



MACCABI WORLD UNION Department of Education

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Kfar Maccabiah, April 2018
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חג הפסח וגאולת ישראל **Was Pessach's redemption a complete one?**

Dear Friends,

The central subject of Passover is the liberation of the Children of Israel from the Egyptian yoke, especially that imposed by Pharaoh (likely Ramses II) more than 3300 years ago¹. This motif is so central to our national consciousness that we include it in each of our three daily prayers, and practically in *all* our prayers. We celebrate Freedom as the maximal gift God gave us after Life itself, and our particular national liberation as God's loving act of redemption, the One God who chose us through the merit of Abraham Avinu to make this planet a better world for ourselves, for our children, and for all God's children.

The Torah describes the Ten Plagues which empowered our exit from Egypt in powerful imagery, recalled in the Pesach *Seder*. Their magnitude, miraculous character and their immense scope place these amongst the greatest of God's miracles after the incomparable, eternal and infinite Divine Creation of the Universe. We read the unfolding of images described by *Sefer Shemot* (the Book of the Exodus) in astonishment and wonder, and we marvel at the unique nature of its story.

Nevertheless, there is something we are not generally attentive to: the saga of what happened to our People after the Exodus from the land of the Pharaohs. We so delight in our Freedom that we brush over the events that followed the mega-moments. What happened to us after fleeing? We had to fight Amalek, the people who attacked us at our moment of greatest weakness, immediately after we crossed the miraculously opened waters. That was followed by 40 years of wandering in the desert, and hard conquest by the sword of the Land of Israel, the Land promised by God to the seed of Abraham.

The required question is: Why did God, He who so wondrously took us out of Egypt, not complete His redemptive action, taking us, also by miracles, to the Land He gave us as our heritage? Why did He not completely free the Land in that same action?

The answer to this question is tied to our essence as Abraham Avinu's people and descendants; to our responsibility towards God, men and our mission as a Nation. We are called by God to be His humble partner in the plan to improve the world – a complex, difficult, painful but always challenging and extraordinary plan. This

¹ Of the 430 years that the Children of Israel lived in Egypt, the last 230 were of increasing bondage and slavery. The Pharaoh who disputed with Moses as described in the Book of Shemot (Exodus) added yet more abuse: mass murder of Jewish babies.



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partnership is applied to all aspects of life. Although God opened the doors to us to leave Egypt, it was - and is - our responsibility to maximize that opportunity, initiating a new era as a Free People. Had God "carried" our ancestors "in His hand", in other words, without their intervention, effort, collaboration or active participation, He would have denied the Children of Israel their essence as a Nation and as Free men and women. He would have taken away *that* which makes us what we are –partners in His Plan; He would have taken out some of what makes us fully *human*. We - our ancestors - had to go through the agony of defending ourselves against attack, the challenging responsibility of new freedoms unknown to slaves, and even the fight to possess that which God Himself had destined to be ours - the Land of Israel; thus "we make ours" the freedom that made us the People we are, today so supremely expressed in the modern State of Israel.

Our Sages so deeply understood the fundamental truth of this reasoning that they ordered *Hallel*², a special compilation of Psalms in gratitude to God and celebration of His kindness, to be sung in the Passover Seder, the only nighttime occurrence of Hallel in the Jewish calendar.

As we sit with our loved ones to celebrate our freedom as a Nation this year, may God inspire us to remember our permanent personal and collective partnership with our Creator, that making *ours* of all the Freedom in which we are forged as human beings. May we enjoy the glorious Present era, however difficult it is, in the knowledge that the price of that freedom is indeed decided by our action to maintain it and to make it *ours*, and through it, sanctifying our own lives and the Life of our People.

**Chag Pessach Sameach!
Chazak ve'ematz!**

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² Indeed, the "Great *Hallel*" is sung in the Passover *Seder*, composed of a complete *Hallel* with some additional texts.