

Parsha Ponders

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The bittersweet herb¹

מרור זה שאנו אוכלים על שום מה? על שום שמררו המצרים את חיי אבותינו במצרים

This *marror* that we eat, it represents what? It represents the fact that the Egyptians embittered the lives of our forefathers in Egypt²

The *Pesach Seder* is a confusing night. There are these contradictory themes of freedom and slavery. It's a bit astounding that at the time that we're demonstrating our freedom by eating *matzah*, reclining, and drinking the four cups, we're also required to eat *marror*, the bitter herbs representing our enslavement. The reason for this, however, is that through this we can engrain in our hearts that even that which seems bad in our eyes, in truth, has good in it. All of Hashem's attributes are merciful, and everything He does is good³.

The Klauzenberger Rebbe suggested that this is the reason why we cover our eyes when we recite the Shema. The recitation of the Shema is considered an act of accepting upon ourselves the yoke of Heaven. This is through saying the verse "Hashem, our G-d, is One". Meaning, the name Hashem, representing His attribute of Mercy, and אלקינו, our G-d, the name representing His attribute of strict Justice, are One. Even the attribute of Justice has within it the attribute of Mercy, even though all we see is Justice. To symbolize this limited vision, we cover our eyes at that exact moment.

We find similarly⁴ with something Hashem told Yaakov: "Don't be afraid of going down to Egypt...Yosef will spread his hand on your eyes"⁵. Hashem was telling Yaakov that even though it appears that the exile to Egypt is very harsh, in the end it will become clear and revealed that everything was for the good. We find a precedent for this from Yosef. Yosef being sold into slavery gave the impression that Hashem's attribute of strict Justice was meting out harshly against Yaakov.

However, it became clear that Yosef was sent to Egypt to serve as a vessel for salvation. He was Hashem's agent to ensure Yaakov's family wouldn't starve in the greatest famine in history. This is the intent of the end of the verse, which says "Yosef will spread his hand on your eyes". Just like we cover our eyes during the recitation of Shema. This is to hint to the idea that we are confident in our faith that within Hashem's attribute of strict Justice is the attribute of Mercy. Just, we haven't yet merited to see the full picture. In fact, this is the intent of the *Zohar's* interpretation of this verse, when it says: "This verse is an allusion to the recitation of Shema".

The Chasam Sofer adds⁶ that this is the intent behind the verse where Hashem says, "You can see My back [אחורי], but you will not see My face [פני]"⁷. Meaning, we don't have the ability to see the loving kindness hidden within [פנימיות] Hashem's attribute of strict Justice. However, after the fact [אחורי], everything becomes clear. Later generations see what the earlier generations could not.

¹ Based on Minchas Asher Haggadah Shel Pesach s.v. שמררו המצרים על שום שמררו המצרים

² Haggadah shel Pesach

³ Berachos 60b

⁴ Teshuvos Kol Aryeh Pesach Tov § 7

⁵ Genesis 46:3-4

⁶ Brought by Kol Aryeh loc. cit.

⁷ Shemos 33:23

There are different types of vegetables that can be used for *marror*⁸. Our Sages tell us the first choice is אֶסָא, lettuce. Another one is תַּמְכָּא, horseradish. Both of these have hidden allusions to prayers and praises to Hashem. אֶסָא is a hint to the prayer of עֲלֵךְ חַס רַחֲמֵנָא, may Hashem have mercy upon us. תַּמְכָּא can be seen as an acronym for the phrase אֶל-לִבְנוֹת מִסְפָּרִים כְּבוֹד אֱ-לֹהֵינוּ, we always will proclaim the Honor of Hashem⁹.

This doesn't just have to be a cute acronym. The whole point of eating the *marror* is hopefully to get us to a point where we always will be able to proclaim Hashem's praises. Even in the hard days, when the darkness covers the earth, even if we don't see His loving kindness openly. Nevertheless, we believe that at all times He is a G-d of salvation, the One who has our best in mind.

May this *Pesach* not only bring us that clarity of vision, but also be the catalyst for the open salvation we've been waiting for.

Good Shabbos and Chag Sameach

⁸ Pesachim 39a

⁹ Teshuvos Chasam Sofer Orach Chaim § 132