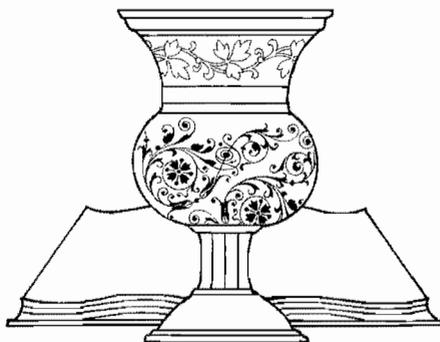


הגדה של פסח

HAGGADAH

With commentary compiled and adapted
from the writings of
Samson Raphael Hirsch



FELDHEIM PUBLISHERS *Jerusalem & New York*

so that I may test them whether they will walk in My Teaching or not" (*Shemos* 16:4). Whether "My Teaching" will be observed depends upon there being men who are content having their families' needs provided for one day at a time, cheerfully and happily enjoying today while carrying out all of its duties, leaving the worry for tomorrow to Him Who has provided for today and Who can be trusted to provide for tomorrow, too. Only such unreserved confidence in God will safeguard the observance of His Law against infringement caused by anxiety, real or imagined, about material hardship. He who has not learned to trust God for the next day will ultimately be led away from God and His Law by his persistent concern for future years. Hence, the saying of Rabbi Elazar Hamodai: "He Who created the day created its sustenance too." On this Rabbi Eliezer the Great commented: "Anyone who has enough to eat for today and says: 'What shall I have to eat for tomorrow?' — indeed he is among those who have little trust in God" (see *Mechilta, Beshalach* 2:4 and *Sotah* 48b).

AND GAVE US SHABBOS. Had the Shabbos, with its manifold benefits, been nothing more than a Divinely ordained day of rest, how great a blessing would it still have been.

For had Shabbos *not* been given to the Children of Yisrael for rest, had God *not* ordained it, then when would they have found rest? When can a man find time for himself, for his wife, and for his children? When can he find time for his spirit and soul? When can he find his Heaven on earth? One might answer: "When he has time." But when will that be? When is such a man allowed to find the time?

The material world goes about its work without respite. It never pauses and so, perpetually in motion, it wages its war for survival. Whatever does not ascend, descends; whoever marks time is trampled down. "Day and night shall never cease" (*Bereishis* 8:22). Can one then stop, say "Halt!" to his cares and anxieties about his physical existence? Can one simply rest his hand, his head, his soul and wipe away the sweat, smooth away the frown, and shake off the dust from the treadmill of life? When will he cease peering ahead at his next goal? When will he have the time to look behind and around — to gaze into the inner recesses of his soul and see what it was that he wanted and what he strove for, to see what he has become and what has become of him? One must ask himself: "When will I once and for all desist from the vexation of pursuing the future and rejoice in the happiness of the present — the joy of the present in my paradise on earth?"

Paradise? Who still dreams about a paradise on earth? The gates of the Garden of Eden closed behind us long ago. The Tree of Life no longer blooms for man; thorns and thistles grow by the wayside. By the sweat of his brow does man seek his bread. And the bread he finds he eats in worry and sadness. Without Shabbos, man toils restlessly. Without Shabbos, without a respite, he tortures himself with his anxiety. Even if each day a thousand minds were to ponder how to add to human knowledge — even if each day a thousand new inventions increased man's power, he would not become happier through his augmented knowledge. He would neither become more free nor his burden become lighter, by his increased power. "He that increases knowledge, increases sorrow" (*Koheles* 1:18). The more inventions, the more desires; the more power, the more toil.

The father strives with his neighbor, the scope of his pursuits extending as far as the boundaries of his hamlet, while the son competes against the whole world, reaching for the heavens where the sky is the limit. The smart son chases after a thousand objects of pleasure that were unknown to the simple father. He acquires them by the sweat of his brow, and in so doing, *worries* much about himself, his wife, and his children. But he has no time to *think* about himself, his wife and his children. In his anxiety over his household's survival, he becomes estranged from his family.

The concept of "making a living," consumes man to the point where the whole of life has become subjugated to the struggle for a living. Meanwhile, no one asks about the purpose and goal of living, about the value and significance of life. Making a living has become so great and gigantic a task that the sum of all human wisdom — the study of heaven and earth, lands and seas, virtue and ethics, even kindness and compassion — has no other than a purely economic value. And man, who was created in the image of God by resembling his Creator in wisdom, in kindness and in justice, man, who was to rejoice as did God in the work of his hands, is harnessed to the soil, dripping with sweat as he seeks his food. He does not hear the voice of God moving about, calling out, searching: "...Where are you?" (*Bereishis* 3:9).

Then, sent from Eden like the angel of God, Shabbos comes and approaches man and says: "In the Name of God, Stop! Your sole worry must not be for material provisions for yourself and your family. You are sinning against yourself, your wife, and children if your hand is unceasingly occupied in providing food. Have you no spirit, no heart, no soul assigned to your earthly existence wherewith to merit eternal life? Will you surrender your souls to suffering and

degeneration at the same time that you feed and pamper your bodies? An end to work! Your God has decreed it. You are forbidden to work. And this is the guarantee that you do not need to work: you will have accomplished enough if you have worked properly for six days. Do not deny your Heavenly soul — do not deny your God. Leave your work and come home with me.”

Now indeed man stands where he belongs — his bursting chest relaxes, his violent pulse subsides. Now he takes off time for himself and casts off his burdens. He wipes his sweat-covered brow, and dusts off his body. The frown disappears, he raises his eyes and looks about — indeed, he smiles — and now he can hear the voice calling from the Garden of Eden. It beckons him to his wife’s side, within the circle of his children. It brings Shabbos into his soul, into his home; and his dwelling is transformed. No home is too small to contain the Divine Presence entering upon the footsteps of Shabbos. The light radiating from within him doubles the illumination of the candles; the peace reposing within him adds spice to the Shabbos meal. Worry, tears, sorrow and sighing — all are banished from even the poorest of Jewish dwellings. “It is Shabbos — and to cry out is forbidden” (*Shabbos* 12a). “It is Shabbos — and funeral orations are proscribed” (*Bach, in Tur Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim, Siman 287*). Shabbos offers balm and comfort to all. Shabbos enriches and equalizes great and small. Shabbos proclaims to each and all: “Cast the burden of your path upon Hashem, and trust in Him, and He will bring it to pass” (*Tehillim* 37:5). If one has done his share, Hashem will do the rest. Consequently, Shabbos is a delight to him. Indeed, Shabbos is an order given in the Name of God for man to rest from his worry and anger. It shows him that God fights his battles, knows his suffering, and does his worrying for him. And He rejoices in lifting man’s burdens from upon him if only he will entrust them to His hands.

Shabbos enriches and equalizes great and small! The possessions for which men struggle on weekdays distinguish the haves from the have-nots, for not everyone succeeds in the struggle. But the treasures of paradise that Shabbos supplies from its stores — the peace and relaxation, the fullness of joy in the presence of God — are provided for all in abundance and equality.

“Rabbi Levi said, ‘If Yisrael were to observe even a single Shabbos properly, the son of David would come immediately, and they would be redeemed’” (*Yalkut, Tehillim* 95:7). Only the Shabbos of Hashem will succeed in effecting such magic. Only if God commands that one cease from his work, will he achieve the proper rest. Choosing a weekly rest day oneself would be in vain, even though one’s hand

might rest, his feet stand still, his body enjoy itself, for peace of mind and tranquility of heart come from God alone. Only if rest is God-ordained, will His command assure that one will rest well and securely and that he will find his life's fulfillment in Him.

Indeed, God gave us Shabbos — and only Shabbos gives rest to Yisrael.

AND FED US WITH MANNAH AND GAVE US SHABBOS. For thousands of years, man was oblivious to Shabbos. It had disappeared from the earth. Man bent his knee before his sensual desires. He trembled before the host of material forces that everywhere constrained his existence and endeavors. He regarded himself as being at war with nature. Every stone he wrested from the earth became a weapon with which to transform even history into a story of war and strife in which man oppressed man. War ruled the earth. Man's creative power expressed itself in developing ever more sophisticated weapons; his creative spirit expressed itself in cunning and trickery. Egotism, pleasure seeking, being and enjoying were life's goals, and in striving for these objectives man saw himself as alone.

The war of man against nature or man against man — this was what life meant. Desire and ambition, fear and hatred were life's motives. Man sought to save himself from nature and to exploit its powers for his own ends. Man sought to protect himself from the competition of his brother and to utilize his brother's struggle solely for his own benefit — this was the sum of man's ambitions once Shabbos had been lost to the world.

Shabbos was lost — and with it the belief in the One God, the Master Whose will and wisdom are manifest in the totality of the world and in the slightest movement of the smallest of any of its parts. Shabbos had disappeared — and with it, belief in the dignity and nobility of man. Gone was faith in man whom God had imbued with part of His own spirit, granted part of His freedom, with whom He had established a special covenant and whom He had destined to become, not a slave to nature or a tyrant over other men, but His voluntary servant. Gone was faith in he who was to be first in the choir of created beings into whose hands freedom, truth, justice, compassion and blessing were given.

With the disappearance of Shabbos, belief in the value of human activity was lost. Gone was the understanding that one thought freely conceived and acceptable to God, one word freely spoken and acceptable to God, one deed freely done and acceptable to God is