



לקוטי שיחות
PROJECT
LIKKUTEI
SICHOS

Sicha Summary

Chelek 17 | Pesach | Sichah 2

The Premise:

The beginning and end of something— whether of a book, a ritual, or an experience — express the overarching theme of that thing. The essence of the Seder is its narrative portion, the step called *Maggid*. The overarching theme of the Seder, therefore, should be expressed in the beginning sections and in the conclusion of *Maggid*. By investigating these passages, we will discover this theme.

The Questions:

The first passage of *Maggid* reads:

“This is the bread of affliction that our fathers ate in the land of Egypt. Whoever is hungry, let him come and eat; whoever is in need, let him come and conduct the Passover Seder. This year we are here; next year in the land of Israel. This year we are slaves; next year we will be free people.”

- 1) Seemingly this invitation belongs in the synagogue, where the poor people who need an invitation to the Seder are to be found. What is gained by reading it at home?
- 2) If Pesach is the holiday of redemption, why do we begin by highlighting the exile, the “bread of affliction”?
- 3) Similarly, why do we stress the fact that we are “slaves,” “here” in exile, on a night when we focus on redemption?

We open the narrative itself with the following passage:

“We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and G-d, our L-rd, took us out from there with a strong hand and with an outstretched arm. If the Holy One, blessed is He, had not taken our fathers out of Egypt, then we, our children, and our children’s children would have remained enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt...”

How can we say that “we would have remained enslaved” if G-d promised in the Torah that the Egyptian exile would last for 400 years?

The final passage of the section that outlines the general structure of the Exodus, before the Haggadah turns to a more detailed interpretation of Scripture, reads:

“This is what has stood by our fathers and us! For not just one alone has risen against us to destroy us, but in every generation they rise against us to destroy us; and the Holy One, blessed is He, saves us from their hand!”

- 1) If our oppressors are evil, then our salvation should be expected and unremarkable. G-d should rightfully save us from their hands. Why frame G-d’s salvation in a way that sounds like it is a novelty?
- 2) If oppressors rise against us “in every generation,” why do we make special mention of this at the Seder and not read this passage on any other occasion that commemorates salvation?

We conclude the portion dedicated to discussing G-d’s miracles in Egypt with the passage *Dayeinu* poem, “How many levels of favors has the Omnipresent bestowed upon us.” The conclusion of that passage reads: “(G-d) brought us into the land of Israel and built for us the *Beis HaBechirah* to atone for all our sins.”

- 1) Why is this particular “favor” related to the Exodus?
- 2) Why is the Temple referred to here with the unusual name “*Beis HaBechirah* — G-d’s Chosen House”?

3) Why is an explanation provided as to why the *Beis HaMikdash* is considered a favorable gift — “to atone for our sins” — as opposed to the other 40 previous items for which no explanation is provided?

The Explanation:

Before we can begin the Seder, we are confronted with a fundamental question that challenges the very notion of the Seder itself:

If G-d redeemed us from Egypt with “great wealth,” and everything that G-d does is everlasting, then why do Jews find themselves in the midst of a bitter, prolonged exile, with many Jews experiencing poverty and hardship?

How can we perform the rituals of the Seder and commemorate our freedom if our current situation seems to contradict the theme of freedom?

To address this difficulty, the Seder begins by explaining that the exodus from Egypt was incomplete — that is why “this year we are here... we are slaves...,” and why there are hungry people who must be invited to “come and eat.” And yet we celebrate the Exodus and it is central to our history because it marks the beginning of the redemptive process which will culminate with the final and complete redemption, “next year we will be free people.”

Why was the Exodus from Egypt an incomplete redemption? The purpose of exile is for the Jewish people to elevate and redeem the Divine sparks within their host’s land and culture. In Egypt, the Jewish people did not complete their task. Egypt had so corrupted the Jewish people that G-d had to forcibly remove them from there before they had fully refined the evil within themselves and of the land of Egypt.

That is why we say, “*If the Holy One, blessed be He, had not taken our fathers out of Egypt, then we... would have remained enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt...*” Our task being unfinished, if it were not for G-d’s mercy, we would have remained in Egypt until we elevated every last Divine spark, ushering in the final redemption.

And this is why the idea that G-d saves us in every generation is novel and worthy of praise: As long as we have not completed the work of exile, the Divine attribute of judgment can claim that we are deserving of punishment. The fact that G-d overrides this legitimate claim is a testament of His love for us.

If the exodus from Egypt was an urgent, last-second salvation of an unworthy people, then why is celebrating it so fundamental? This is explained at the conclusion of Maggid, “G-d brought us into the land of Israel and built for us the *Beis HaBechirah* (G-d’s Chosen home) to atone for all our sins.”

When we say G-d chose something, we refer to His essential bond with that thing that transcends any logical or conscious-level connection with it. Externally, the Exodus may seem to be G-d saving an imperfect people, but beneath the surface, it was an act of G-d’s choice — He redeemed us because of His essential, unbreakable bond with the Jewish people. This dimension of the Exodus, however, only became fully revealed when “G-d... built for us the *Beis Habechirah* to atone for all our sins.” True forgiveness stems from the essential bond we share with G-d. Reflecting on this bond allows G-d to transcend the imperfections on the surface. When we were given the opportunity to gain G-d’s forgiveness in the *Beis HaMikdash*, that revealed that in the very beginning, at the Exodus, G-d redeemed us because of His essential love.