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Matan Pesach Yom Iyun

The Seder: A Lesson in Mourning, Loss, Repressed memory and Creating Self-narratives

On Jews and Grief – Galut and Geula

Jews have a strong connection to grief. To the outsider it looks as though Jews are obsessed with mourning; they seem to do anything they can to keep themselves in a state of grief, even when the cause of mourning is thousands of years behind them....the Jew deals with these inescapable experiences of the past in ways that negate the traditions, linear concept of time. He draws the past to the present and makes it come alive as if it is new.....another incredible example is the fact that Jews continued to celebrate festivals like pesach in the concentration camps of Auschwitz and Dachau....his body may have been enslaved and tortured, but his soul was already living in the future. He believed in redemption, even though it could take years till it would actually happen....mourning and consolation, past and future, exile and redemption ultimately unite in the contemporary....the present is made up of the past and future, and it is in this world that the Jews live.

(Rabbi Nathan Lopez Cardozo: booklet in memory of Micky Klein)

PART I: Sigmund Freud: Mourning and Melancholia – the people leave Egypt – the land of absolutes

Mourning is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the **loss of some abstraction** which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on. In some people the same influences produce melancholia instead of mourning and we consequently suspect them of a pathological disposition.

The distinguishing mental features of melancholia are a profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and a lowering of the self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and **self-revilings**, and culminates in a **delusional expectation of punishment** frequently suspect them of a pathological disposition.

In mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the **ego itself**.

Melancholia, therefore, borrows some of its features from mourning, and the others from the process of regression from narcissistic object-choice to **narcissism**. It is on the one hand, like mourning, a reaction to the real loss of a loved object; but over and above this, it is marked by a determinant which is absent in normal mourning or which, if it is present, transforms the latter into pathological mourning. The loss of a love-object is an excellent opportunity for the **ambivalence in love-relationships** to make itself effective and come into the open.

והאספסוף אשר בקרבו, התאוה תאוה; וישבו ויבכו, גם בני ישראל, ויאמרו, מי יאכלנו בשר. ה זכרנו, את-הדגה, אשר-נאכל במצרים, חנם: את הקשאים, ואת האבטחים, ואת-החציר ואת-הבצלים, ואת-השומים. (במדבר יא)

כח אפס כי-עז העם. הישב בארץ; והערים, בצרות גדלת מאד, וגם-ילדי הענק, ראינו שם. כט עמלק יושב, בארץ הנגב; והחתי והיבوسی והאמרי, יושב בהר, והכנעני יושב על-הים, ועל יד הירדן. ל ויהס כלב את-העם, אל-משה; ויאמר, עלה נעלה ונרשנו אתה-כי-יכול נוכל, לה. לא והאנשים אשר-עלו עמו, אמרו, לא נוכל, לעלות אל-העם: כי-חזק הוא, ממנו. לב ויצאו דבת הארץ, אשר תרו אתה, אל-בני ישראל, לאמר: הארץ אשר עברנו בה לתור אותה, ארץ אכלת יושביה הוא, וכל-העם אשר-ראינו בתוכה, אנשי מדות. לג ושם ראינו, את-הנפילים בני ענק-מן-הנפילים; ונהי בעינינו כחגבים, וכן היינו בעיניהם. (במדבר יג)

וטפכם אשר אמרתם לבז יהיו ובניכם אשר לא-ידעו היום טוב ורע המה, יבאו שמה; ויהם אתננה, והם יירשנה. (דברים א)

"Ambivalence in love relationships" – On growing up and letting go of absolutes and easy living as a means of creating An authentic self narrative

Healthy mourning – going through a process of letting go, being able to integrate the loss into ones daily life, owning my loss and moving forward

Unhealthy mourning - inability to make the leap into the present and the future. Narcissistic obsession with ones passivity and downfall.

The Nature of Slavery

Reflections of the Rav: Abraham R. Besdin p199

A slave is a person without options. He cannot make his own decisions, except in insignificant areas. His discernment in substantive matters is consequently impaired. He never develops faith in his own judgment because it is never tested and sharpened pragmatically. Trial and error experiences which build confidence and refine perception are absent. Only the free man is continually challenged by the many-faceted possibilities inherent in all aspects of life. Those who are restricted in the scope of their choices or participation tend to develop illusions: they see truth subjectively; they observe things not as they are, but as they (the slaves) would like them to be. Being ever unable to intervene or take judgmental initiatives, they view matters passively. Truth and falsehood are sharpened for the one to whom such distinctions are useful; maimed and confined people, however, find their distinctions blurred and are surrounded by unrealities. Rendering testimony, however is an exercise of discernment, an awareness of nuances, a keenness of perception, and a breadth of judgement. A slave lacks these qualifications.

On Love and Hate of God

(Avivah Zornberg: Bewilderments chapter 3)

Here begins the saga of love and hate in the wilderness. Here begins the **subjective narrative of an ambivalent people** who, through a series of wilderness narratives, struggle with their own volatile relations with God, with Moses, and, ultimately **with themselves**. In the end their loves and hates will postpone, for an entire generation their entry into the land.....human mortality sharpens, intensifies the goodness of life. Unalloyed pleasure becomes cloying; the experience of limits, allows loss, allows one to experience delight more acutely...They (Joshua and Caleb) acknowledge **life and death as inextricably interwoven**....they affirm the paradox of the game of loss through which courage can be developed. Constantly losing the world, Joshua and Caleb acknowledge that it must be regained every day; absence and presence become the essential game. But the people live in the place of loss, in a malady of scepticism to which, apparently, there is no alternative. **They live in a world in which love and hate, goodness and badness, are radically split**.....their hatred is directed against God who is in a sense within them. In this sense, **it is self hatred that marks their experience of God himself**.....Perhaps only after the sin of the spies can they begin to mourn for the losses they have incurred. With mourning comes concern, and the playfulness that allows one every day to **regain the lost world**.



Faith and Doubt

Erich Fromm: Man for Himself p199-209

In contrast to irrational doubt, rational doubt questions assumptions the validity of which depends on **belief in an authority and not on ones own experience**. This doubt has an important function in personality development. The child at first accepts all ideas on the unquestioned authority of his parents. In the process of emancipating himself from their authority, in developing his own self, he becomes critical. **In the process of growing up the child starts to doubt the legends he previously accepted without question, and the increase of his critical capacities is directly proportionate to his becoming independent of parental authority and to his becoming an adult.**

The Four Sons

What does the wise one say?

"What are the testimonies, the statutes, and the laws that G-d, our G-d, has commanded to you?" (deut. 6:20)

You should respond to him as the Torah commands, "We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, etc." and also instruct him in all the laws of Passover, up to and including its final law: "After eating the Passover offering, one should not then conclude the meal with dessert which would wash away the taste of the Passover offering."

What does the wicked one say?

"What is this service of yours?!" He says of yours—implying that it is not for him. By excluding himself from the community, he denies the essential principle of Judaism, the obligation to fulfill the commandments of the Torah. You should also "blunt his teeth" (speak harshly to him) and say to him: "It is because of this that I would fulfill His commandments, such as this Passover offering, matzah and maror that G-d acted for me when I left Egypt (Exodus 13:8)—for me, but not for him. If he [the wicked child] had been there, he would not have been redeemed."

The Simple One—what does he say?

"What is this celebration about?" You shall say to him: "We are commemorating the fact that with a strong hand G-d took us out of Egypt, from the house of slaves" (Exodus 13:14).

As for The One Who Knows Not How To Ask—you must open up [the conversation] for him.

As it is written: You shall tell your child on that day: "It is because of this that G-d acted for me when I left Egypt" (Exodus 13:8).

Eruvin 13b

Rabbi Abba said in the name of Shmuel, For three years, the House of Hillel and the House of Shammai argued. One said, 'The halakha is like us,' and the other said, 'The halakha is like us.' A heavenly voice spoke: "These and these are the words of the living God, and the halakha is like the House of Hillel."

A question was raised: Since the heavenly voice declared: "Both these and those are the words of the Living God," why was the halacha established to follow the opinion of Hillel? It is because the students of Hillel were kind and gracious. They **taught their own ideas as well as the ideas from the students of Shammai**. Not only for this reason, but they went so far as to teach Shammai's opinions first.



"How can Pharaoh let the Hebrew people go, or keep them for that matter, when he cannot remember anything? Lack of memory is not a random occurrence, it is characteristic of slave regimes, for slaves and masters alike. Having no need to take account of others, masters ape the mentality of their slaves; without responsibility, masters have no need to remember or to teach."
(Aaron Wildavsky: *The Nursing Father: Moses as a Political Leader* p68)

PART II: Remembering and forgetting – Pharaoh and the People of Israel

" והגדת לבנך, ביום ההוא לאמר: בעבור זה עשה ה' לי, בצאתי ממצרים. ט ונהיה לך לאות על-ידך, ולזכרון בין עיניך, למען תהיה תורת יהוה, בפיה: כי ביד חזקה, הוצאך ה' ממצרים. י ושמרת את-החקה הזאת, למועדה, מימים, ימימה. 8 "And thou shalt tell thy son in that day, saying: It is because of that which the LORD did for me when I came forth out of Egypt. 9 And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thy hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes, that the law of the LORD may be in thy mouth; for with a strong hand hath the LORD brought thee out of Egypt. 10 Thou shalt therefore keep this ordinance in its season from year to year."



Twenty times we are told Pharaoh heart was hardened - His callous and evil mindset successfully manages to forget the suffering he and his people have endured, refusing shortly after each plague, to submit to the will of God to free the Israelites. In contrast Moshe message is littered with numerous mentions of 'memory'. The people are told that this moment must be imprinted on their individual and collective memory, never forgotten, passed down to each generation.

The Role of memory in self narrative

• Memory as an essential part of self

You have to begin to lose your memory, if only in bits and pieces, to realize that memory is what makes our lives. Life without memory is no life at all ... Our memory is our coherence, our reason, our feeling, even our action. Without it, we are nothing ... (I can only wait for the final amnesia, the one that can erase an entire life, as it did my mother's ...) — Luis Bunuel

This moving and frightening segment in Bunuel's recently translated memoirs raises fundamental questions—clinical, practical, existential, philosophical: what sort of a life (if any), what sort of a world, what sort of a self, can be preserved in a man who has lost the greater part of his memory and, with this, his past, and his moorings in time? 'He is, as it were,' I wrote in my notes, 'isolated in a single moment of being, with a moat or lacuna of forgetting all round him ... He is man without a past (or future), stuck in a constantly changing, meaningless moment....To be ourselves we must have ourselves - possess, if need be re-possess, our life stories. We must "recollect" ourselves; recollect the inner drama, the narrative, of ourselves. A man needs such a narrative, a continuous inner narrative, to maintain his identity, his self

(Oliver Sacks: *The Man who mistook his wife for a hat*)

• Memory and History

There is a profound difference between history and memory. History is his story—an event that happened sometime else to someone else. Memory is my story – something that happened to me and is part of who I am.....without memory there can be no identity. (Jonathan Sacks: *The Chief Rabbi's Haggadah*)

ט ונהיה כן-יאמרו אליכם בניכם: מה העבדה הזאת, לכם. כז ואמרתם זבח-פסח הוא ליהוה, אשר פסח על-בתי בני-ישראל במצרים, בנגפו את-מצרים, ואת-בתינו הציל, ויקד העם, וישתחוו

26 And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you: What mean ye by this service? 27 that ye shall say: It is the sacrifice of the LORD'S Passover, for that He passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when He smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses.' And the people bowed the head and worshipped.

ח והגדת לבנך, ביום ההוא לאמר: בעבור זה עשה יהוה לי, בצאתי ממצרים. 8 And thou shalt tell thy son in that day, saying: It is because of that which the LORD did for me when I came forth out of Egypt

יד ונהיה כן-ישאלך בנך, מתי-לאמר מה-זאת. ואתם אליו-בחזק ד' הוציאנו יהוה ממצרים, מבית עבדים. 14 And it shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying: What is this? that thou shalt say unto him: By strength of hand the LORD brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage; (Shemot 13)

וזכרת כי עבד היית בארץ מצרים ויצאך ה' אליך משם ביד חזקה וברוע נטיה על-כן ערך ה' אליך לעשות את-יום השבת.

" ויאמר משה אל העם הזקן אתה היום הזה אשר יאתם ממצרים מבית עבדים כי בחזק ד' הוציא ה' אתכם מזה וילא יאכל חמץ.

לא תאכל עליו חמץ שבעת ימים ואתם תאכלו עליו מצות לחם עני כי בחפזו יצאת מארץ מצרים למען תזכר את יום צאתך מארץ מצרים כל ימי חייך

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reliving the repressed memory as a means to healing "The patient cannot remember the whole of what is repressed in him, and what he cannot remember may be precisely the essential part of it. ... He is obliged to repeat the repressed material as a contemporary experience instead of remembering it as something in the past." (Freud Beyond the Pleasure Principle p. 18) • Memory as an imperative "Without memory, our existence would be barren and opaque, like a prison cell into which no light penetrates; like a tomb which rejects the living. If anything can, it is memory that will save humanity. For me, hope without memory is like memory without hope..." Stripped of possessions, all human ties severed, the prisoners found themselves in a social and cultural void. "Forget," they were told. "Forget where you came from, forget who you were. Only the present matters." Night after night, seemingly endless processions vanished into the flames, lighting up the sky. Fear dominated the universe. Of course, we could try to forget the past. Why not? Is it not natural for a human being to repress what causes him pain, what causes him shame? Like the body, memory protects its wounds. When day breaks after a sleepless night, one's ghosts must withdraw; the dead are ordered back to their graves. But for the first time in history, we could not bury our dead. We bear their graves within ourselves. For us, forgetting was never an option. Remembering is a noble and necessary act. The call of memory, the call to memory, reaches us from the very dawn of history. No commandment figures so frequently, so insistently, in the Bible. It is incumbent upon us to remember the good we have received, and the evil we have suffered. " (Elie Wiesel'Hope, Despair and Memory' Nobel Prize Lecture) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reliving the repressed memory as a means to healing בכל דור ודור חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאילו הוא יצא מצרים In every generation man is obligated to imagine himself as if he had come out of Egypt. (Mishnah Pesachim). בכל דור ודור חייב אדם להראות את עצמו כאילו הוא בעצמו יצא ממשעבוד מצרים In each and every generation, a person must present himself as if he, himself, has now left the slavery of Egypt, (Rambam Mishnah Torah Hilchot Chametz Umatzah 6:6) Difference between Mishnah and Rambam – making memory into a self narrative והגדת לבנך, ביזם הוא לאמר: בעבור זה, עשה יהוה לי, בצאתי, ממצרים. It is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of mizraim (Exodus 13:8) • Memory as an imperative לתזכר את יום צאתך מארץ מצרים כל ימי חייך In order that you remember the day you were exiled from Egypt all the days of your life (Devarim 17)
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PART III: The difference between remembering and 'telling' - the ambivalence of subjectivity

הלכות חמץ ומצה ז, א רמב"ם Mishnah Torah

מצות עשה של תורה לספר בנסים ונפלאות שנעשו לאבותינו במצרים בליל חמשה עשר בניסן שנאמר: "זכור את-היום הזה אשר יצאתם ממצרים" כמו שנאמר "זכור את-יום השבת" (שם' כ:ח). ומנין שבליל חמשה עשר? תלמוד לומר "והגדת לבנך ביזם הוא לאמר בעבור זה" (שם' יג:ח). בשעה שיש מצה ומרור מונחים לפניך... וכל המאריך בדברים שאירעו ושהיו הרי זה משונח.

It is a positive commandment of the Torah to relate the miracles and wonders wrought for our ancestors in Egypt on the night of the fifteenth of Nisan, as [Exodus 13:3] states: "Remember this day, on which you left Egypt," just as [Exodus 20:8] states: "Remember the Sabbath day." From where [is it derived that this mitzvah is to be fulfilled on] the night of the fifteenth? The Torah teaches [Exodus 13:8]: "And you shall tell your son on that day, saying: 'It is because of this...'"FS" [implying that the mitzvah is to be fulfilled] when matzah and maror are placed before you. The mitzvah applies even though one does not have a son. Even great Sages are obligated to tell about the Exodus from Egypt. Whoever elaborates concerning the events which occurred and took place is worthy of praise.

- Remembering – an event /objective/objectual
- Telling – a narrative/subjective/multiple perspectives

Mourning a loss of easy reality – freedom – entering into a world of multiplicity and complexity. Questions without answers, hidden truth, the loss of absolute authority – leil haseder integrates this 'loss' into a positive experience of 'telling' – creating a narrative.

FREUD, MEMORY, INTEGRATION AND LIBERATION

PART I
HEALTHY MOURNING – INTEGRATION OF LOSS WITH LIVING– LETTING GO OF ABSOLUTES – CRISIS – 'THESE AND THESE ARE THE WORDS OF THE LIVING GOD' - RECOGNITION OF THE AMBIVALENCE OF EXISTANCE

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PART II
MEMORY - REMEMBERING AND FORGETTING – PAST AND FUTURE, GALUT AND GEULA - THE AMBIVALENCE OF BEING A JEW

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PART III
מצות זכור \ מצות סיפור יציאת מצרים - LEIL HASEDER – INTEGRATING THE LOSS INTO THE AMBIVALENCE OF JEWISH EXISTENCE A MULTIPLICITY OF PERSPECTIVES – TRUE FREEDOM



The integration of negative and positive memory: A lesson in Freedom



It has been taught: Ben Zoma said to the Sages: Will the Exodus from Egypt be mentioned in the days of the Messiah? Was it not long ago said: Therefore behold the days come, saith the Lord, that they shall no more say: As the Lord liveth that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, As the Lord liveth that brought up and that led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country and from all the countries whither I had driven them? (Jer. XXIII, 7. 8) They replied: This does not mean that the mention of the exodus from Egypt shall be obliterated, but that the [deliverance from] subjection to the other kingdoms shall take the first place and the exodus from Egypt shall become secondary. (Talmud Brachot 13a)

This is not simply a question of the memories of Exodus versus the experience of Auschwitz....almost -all Jews acknowledge this phenomenon – the event of catastrophe and the event of redemption and their dialectical interrelationship-and it touches their lives. Studies show the number of those who affirm this phenomenon as central has grown from year to year; that its impact is now almost universal, among those who will acknowledge themselves as Jews...the whole Jewish people is caught between immersion in nihilism and immersion in redemption – both are present in immediate experience and not just historical memory. To deny either pole in our time is to be cut off from Historical Jewish experience. In the incredible dialectic tension between the two we are fated to live. (Rabbi Yitz Greenberg: Cloud of Smoke; Pillar of Fire)



CONCLUSION – לשנה הבאה – בירושלים הבנויה



"Faith is living in the presence of the redeemer even when the world is unredeemed. After Auschwitz faith means there are times when faith is overcome...we know have to speak of 'moment faiths', moments when Redeemer and visions or redemption are present, interspersed with times when the flames and smoke of the burning children blot out faith-though it flickers again....If Treblinka makes human hope an illusion, then the western wall asserts that human dreams are more real than force and facts. Israel's faith is the God of History demands that an unprecedented event of destruction be matched by an unprecedented act of redemption and this has happened....to deny either pole (nihilism or redemption) in our lifetime is to be cut off from historical Jewish experience. In the incredible dialectical tension between the two we are fated to live.....

That this pain will be incorporated in the round of life we regret; yet we may hope that it will not destroy hope but rather strengthen responsibility, will and faith."

Irving Greenberg: Cloud of smoke Pillar of Fire

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