statement. Hashem explicitly promised Avraham that his descendants would escape slavery in a land not their own with great riches<sup>3</sup>. How could we then entertain the possibility that Hashem wouldn’t have given us the Egyptian’s riches<sup>4</sup>?

This question can be answered by addressing another one. Before the Jews were freed from Egypt, Hashem asked Moshe to *please* tell the Jewish people that they request from their Egyptian neighbors various clothes and vessels<sup>5</sup>. Our Sages explain<sup>6</sup> that Hashem was concerned, so-to-speak, that Avraham would complain to Hashem that He fulfilled the promise that the Jews be enslaved and tortured, but that He didn’t fulfill the promise that they’d leave with great wealth. Many are bothered by this formulation. It implies that Hashem wasn’t worried that He not fulfill His own promise. It just says that Hashem was concerned that Avraham would complain. How can we make sense of this?

Let’s consider a parable for a moment<sup>7</sup>. A young lad hired himself out for manual labor. After a long time working for his employer, the lad decided to return home. When he requested his employer for payment, he was shocked to be handed a large cheque<sup>8</sup>. The boy refused this as payment, and demanded he be given coins instead. The employer wasn’t sure what to make of this, so he called in the boy’s father. The father explained that it wasn’t that the son thought that the cheque would bounce. It’s that his boy was so young he didn’t even understand the concept of cheques. He said to just give him some physical money and he’ll be satisfied.

The moral of the story is that Hashem never intended on giving the Jews physical riches. When He promised Avraham that the Jews would leave Egypt with great wealth, Avraham understood that the intent was spiritual riches. The whole purpose of the slavery was to receive the Torah, the Land of Israel,

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<sup>1</sup> Based on [Siach HaPesach Maggid](#) s.v. אלו הרג את בכוריהם, a *sefer* which includes novella from [Rav Chaim Kanievsky zt”l](#), written by his grandson [Rav Avraham Shteinman](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Haggadah shel Pesach Maggid, Dayeinu](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Genesis 15:14](#)

<sup>4</sup> See [Rashbam, Orchos Chaim/Kol Bo, Abudraham](#), and [Chukas HaPesach](#) citing פירשו ז”ל, *ad. loc.*, who explain that this line of *dayeinu* is referring to the riches that the Jews received at the splitting of the sea. Hashem could have withheld this kindness, and yet His promise would have remained fulfilled. The Jews already received many articles of clothing and riches from the Egyptians when they asked to “borrow” from them as they left to freedom

<sup>5</sup> [Exodus 11:2](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Berachos 9a](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Dubna Maggid Haggadah Emes L’Yaakov](#) s.v. ואחרי כן יצאו ברכוש גדול

<sup>8</sup> The [Dubna Maggid](#)’s parable mentions cash, but [Rav Chaim](#) said it over as a cheque, which probably fits better in contemporary society. There are other differences, such as [Rav Chaim](#) specifying a young girl, and that the girl ended up leaving the coins with their employer

and their place in World to Come<sup>9</sup>. That, Hashem always intended on fulfilling. However, the Jewish people were not in such a spiritual state at the time of the Exodus. They knew of Hashem's promise to Avraham, and were glad to finally be freed from their bitter enslavement. As they set out on their path to freedom, they expected financial compensation. They wanted what to them was great wealth.

We can now understand Hashem's concern. If Hashem were to simply go through with the original plan, and give the Jewish people spiritual gifts, then Avraham might complain. Hashem definitely fulfilled the promise to enslave the Jewish people. And yet, if only given spiritual treasures, the Jewish people would feel that the promise of wealth wasn't fulfilled. As such, not only did Hashem fulfill His own promise with spiritual gifts, but He even gave the Jews the less significant, material wealth that they were expecting. It was this extra kindness on Hashem's part that the song *Dayeinu* is referencing. If Hashem had only killed the Egyptians' firstborns, but not given us tremendous wealth, it would have been enough.

Good Yom Tov and Chag Kasher VeSameach!

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<sup>9</sup> The Dubna Maggid cites Berachos 5a, which says that these three things are gifts that Hashem gave the Jewish people (albeit through suffering). Rav Chaim only mentions Hashem giving us the Torah