

Singing and the Exodus

1. "Then Moses sang . . ." From the day when God created the world until the Israelites stood near the sea, no one save Israel sang unto God.

– Exodus Rabbah 23:4 (11th or 12th century midrash)

"The way to faith leads through acts of wonder and radical amazement . . . [We] sing to Him before we are able to understand Him."

– Abraham Joshua Heschel, *God in Search of Man*, pp. 46–47, 281.

Singing in Mishnah and Gemarah

3. **They poured for him the fourth cup of wine and he completes the Hallel over it and also recites over it the blessing of song.** What is the blessing of song? Rabbi Yehudah says, "All your works praise you" . . . [It is pleasant to sing praises to Your name, **יְהַלְלוּךָ יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ כָּל** . . . [מְעַשְׂיךָ. . . כִּי לְךָ טוֹב לְהוֹדוֹת וּלְשַׁמְדָּה נָאָה לְאִמֵּר] . Rabbi Yochanan says "The soul of every living thing" [shall bless Your name. . . . Were our mouths filled with song as the sea [is with water].. we would still be unable to thank You . . .

נְשַׁמַּת כָּל חַי . . . אֵלֵינוּ כִּינּוּ מִלֵּא שִׁירָה בְּיָמֵינוּ . . . אֵין אֲנַחְנוּ מְסַפִּיקִים לְהוֹדוֹת לְךָ

– Babylonian Talmud Pesachim 117b-118a

Singing New Songs at the Seder

4. Before the first two Psalms of Hallel

Lift the cup of wine and recite:

Therefore it is our duty to thank and praise, pay tribute and glorify, exalt and honor, bless and acclaim the One who performed all these miracles for our ancestors and for us. He took us from slavery to freedom, from sorrow to joy, from mourning to a festival, from darkness to great light, from slavery to redemption. We will recite a **new song** (שִׁירָה הַחֲדָשָׁה) before Him! Halleluyah!

The Second Cup of Wine

5. The blessing over the second cup of wine.

Lift the cup of wine and recite:

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who hast redeemed us and our ancestors from Egypt and enabled us to reach this night that we may eat matsah and maror. So Lord our God and God of our ancestors, enable us to reach also the forthcoming holidays and festivals in peace, rejoicing in the rebuilding of Zion Your city, and joyful at Your service. There we shall eat of the offerings and Passover sacrifices (On Saturday night read: of the Passover sacrifices and offerings) whose blood will reach to the walls of Your altar for acceptance. We shall thankfully acknowledge You with a **new song** (שִׁיר הַחֲדָשׁ) for our redemption and for our liberation. Blessed are You, O Lord, Redeemer of Israel.

Dayyenu – The Seder’s First Song

How many degrees, *ma'alot*, of goodness has God bestowed upon us!

כַּמָּה מַעֲלוֹת טוֹבוֹת לְמָקוֹם עָלֵינוּ:

Had He brought us out of Egypt, and not executed judgments against the Egyptians, It would have been enough – dayennu.

אֵלוֹ הוֹצִיאָנוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם, וְלֹא עָשָׂה בָּהֶם שְׁפָטִים, דַּיֵּנוּ:

1. brought us out of Egypt
2. executed judgements against the Egyptians
3. smote their gods
4. slew their firstborn
5. gave us their wealth
6. split the Sea for us
7. led us through it on dry land
8. sunk our foes in it
9. sustained us in the desert for forty years
10. fed us with the manna
11. gave us the Sabbath
12. brought us to Mount Sinai
13. gave us the Torah
14. brought us to Israel
15. built the Temple for us

הוֹצִיאָנוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם
עָשָׂה בָּהֶם שְׁפָטִים
עָשָׂה בְּאֱלֹהֵיהֶם
הָרַג אֶת־בְּכוֹרֵיהֶם
נָתַן לָנוּ אֶת־מָמוֹנָם
קָרַע לָנוּ אֶת־הַיָּם
הֶעֱבִירָנוּ בְּתוֹכוֹ בְּחָרָבָה
שָׁקַע צָרֵינוּ בְּתוֹכוֹ
סָפַק צָרְכָנוּ בְּמִדְבָּר
הֵאָכִילָנוּ אֶת־הַמָּן
נָתַן לָנוּ אֶת־הַשְּׁבִטָה
קָרְבָנוּ לְפָנֵי הַר סִינַי
נָתַן לָנוּ אֶת־הַתּוֹרָה
הִכְנִיסָנוּ לְאֶרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל
בָּנָה לָנוּ אֶת־בַּיִת הַבְּחִירָה

Parallels with the Song of the Sea – The Israelites’ First Song

The Era of the Exodus Culminates with Building the Temple

4. Pharaoh’s chariots and his army has He thrown into the sea...
13. You in your mercy have led forth the people whom You have redeemed; You have guided them in your strength to Your holy habitation.
14. The people shall hear, and be afraid; sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Philistia.
15. Then the chiefs of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away.
17. **You shall bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of Your inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which You have made for You to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which Your hands have established.**
–Song of the Sea, Exodus 15

Building the Temple

And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the people of Israel **came out of the land of Egypt**, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month Ziv, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the Lord.

—I Kings 6:1

Dedicating the Temple

9. There was nothing in the ark save the two tablets of stone, which Moses put there at Horeb, when the Lord made a covenant with the people of Israel, when they came **out of the land of Egypt**.

16. Since the day when I **brought forth my people Israel out of Egypt**, I chose no city from all the tribes of Israel to build a house, that my name might be in there; but I chose David to be over my people Israel.

21. And I have set there a place for the ark, where the covenant of the Lord is, which he made with our fathers, when He **brought them out of the land of Egypt**.

51. For they are Your people, and Your inheritance, whom You **brought forth out of Egypt**, from the midst of the furnace of iron;

53. For You did set them apart from among all the people of the earth, to be your inheritance, as you spoke by the hand of Moses your servant, **when You brought our fathers out of Egypt**, O Lord God.

—I Kings 8

Dayyenu Versus Psalm 106: A Positive Versus A Critical Exodus Review

7. Our fathers, when they were in Egypt, did not understand Your wonders; they did not remember the multitude of Your deeds of loving kindness; and they rebelled against You at the sea, the Red Sea.

8. But He saved them for His name's sake, that He might make known His mighty power.

9. And He rebuked the Red Sea, and it was dried up; so He led them through the depths, as through the wilderness.

10. And He saved them from the hand of him who hated them, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy.

11. And the waters covered their enemies; there was not one of them left.

12. Then they believed His words; they sang His praise.

13. They soon forgot His works; they did not wait for His counsel;

14. But they had wanton cravings in the wilderness, and put God to the test in the desert.

21. They forgot God who had saved them, who had done great things in Egypt;

22. Wondrous works in the land of Ham, and awesome things by the Red Sea.

A Response to Christian Anti-Jewish Polemics?

Ungrateful Israel, come and take issue with me about your ingratitude.

How much did you value the descent into Egypt and your sustenance there through handsome Joseph?

How much did you value the ten plagues?

How much did you value the nightly pillar and the daily cloud and the crossing of the Red Sea?

How much did you value the giving of manna from heaven and the supply of water from a rock and the law-giving at Horeb and the inheritance of the land and the benefits there?

– Melito, Bishop of Sardis (died, c. 180)

Why Fifteen Degrees of Goodness?

The Architecture of the Temple

7. Fifteen steps, *ma'alot*, led from [the Court of the Women] to the Court of the Israelites, corresponding to the fifteen Psalms which begin “A psalm of ascent,” and upon which the Levites used to sing.

– Mishnah Midot 5:2

Textual Inspirations

8. By our oath, if we see Moses (leaving us), we will not let the man who had brought us out of Egypt, had split the sea for us, had brought down manna for us, had supplied us with the quail and had performed miracles and wonders for us – we will not let him go!

– Sifre on Deuteronomy, Piska 337, 3rd century midrash

9. “They said, ‘If we had been plagued without letting them go, it would have been enough (*k’die hu*). Or if we had been plagued and let them go without our money being taken, it would have been enough. But we were plagued, let them go, and our money was taken.’”

– Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael, Beshalach, 3rd century midrash

10. Said Pharaoh, “It would not be worth our while, *lo dayyenu* says Pharaoh, “to pursue the Israelites [just to get *them*] but for the sake of the silver and gold they have taken from us it is worthwhile, *k’die hu*.”

– Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael, Shira

11. “. . . Put Me to the test – said the Lord of Hosts, I will surely open the floodgates of the sky and pour out for you blessing immeasurable, *ad b’li die*” (Malachi 3:10). What is the meaning of *ad b’li die*? . . . Until your lips shall wear away from saying, “*dayyenu*.”

– Leviticus Rabbah 35:12, 5th or 6th century midrash

A Medieval Commentary: Attributed to Shmuel Ben Meir, Rashbam, c. 1085- c. 1158

1. brought us out of Egypt and not executed judgements against the Egyptians

It doesn't mean that God will not take revenge against them because God already promised Abraham that "And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge" (Gen. 15:14). It means that the judgements might not have been less than they were.

5. and not given us us their wealth

This does not refer to the booty the Israelites were given in Egypt because God already promised Abraham that "afterward shall they come out with great wealth" (Gen. 15:14). The song refers to the booty they obtained from the Egyptians at the Sea (which according to midrashic sources was much greater than what they received in Egypt).

6. and not split the Sea for us

God could have saved us by other means and we could have gone on our way.

7. not led us through it on dry land

It could have been a bit wet or a bit muddy, but God took us through on dry ground.

8. had not sunk our foes in it

God could have brought the sea together after we passed through and left the Egyptians on the other side.

9. had not sustained us in the desert for forty years

They had some animals that God had provided them which could have supplied them with meat. Moreover, they had the wealth of the Egyptians with which they could have bought whatever they needed from the neighboring nations.

12. and not brought us to Mount Sinai

If we had just seen God's glory that would have been enough, without necessarily having been brought to Sinai.

13. had not given us the Torah

Had we received the Ten Commandments from God directly and the rest of Torah from Moses it would have been enough. Or if God had revealed only a half or a third of the Torah at Sinai and the rest on another occasion, it would have been enough.

14. and not brought us to Israel

Even though God promised our ancestors to give them the Land of Canaan, the song refers to the fact that God could have brought the next generation into the land, but God brought all those who were under the age of twenty at the time of the Exodus into the land, so they not only saw all the miracles of Egypt, but they also entered the land.

15. and not built the Temple for us

Indeed, we had the Mishkan! But the building of the Temple brought with it ten additional miracles (mentioned in Pirke Avot, 5:5, e.g. the sacrificial flesh never became putrid, rains never extinguished the fire on the altar, a fly was never seen in the slaughterhouse, etc.).

Dayenu: A Microcosm of the Haggadah's Underlying Principles

If you are looking for something pithy and concise to illustrate the essence of the Haggadah, Dayyenu would suffice!

The Haggadah

1. The Seder substitutes for sacrifice in the Temple.
2. The Mishnah (Pesachim 10:4) tells us to make a midrash on Deuteronomy 26:5-9. The passage begins with the Exodus and ends with the Temple.
3. The same Mishnah says we should "begin with degradation and end with glory."
4. The Talmud debates whether "degradation" refers to slavery or idol worship. The Haggadah includes both options. The response to the Four Questions is, "We were slaves in Egypt." The Haggadah follows the Four Children with, "In the beginning our ancestors worshipped idols."
5. After the Israelites cross the Red Sea, they burst into their first song. The Haggadah tells us that we should feel as if we had left Egypt.

Dayyenu

1. Dayenu's 15 divine favors evoke the 15 steps in the Temple pilgrims would climb en route to slaughtering the Pascal sacrifice.
2. Dayyenu can be thought of as such a midrash. It begins with the Exodus and ends with the Temple.
3. Dayyenu begins with the events of Egypt and ends with entering the Land of Israel and the building of the Temple.
4. Dayyenu first deals with the liberation from Egypt and then with matters of spiritual elevation.
5. After we read about the plagues the Egyptians suffered at the Red Sea, we burst into Dayyenu, the Haggadah's first song.

Echad Mi Yodea

For discussion:

- How many things in the Haggadah can you think of that relate to numbers or counting?
- Why do you think there are so many elements of the Haggadah that relate to numbers or counting?

On Counting

12. It is forbidden to count Israel even for [the purpose of fulfilling] a commandment. As it is said: *Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured* (Hosea 2:1).

– Babylonian Talmud Yoma 22b

Save your people, and bless your inheritance; be their shepherd, and carry them forever.

– Psalms 28:9

הוֹשִׁיעָה אֶת־עַמֶּךָ וּבְרַךְ אֶת־נַחְלָתְךָ וְרַעַם וְנִשְׂאֵם עַד־הָעוֹלָם:

Who knows one? I know one. One is our God in heaven and earth...

אֶחָד מִי יוֹדֵעַ? אֶחָד אֲנִי יוֹדֵעַ: אֶחָד אֱלֹהֵינוּ שְׁבַשְׁמִים וּבְאָרֶץ.

Who knows thirteen?

I know thirteen!

Thirteen are the attributes of God;

Twelve are the tribes of Israel;

Eleven are the stars [in Joseph's dream];

Ten are the commandments;

Nine are the months to childbirth;

Eight are the days to circumcision;

Seven are the days of the week;

Six are the orders of the Mishnah;

Five are the books of the Torah;

Four are the matriarchs of Israel;

Three are the patriarchs of Israel;

Two are the tablets of the covenant;

One is our God in heaven and earth.

שְׁלֹשָׁה עָשָׂר מִי יוֹדֵעַ ?

שְׁלֹשָׁה עָשָׂר אֲנִי יוֹדֵעַ:

שְׁלֹשָׁה עָשָׂר מִדֵּיָא,

שְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר שְׁבִטֵיָא,

אֶחָד עָשָׂר כּוֹכְבֵיָא,

עֶשְׂרֵה דְבְרֵיָא,

תְּשַׁעָה יְרַחֵי לֵידָה,

שְׁמוֹנֶה יְמֵי מִילָה,

שִׁבְעָה יְמֵי שְׁבִתָא,

חֲמִשָּׁה סִדְרֵי מִשְׁנָה,

אַרְבַּע חוּמְשֵׁי תוֹרָה,

אַרְבַּע אֲמָהוֹת,

שְׁלֹשָׁה אָבוֹת,

שְׁנֵי לְחוֹת הַבְּרִית,

אֶחָד אֱלֹהֵינוּ שְׁבַשְׁמִים וּבְאָרֶץ.

Two Hasidic Commentaries

It was taught by the Ba'al Shem Tov that the song begins with knowing oneness and continues to knowing thirteen. But thirteen returns us to oneness because the Hebrew letters for one, 'echad' (alef=1, chet=8, dalet=4) add up to thirteen. Beneath the façade of multiplicity lies the ultimate truth of the unity of all things in God.

– *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef*, Ya'akov Yosef of Polnoye (1669-1781, Poland) author of the first Chassidic book, a disciple of the Ba'al Shem Tov, founder of Chassidism

Even if we were all wise, intelligent, experienced and knowledgeable about Torah we would still be obligated to recount the Exodus.

– The Passover Haggadah

וְאִפְּיֵלוּ בְּלֵנוּ חֻכְמִים, בְּלֵנוּ נְבוֹנִים, בְּלֵנוּ זְקֵנִים, בְּלֵנוּ יוֹדְעִים
אֶת־הַתּוֹרָה, מִצְוָה עָלֵינוּ לְסַפֵּר בִּיציאת מִצְרָיִם.

Why who *knows* on this night? Because knowledge can bring us to the heights. And it was so important to draw close to this knowledge during the Exodus, just as the Haggadah says that “even if we were all wise, intelligent, experienced and *knowledgeable* about Torah we would still be obligated to recount the Exodus” [which includes the great deeds of Yocheved, Moses, Aaron, Miriam, the midwives etc.]. Even so, one must remember that it all came about through the power of God, who brought us out of Egypt. And that’s what we mean when we say in this song, “I know.” As if to say, it is because we know that [it all came from God] that we tell the story of the Exodus [in which God seems not to be the soul actor].

– Yehudah Leib Altar of Ger, *The Sfat Emet* (1847-1905, Poland), commentary on the Haggadah

Midrashic Roots: A Midrash on David’s Census in I Chronicles 16

1. And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to make a census of Israel. 2. And David said to Joab and to the rulers of the people, Go, count Israel from Beersheba to Dan; and bring their number to me, that I may know it. 7. And God was displeased with this thing; and he struck Israel. 8. And David said to God, I have sinned greatly, because I have done this thing; but now, I pray you, take away the iniquity of your servant; for I have done very foolishly. 11. And Gad came to David, and said to him, Thus said the Lord, Choose: 12. Either three years of famine; or three months of destruction by your foes, while the sword of your enemies overtakes you; or else three days of the sword of the Lord, pestilence on the land, and the angel of the Lord destroying throughout all the borders of Israel. Now decide yourself what word I shall bring back to him who sent me. 13. And David said to Gad, I am in great distress; let me fall rather into the hand of the Lord; for very great are his mercies; but let me not fall into the hand of man. 14. And the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel; and there fell of Israel seventy thousand men. 16. And David lifted up his eyes, and saw the angel of the Lord standing between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem.

– I Chronicles 21

Mighty hand refers to the disease among the cattle [*dever*], as it is written: *Behold the hand of the Lord strikes your cattle which are in the field, the horses, the donkeys, the camels, the herds, and the flocks – a very severe pestilence* (Ex. 9:3). *Outstretched arm* refers to the sword, as it is written: *His drawn sword in his hand, outstretched over Jerusalem* (I Chronicles 21:16).

– The Passover Haggadah

13. Then good pleaders came to request mercy. The seven days of week, the eight days prior to circumcision – thus fifteen; the five books of the Pentateuch, and the three patriarchs – thus twenty three. And according to Rabbi Tanchuma the Ten Commandments and the Two Tablets of the Covenant – a total of thirty five. Others suggested that in lieu of Commandments and the Tablets, the heads of the twelve tribes appeared. In any event there remained only one hour of pestilence. But, behold, how many hosts died out in that brief time – 70,000.

– Pesikta Rabbati 11:3, 6th-7th century midrash

Numbering Israel in the Haggadah

... he went down to Egypt and sojourned there few in number and there he became a great and very populous nation (Deut. 26:5).

Few in numbers, as it is written: *With seventy souls your ancestors went down to Egypt, and now the Lord your God has made you as numerous as the stars in the heaven* (Deut. 10:22). *There he became a nation* means that they became a distinct people in Egypt. *Great and very populous*, as it is written: *The children of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and became mighty, and the land was full of them* (Ex. 1:7).

And very populous, as it is written: *I made you as populous as the plants of the field . . .*

... The Egyptians dealt harshly with us as it is written: *Let us deal with them wisely lest they multiply . . .*

Chad Gadya

One kid, one kid that Father bought for two zuzim; One kid, one kid...

חד גדיא, חד גדיא דזבן אבא בתרי זוזי, חד גדיא, חד גדיא.

The came the Holy One, blessed be He,
and slaughtered the angel of death,
that slaughtered the slaughterer,
that killed the ox,
that drank the water,
that quenched the fire,
that burned the stick,
that beat the dog,
that bit the cat,
that ate the kid,
that father bought for two zuzim;
One kid, one kid.

ואתא הקדוש ברוך הוא,
ושחט למלאך המות,
דשחט לשוחט,
דשחט לתורא,
דשתא למינא,
דכבה לנורא,
דשרף לחוטרא,
דהכה לכלבא,
דנשד לשונרא,
דאכלה לגדיא,
דזבן אבא בתרי זוזי,
חד גדיא, חד גדיא

General Inspiration

Therefore all those who devour you shall be devoured; and all your adversaries, every one of them, shall go to captivity; and those who plunder you shall be plundered, and all those who prey upon you will I give for a prey.

For I will restore health to you, and I will heal your wounds, says the Lord . . .

—Jeremiah 30:16-17

For the day of the Lord is near upon all the nations. As you have done, it shall be done to you; your reward shall return upon your own head.

—Ovadia 1:15

He made a pit, digging it out, and has fallen into the ditch which he made.

His mischief shall return on his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down on his own pate.

—Psalms 7:16-

14. [Hillel] saw a skull floating on the face of the water. He said to it: because you drowned others they drowned you and the end of those who drowned you will be that they will be drowned.

—Mishnah Avot 2:6

15. [Rabbi Judah said] "Ten strong things have been created in the world. The rock is hard, but the iron cleaves it. The iron is hard, but the fire softens it. The fire is hard, but the water quenches it. The water is strong, but the clouds bear it. The clouds are strong, but the wind

scatters them. The wind is strong, but the body bears it. The body is strong, but fright crushes it. Fright is strong, but wine banishes it. Wine is strong, but sleep works it off. Death is stronger than all, and charity saves from death, as it is written, 'Righteousness (tzedakah) saves from death'" (Proverbs 10:2).

– Babylonian Talmud Baba Batra 10a.

Commentary: Jonathan Eybeshuetz 1690-1764

One Kid – in Hebrew גדי. The additional **ן** symbolizes the oneness of God, of Israel, and the eternal covenant between God and Israel.

Two Zuzim – two momentous acts in the life of Abraham and the Jewish People. 1) the Covenant Between the Pieces – when God assures Abraham that his offspring will be numerous as the stars, that they will be enslaved in Israel, but they will eventually inherit that Land of Israel, 2) the birth of Isaac.

The Cat – the enslavement of Israel by Pharaoh, likened to a cat because he does not recognize God, like a cat, says the Talmud (Horayot 13a) doesn't recognize its owner.

The Dog – Amalek who attacks the Israelites in the desert, recognizes God, but sins nonetheless.

The Stick – the staff of Moses which when raised brought the defeat of Amelek (Exodus 18:9).

The Fire – the burning of the First Temple by Nebuchadnezzar.

The Water – Torah, compared to water (Deut. 32:2). Commitment to Torah led to the rebuilding of the Temple some seventy years after its destruction.

The Ox – likened to the Greeks during the Second Temple period who discouraged Jewish practice and according to midrashic sources ordered Jews to "write on the horn of an ox that 'I have no portion in the God of Israel'" (Gen. Rabbah 2:4).

The Slaughterer – the Hasmoneans who defeated the Greeks, rededicated the Temple after the Greeks defiled it, and resumed proper sacrifice.

The Angel of Death – the Roman emperor Titus, who destroyed the Second Temple and murdered many thousands of Jews, likened to Satan whom the Talmud equates with the Angel of Death (Baba Batra 16a). Rome=Edom=Esav. The conflict between Rome and Israel=conflict between Esau and Jacob. Esau brings four hundred men with him to meet Jacob. Jacob tells Esau, **יֵשׁ-לִי כֹל**, I have everything=400.

God – "In that day Adonai will punish, with His great, cruel, mighty sword . . . the elusive serpent . . ." (Isaiah 27:1) and so the cycle of Jewish suffering will come to an end. "In the days to come the Mount Adonai's house shall stand firm above the mountains . . . And all the nations shall gaze upon it in joy . . ." (Isaiah 2:2).

Agnon's Chad Gadya

This poem tells us that the Cat devoured the Kid that Father bought for two zuzim. It seems that the Cat committed an evil deed deserving punishment. If so – the Dog did right to bite the Cat. If so – the Stick did wrong to hit the Dog. And the Fire did right to burn the Stick. If so – the Water did wrong to extinguish the Fire. And the Ox did right to drink the Water. If so – the Slaughterer did wrong to slaughter the Ox. And it seems the Angel of Death was right to slaughter the Slaughterer. But in the end God comes and slaughters the Angel of Death. It seems that the Angel of Death was right and God was not. But this is impossible to say because as the Psalm says, “God is righteous in all His ways and gracious in all His deeds” [145:17].

The solution is this:

Surely the Cat committed an evil deed when it ate the Kid. But when a Kid and a Cat quarrel, maybe they make peace. If so – what business is it of yours, Dog, to involve yourself and render judgment here? It seems that the Dog deserved the Stick, and the Stick did right to hit the Dog. If so – the Fire did wrong to burn the Stick. If so – the Water did right to extinguish the Fire. And the Ox did wrong to drink the Water. And the Slaughterer did right to slaughter the Ox. And this means that the Angel of Death sinned by slaughtering the Slaughterer. Therefore, in the world to come God brings the evil inclination which is the Angel of Death who is Satan and slaughters him.¹ Thus, it seems “God is righteous in all His ways and gracious in all His deeds” [Psalm 145:17].

– Shmuel Yosef Agon, 1943 (1888-1970, Galicia, Israel), winner 1966

Nobel Prize for Literature, *Takhrikh shel Sipurim* (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1984)

“When God created the world, he provided an opportunity for the work of His hands—man—to participate in His creation. The Creator, as it were, impaired reality in order that mortal man could repair its flaws and perfect it. . . . [We] are commanded to become a partner with the Creator in the renewal of the cosmos; complete and ultimate creation—this is the deepest desire of the Jewish people.”²
– Joseph Soloveitchik (1903-1993)

¹ Agnon alludes here to the Babylonian Talmud, Baba Batra 16a. Resh Lakish said: Satan, the evil inclination, and the Angel of Death are all one. אמר ר"ל: הוא שטן הוא יצר הרע הוא מלאך המות.

² Joseph b. Soloveitchik, *Halakhic Man* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1983), pp. 107 and 105.