

## SECOND DAY PESACH 1998

Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

One of the most favorite parts of the Haggadah is the Daenu. All the children love to sing Daenu. In fact, after our beautiful, wonderful nursery school children sing all the verses of Daenu, it really is Daenu, it really is enough. Daenu, though is a hard hymn to understand. It starts out with the word, "If G-d had brought us out from Egypt and not executed judgments against the Egyptians, it would have been enough. If He would have executed judgments against the Egyptians and not against their gods, it would have been enough. If He would have executed judgments against their gods but not killed their firstborn, it would have been enough." This is completely out of chronological order. The Egyptians only thrust us out of Egypt because G-d killed their firstborn, only because G-d executed judgments against them. What could this possibly mean?

Also, later on in the poem it says, "If G-d would have given to us their money and not split the Red Sea, it would have been enough." What do you mean, it would have been enough? If G-d would not have split the Red Sea and just given them their money, they would be all dead, very dead rich people. What could that possibly mean?

Also, later we learn, "If G-d would not have supplied our needs in the dessert for 40 years and not fed the manna, it would have been enough." Isn't that the way G-d supplied our physical needs, by giving us the manna? Also, it says, "If G-d would have fed us the manna and not given us the Shabbat, it would have been enough." G-d actually gives the Shabbat before the manna, and what does it mean that it would have been enough?

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I believe we can understand the answers to these questions if we look at the last blessing in the Haggadah before we drink the second cup of wine where we thank G-d for our redemption, which refers to physical redemption, and on the redemption of our souls. There is an argument between Rav and Shmuel as to what we are really celebrating on Pesach. Are we celebrating our physical liberation from Egypt, or our spiritual liberation from Egypt? Shmuel says that we are celebrating our physical redemption, because it was the physical slavery which caused us to lose heart and for many of the Jews to even become idol worshippers. The Jews were on the fourth level of Tumah. If they would have descended any further, they would not have been worthy of being redeemed, but once You took them out of slavery, immediately they would rebound to their former spiritual selves. Rav was not so sure. He said that what we are celebrating really is our spiritual redemption from Egypt, that because of the plagues and the Jewish people slaughtering the lamb, the symbol of Egyptian idolatry, and because of the overwhelming feeling that it was G-d Who saved them from Egypt, they were able to regain their spiritual bearings. In other words, you can take the slave out of slavery, but it is very hard to take the slavery out of the slave. That's why the Haggadah alternates back and forth between telling us about physical slavery and spiritual slavery. The Halacha is really decided according to Shmuel, that what we are primarily celebrating is the fact that we were physical slaves. That's why it starts out by saying, "We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt." Later on it also says, "In the beginning our forefathers were also idol worshippers," which means that the Haggadah also agrees with the position of Rav, that if the Jews are free, it does not mean they automatically will be spiritual and follow

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the Jewish religion. It is possible that they can be free and not follow the Jewish religion. In fact, we just read about that in the Haphtorah today, how for many years during the Kings of Israel the Jewish people did not properly celebrate Pesach. It was only when King Josiah found the Book of Deuteronomy that he reinstated the celebration of Pesach the correct way. We also learn that when the Jewish people wandered in the dessert they did not celebrate Pesach for 38 years and did not circumcise themselves for these 38 years. Also, when the Jewish people went back to Israel after the Babylonian exile, they also did not observe the Torah well, just like in our own era they did not all observe the Torah well, but just as in those days they eventually did, we believe that eventually the Jews in our day will, too.

The Haggadah in the song Daenu is telling us that physical redemption is important and actually precedes spiritual redemption. That's why it mentions that G-d took us out of Egypt. Whether He would do it by killing the firstborn and executing judgment against the Egyptian gods was not as important. True, it affected the spiritual level of the people, but they could have made up for it later.

In Judaism we do not have this separation between body and soul where the body is bad and the soul is good. This was a Greek concept and was taken over by certain Christian denominations, but this is not a Jewish position. The Jewish position holds that both the body and soul can sin. After all, in the ancient days, people felt very altruistic when they sacrificed their children, literally. There is a famous Medrash which speaks about the fact

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how Roman Emperor Antonius and Rabbi Yehuda had a discussion. Antonius said, "How is it possible that either the soul or the body can be judged in the next life? The soul can claim that it is the body who sinned because after the soul left the body, all it has been doing is flying in the air, while the body can claim it is the soul that sins because ever since the soul left the body, the body has been still like stone." Rabbi Yehuda gave him a parable. He said, "Once there was a man who owned a beautiful orchard with beautiful fruit. He decided to put two watchmen in the garden, one was blind and one was lame. He was sure they would not steal the fruit. The lame watchman, though, was very smart. He called the blind watchman to come to him and told him there was beautiful fruit in the garden. He said, 'Let me get on your shoulders and we will walk over to the fruit and share it.' That is what they did. A few days later the owner of the garden came and said, 'Where's my fruit?' The blind watchman said, 'Can I see it?' The lame watchman said, 'Can I walk to it?' The owner of the garden then put the lame man on top of the shoulders of the blind man and judged them together." This is what G-d does to us. We are not like those who would deny the physical aspects of life. In fact, that is why Marx called religion the opiate of the people because so many religions claim it is not important what your physical conditions are. You bear your problems because you will have a better afterlife. It does not make any difference if you are free or not. In fact, it is probably better if you are not free because then you do not have the temptations of power. You do not have the ability to kill people or harm people.

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I am reminded of the experience that Barsela's father had immediately after the Russian Revolution. He was thrown into jail by the Communists because he was a Zionist, and he was thrown in the same cell in Moscow with the Archbishop of the Russian Orthodox Church in Moscow. They had many discussions and throughout their discussions, the Archbishop of Moscow continually told Barsela's father how lucky he was that he was Jewish. Barsela's father asked, "Why? We are a persecuted people. We are the subject of so many pogroms. Why should he be so happy he is part of the Jewish people?" The Archbishop said, "Because you have no power. You are not free so, therefore, you cannot hurt anyone or kill anyone or persecute anyone." He said that Barsela's father should be happy to be part of a people who had no ability to be tempted by power.

This, of course, is not the Haggadah's position or the normative Jewish position. We want to be free. This is, by the way, the Netur Kartas position, who claim that we Jews should not have a state because then we will have to act like the gentiles and have an army and shoot people and have a police force. The Haggadah, of course, tells us that we have to use power ethically, but in order to really have a developed spiritual life, we need to be free. Our spiritual life cannot be full if we are not free. The prerequisite for a full spiritual life is freedom. We do not tell people, "Oh, it's good you are not free because you will have a better spiritual life." We believe you cannot.

That's why I am so much in favor of a good secular education, of course, with a good Torah

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education, because if there is no flour, there is no Torah. Of course, we also know that if Jews only have a good secular education, they will assimilate, but as long as Jews are alive in a recognized group, they can regain their spirituality, but if they are slaves, they will lose it eventually for sure.

That's what the Haggadah is telling us in the song of Daenu. If G-d would have supported our physical needs in the desert but not fed us the manna, it would have been enough. It would have been enough at that juncture for us to continue. The manna was a spiritual thing. It fell every morning and people knew that it came from G-d, and if He would have fed us the manna and not given us the Shabbat, that would also have been enough because the Shabbat is on a higher spiritual level. Eventually we would have been able to attain the level of Shabbat. We must make sure a person's basic physical needs are satisfied, then we can worry about his spiritual needs.

That's why they all ask the question, why is it that G-d allowed atheism to exist? The answer is that when a poor man comes to you and says he is hungry, you should not look at him and say G-d will help. You should help him. The first thing we are interested in the song Daenu is, "He took us out of Egypt." The second thing is, "He did it in such a way as to enhance our spirituality," or as we say in the brocha, "He first redeemed us and then redeemed our souls."

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I am reminded of the story they tell about a sales manager who was a very fickle, hard hearted boss. He told his salesman to go down and get coffee for a sales meeting. The salesman left for the restaurant on the first floor. He did not come back for two hours. The sales manager scowled at him and said, "Where have you been?" The salesman said, "I went down to the coffee shop and saw a customer we have to sold anything to for two years. I sold him \$1.5 million worth of sales." The sales manager said, "See, I told you he would forget the coffee." Physical things are important. We need them so we can be spiritual. Physical things alone are worthless but the body and soul are one and we need physical things so we can be spiritual. May we all be so, so the Mashiach will come quickly in our day.

Amen.