

Pour Out Your Wrath or Your Love? Establishing the Authentic Text and Message of the Haggadah¹

By: SHMUEL LESHER

שפוך חמתך על הגוים אשר לא ידעוך ועל הממלכות אשר בשמך לא
קראו. כי אכל את יעקב ואת נוהו השמו. שפוך עליהם זעמך וחרון אפך
ישיגם. תרדוף באף ותשמידם מתחת שמי ה'. (הגדה של פסח)

שִׁפְךָ חֲמַתְךָ אֶל הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר לֹא יָדְעוּךָ וְעַל הַמְּלָכוֹת אֲשֶׁר בְּשִׁמְךָ לֹא קָרְאוּ.
כִּי אָכַל אֶת יַעֲקֹב וְאֶת נוֹהוּ הַשָּׁמוֹ. (תהלים עט:ו-ז)

שִׁפְךָ עֲלֵיהֶם זַעֲמָךְ וְחֲרוֹן אַפְּךָ יִשְׁיִגֵם. (תהלים סט: כה)

תִּרְדֹּף בְּאַף וְתִשְׁמִידֵם מִתַּחַת שָׁמַי ה'. (איכה ג:ס)

Shfokh Hamatkha, the passage in the Haggadah in which we ask G-d to pour out His wrath upon the nations of the world, stands out as one of the most provocative texts within our liturgy.² Its seemingly vengeful nature could not be more out of sync with the joyous and celebratory mood of Seder night. Moreover, the prayer itself is perplexing. As the Talmud (*Berakhot* 10a) concludes, it is preferable to pray for the repentance of sinners, rather than to ask G-d to mete out punishment upon the sinners themselves. In *Shfokh Hamatkha*, however, we explicitly ask G-d to express His wrath and fury by eradicating our enemies. How are we to understand the message of this prayer and its prominent placement within the Haggadah?

¹ My thanks to Rabbi Ron Yitzchak Eisenman for the title of this article. Thank you to Ezer Dina, Rabbi Ken Stollon, and Rabbi Dr. Jacob J. Schacter who greatly improved this article.

² Although most contemporary Haggadot only include four Biblical verses in *Shfokh Hamatkha*, Rabbi Menachem Kasher notes that there are versions that have up to 17 verses about non-Jews being destroyed. See R. Menachem Kasher, *Haggadah Sheleimah* (Machon Torah Shleimah, 1956), 177–180.

Shmuel Lesher is the assistant rabbi of Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation (BAYT). He holds a master's degree in Mental Health Counseling from the Ferkauf School of Psychology.

The Origins of *Shfokh Hamatkha*

As the history of *Shfokh Hamatkha* demonstrates, there are parts of the Haggadah that have evolved over time. The inclusion of *Shfokh Hamatkha* in the text of the Haggadah is well documented by the early 15th century. The following illustrated Haggadot from the 15th and 16th centuries all include *Shfokh Hamatkha*:



*Page from the illuminated Darmstadt Haggadah, Germany (1420)
Israel b. Meir of Heidelberg*



Shfokh Hamatkha — Haggadah from Mantua, Italy (1550)



Shfokh Hamatkha — Haggadah from Florence, Italy (1492)
Library of Congress, Washington

In addition to these 15th- and 16th-century Haggadot that include *Shfokh Hamatkha*, the image of a donkey in the latter two is also noteworthy. Some have claimed that there is no basis for a connection between *Shfokh Hamatkha* and Eliyahu Ha-Navi coming to the Seder. However, as Eliezer Brodt has noted, these Haggadot show this is not the case.³ In fact, I will discuss below the connection between *Shfokh Hamatkha* and the redemption. Perhaps this may explain the relevance of a donkey. There is a tradition that Eliyahu Ha-Navi will be riding on a donkey when he delivers the news that the redemption has arrived.

However, *Shfokh Hamatkha* does not appear in the Haggadah of the Rambam or in the Haggadah of Rabbi Saadiah Gaon. This omission has led many scholars to assume that *Shfokh Hamatkha* was added to the original text of the Haggadah at some later point.

³ Eliezer Brodt, “The Cup for the Visitor: What Lies behind the *Kos Shel Eliyahu*?” *Seforim Blog* (March 18, 2013).

The Rama attributes the practice of reciting *Shfokh Hamatkha* at the Seder to the Ran, dating its inclusion back to the 14th century.⁴ It appears, however, that *Shfokh Hamatkha* actually goes back even further. Although *Shfokh Hamatkha* does appear in the *Seder Rav Amram Gaon*, a work from the late 9th century, scholars have noted that since many additions and textual changes were introduced into this work, it is difficult to discern the original text and its date.⁵ Historically, the earliest source which includes *Shfokh Hamatkha* as part of the Haggadah is probably the *Mahzor Vitry*,⁶ which was compiled ca. 1145 by Rabbi Simḥah of Vitri, a student of Rashi.⁷

⁴ See his gloss to the *Shulhan Arukh, Orach Hayyim* no. 480 as well as his *Darkei Moshe*, *ibid.* Ran's statement appears in his commentary on the Rif, *Pesahim* 19a.

⁵ Daniel Goldschmidt (ed.), *Seder Rav Amram Gaon* (Mossad HaRav Kook, 2004), 7-22. Goldschmidt, *Seder Rav Amram Gaon*, 11 dates the addition of *Shfokh Hamatkha* to the British Museum manuscript sometime between the 14th and 15th centuries. See also Rabbi Eli Brackman, "The Oxford Passover Haggadah: The World's Oldest 12th Century Haggadah," *OxfordChabad.org* (April 2017).

⁶ *Mahzor Vitry, Hilkhot Pesah*, no. 97. See Daniel Goldschmidt (ed.), *Haggadah Shel Pesah* (Bialik, 1969), 62-64; Joseph Tabory, *The JPS Commentary on the Haggadah* (Jewish Publication Society, 2008), 53-54; Israel Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, translated by Barbara Harshav and Jonathan Chipman (University of California Press, 2006), 123.

Most surprising is the claim of R. Menachem Kasher. He suggests that according to Rabbi Yehudah Sir Lion, one of the *Ba'alei Ha-Tosafot* and teacher of the *S'mag*, *Shfokh Hamatkha* dates back to the days of the *Talmud Yerushalmi*. See his *Haggadah Sheleimah*, 177n1.

This claim, however, is not convincing. The *Yerushalmi* in *Pesahim* (10:1) does record an opinion that says the four cups of wine parallel four cups of peril that the nations of the world will drink when redemption comes. But although the *S'mag* does quote his teacher, R. Yehudah Sir Lion, who says this is a reference to *Shfokh Hamatkha*, the *Yerushalmi* does not explicitly make any mention of *Shfokh Hamatkha*.

⁷ Josef Tabory, "*Shfokh Hamatkha—Le-Toledot Ha-Minhag*," in Adam Ferziger (ed.), *Darkei Daniel: Mehkarim Be-Mada'ei Ha-Yahadut Li-Khevod Ha-Rav Professor Daniel Sperber* (Bar-Ilan University, 2007), 383. For more on the history of *Shfokh Hamatkha* and its inclusion in the Haggadah, see Tabory, "*Shfokh Hamatkha—Le-Toledot Ha-Minhag*," 377-400.

Pour Out Your Wrath or Pour Out Your Love?

Shefokh Hamatkeha's provocative tone caused some to search for an alternative text.⁸ My first encounter with an alternative to *Shefokh Hamatkeha* was in the *Rabbi Jonathan Sacks Haggadah*. In it, R. Sacks writes:

In one manuscript from Worms, 1521, there is a unique addition to the Haggadah, alongside Pour Out Your Wrath. It is a prayer of thanks for the righteous gentiles throughout history, who, rather than persecuting Jews, befriended them and protected them in times of danger:

Pour out your love on the nations who know You. And on kingdoms who call Your name. For the good which they do for the seed of Jacob. And they shield Your people Israel from their enemies. May they merit to see the good of Your chosen and to rejoice in the joy of Your nation.⁹

After doing further research, I discovered that this addition was published by the bibliographer Naftali Ben-Menahem in 1963.¹⁰ It was supposedly discovered by Rabbi Hayyim Bloch (1881-1970) in a Haggadah from the estate of Rabbi Shimshon Wertheimer (1658-1724). R. Bloch claimed that this Haggadah was edited in Worms in 1521 by Rabbi Yehudah ben R. Yekusiel, the grandson of Rashi. R. Bloch attributes its disappearance from circulation to the Holocaust.¹¹ However, a number of scholars believe that this prayer was most likely not composed in Worms in 1521, but rather by R. Bloch himself.¹²

⁸ Tabory (JPS Haggadah 54-55) records that in 19th-century Germany, Israel Levi was uncomfortable with this ritual and replaced the recitation of *Shefokh Hamatkeha* with a different prayer.

⁹ *The Rabbi Jonathan Sacks Haggadah* (Maggid, 2003), 120-121.

¹⁰ Naftali Ben-Menahem, *Mahanayim*, 80 (Tel Aviv, 1963), 95.

¹¹ R. Hayyim Bloch, *Heikhal Li-Divrei Hazal U-Pisgimeihem* (Pardes and Shoulson Press, 1948), 592. See Alan Brill, "Pour Out Thy Love upon the Nations and Miriam at the Seder," *Kavvanah* (March 23, 2010). R. Bloch writes that R. Yehudah ben R. Yekusiel was a *nekbed* (grandson) of Rashi. However, this is impossible. Rashi died in 1105 and could not have had a grandson alive in 1521 to edit this Haggadah. Perhaps R. Bloch meant R. Yehudah ben R. Yekusiel was a descendant of Rashi. Or, perhaps this error is yet further evidence of the fabrication of *Shefokh Ahavatkeha*.

¹² Brill, *ibid*; Marc B. Shapiro, "More on Chaim Bloch," *Seforim Blog* (April 22, 2010); Tabory, JPS Haggadah 55. As Shapiro notes, this is not the only controversial work that scholars believe R. Bloch fabricated. However, assuming it was

Notwithstanding its questionable origins, in recent years, some contemporary Haggadot not only have included it as an addition but actually replaced “Pour Out Your Wrath” with “Pour Out Your Love.”¹³ To the mind of this author, this does not resolve the issue. Besides the issue of excising a text that has been included in the Haggadah since the 12th century, *Shfokh Hamatkha* is a collection of Biblical verses. Although removing these verses from the Haggadah can be debated, removing these verses from the Biblical canon is completely beyond the pale of traditional Judaism, no matter how uncomfortable some may be with them. From a moral standpoint, whether this passage is included in the Haggadah or not, is immaterial, since the text remains part and parcel of the Biblical canon. Even if one wants to make the unlikely claim that “Pour Out Your Love” is in fact authentic and was authored in Worms in 1521, it is more likely a form of self-censorship to avoid anti-Semitism than an appreciation of righteous gentiles. In any event, “Pour Out Your love,” does not solve the issue of the jarring and vengeful sentiment of *Shfokh Hamatkha*.

Opening of the Door

Another feature of *Shfokh Hamatkha* is the practice of opening the door to recite it. Rama writes that this practice is to recall the protective nature of the night of the Seder, referred to as “*Leil Shemurim*.” According to Rama, the act of opening the door displays our faith in G-d’s protection. He adds that it is in this merit of this act of faith that *Mashiah* will come and then Hashem will pour out His anger upon our enemies.¹⁴

Other commentators also see *Shfokh Hamatkha* as a reference to the future redemption. The Vilna Gaon notes that we interrupt the recitation of *Hallel* at the Seder by eating the meal. This is because the first half of *Hallel* is particular to the Egyptian redemption while the second half of *Hallel*, beginning with “*Lo Lanu*,” is about the future universal redemption of the entire world. *Shfokh Hamatkha*, which asks G-d to destroy our enemies, is recited after *Birkat ha-Mazon* because “the glory of the righteous cannot rise up until the sinners are consumed.”¹⁵ Similarly, Rabbi Eliezer Waldenberg also interprets *Shfokh Hamatkha* as the introduction to the

not composed in Worms in 1521, R. Bloch’s motivation for forging a new rendition of *Shfokh Hamatkha* remains unclear.

¹³ Brill, *ibid*.

¹⁴ Rama on the *Shulhan Arukh, Orach Hayyim*, 480:1.

¹⁵ *Haggadah Shel Pesah, Peninei Ha-Gaon Mi-Vilna* (Bnei Brak, 2008), 214.

second part of *Hallel*, in which we hope for the final redemption when evil will be destroyed and Hashem's justice will reign.¹⁶

According to the Vilna Gaon and R. Waldenberg, the recitation of *Shefokh Hamatkha* is completely consistent with the themes of the Seder. At the Seder, as we celebrate our freedom from slavery, we thank G-d for redeeming us from Egypt. This celebration focuses on the particular redemption of the Jewish people. However, there is also a larger and more universal redemption to which we give voice at the Seder, hoping and praying for the ultimate redemption and the messianic era. Reciting *Shefokh Hamatkha* at the Seder is part of our hope for the future redemption. By definition, part of the fulfillment of the ultimate redemption is the retribution and punishment of those who are deserving of it. In the end of days we pray that all will become clear, that the righteous will be rewarded and the wicked punished.

A Historical View of *Shefokh Hamatkha*

Rabbi Menachem Kasher provides a historical perspective to the practice of opening the door before saying *Shefokh Hamatkha*. R. Kasher argues that at times of anti-Semitic persecution, the Jewish people opened their doors at the Seder to literally look outside to see if there were any spies waiting by the door to report them to the government for saying negative things about non-Jews.¹⁷ In fact, *Ohr Zaruah* cites Rabbi Nissim Gaon (10th-11th century) who says in the name of his father that the practice was to leave the doors open the entire night of the Seder.¹⁸ Rabbi Daniel Sperber argues that only later, because they feared their anti-Semitic

¹⁶ *Tzitz Eliezer* 18:28.

¹⁷ *Haggadah Sheleimah*, 180. Similar to R. Kasher, Rabbi Shlomo Riskin in his commentary on the Haggadah, (Ktav, 1983) 128-129, writes that because of its proximity to Easter, during the Passover season claims of blood libels that accused Jews of killing gentile babies and using their blood to prepare matzah and the wine for the Seder were often made. Still worse, gentiles would stage vicious pogroms against their Jewish neighbors. This made it necessary to open the door and look out into the street, lest a dead baby had been placed near the home to provide a mob with a pretext to ravage and kill. R. Riskin claims that it was not at all rare to see Jewish families driven from their homes and Jewish populations from their villages in the middle of Seder night to escape certain injury and even death. He notes that the German writer Heinrich Heine tells such a story. See Charles Godfrey Leland (trans.), *The Works of Heinrich Heine*, vol. 1, "The Rabbi of Bacharach" (London, 1891), 206-212.

¹⁸ *Ohr Zaruah*, vol. 2, no. 234. For more on this, see R. Daniel Sperber, *Minhagei Yisrael*, vol. 6 (Mossad Harav Kook, 1998), 129.

Christian neighbors outside, Jews began to limit the practice of opening the door to the recitation of *Shefokh Hamatkha*.¹⁹

R. Sperber cites historian Cecil Roth who documents the practice on Easter for a number of European Christian communities to throw stones at their Jewish neighbors' homes. In fact, when Easter fell on the same day as Pesah, Jews would refer to it as "*Yemei ha-Hesger*" (Days of Enclosure)—a reference to the isolation period a *metzora* (a leper) must undergo, used to describe a time when the Jews had to hide in their homes for fear of being pelted with rocks.²⁰ Accordingly, R. Sperber suggests that the practice of opening the door at the Seder was moved to accompany the recitation of *Shefokh Hamatkha* intentionally. We are asking G-d to pour out punishment on those who "poured out" or threw stones on us during this time period.

In the same vein, in the *Israel Passover Haggadah* edited by R. Kasher, an 1892 painting by Moshe Maimon titled "The Inquisition Interrupts a Seder" is included²¹:



A different historical explanation for *Shefokh Hamatkha* and the opening of the door was offered in the name of Rabbi Yosef Salant. The Gemara (*Pesahim* 85b-86a) says that in the time of the Temple, even though

¹⁹ R. Daniel Sperber, *Minbagei Yisrael*, vol. 3 (Mossad Harav Kook, 1995), 82.

²⁰ Apparently, the rationale for this cruel behavior was that the Jews are purported to have thrown stones at Jesus on Palm Sunday as he was parading through Jerusalem the week before his crucifixion. See R. Sperber, *Minbagei Yisrael*, 6, 129–133. I am indebted to Rabbi Daniel Korobkin for these sources.

²¹ R. Menachem M. Kasher (ed.), *Israel Passover Haggadah* (Shengold, 1983), 194.

people were not allowed to eat the Pesah sacrifice on their roofs, they would go onto their roofs to sing *Hallel*. In his *Haggadah Yisamah Av*, Rabbi Eli Baruch Shulman quotes the *Devar Shmuel*, who says that his grandfather, R. Yosef Salant, used this to explain our practice of opening our doors when we recite *Shefokh Hamatkha*.²² Because the Pesah sacrifice had to be eaten by a specifically designated group in a specific place, the practice was that people would close the doors to their homes to ensure that everyone ate the Pesah in its correct place. Once they finished eating, they would then open their doors to go up to their roofs to sing *Hallel*. Therefore, in commemoration of this ancient practice of singing *Hallel* on the rooftops, we too open our doors.²³

Why the Wrath and Why Their Destruction?

What still remains unanswered is why do we pray for our enemy's destruction? As we noted, does not the Talmud prefer the repentance of sinners to their destruction?

Rabbi Moshe Yaakov Weingarten, in his *Ha-Seder Ha-Arukh*, cites an explanation of Rabbi Tzadok Rabinowitz of Lublin, to answer why we do not pray for our enemies to repent.²⁴ R. Tzadok explains that when it comes to those who commit evil towards G-d, we pray for them to repent. However, when it comes to those who kill other people and are evil to human beings, we do not pray for them to mend their ways. According to R. Tzadok, in a form of *middah ki-neged middah*—a proportional response—we do not seek out good for those who not only did not seek out good for others, but actively harmed them.²⁵

Limiting the Scope of *Shefokh Hamatkha*

To address its vengeful message, some commentators have limited the scope of those to whom *Shefokh Hamatkha* is referring. Perhaps the most radical defense for *Shefokh Hamatkha* was offered by Rabbi Eliezer Ashkenazi in the 16th century. In one of the first passages of its kind, R. Ashkenazi argues that *Shefokh Hamatkha* does not refer to the non-Jews of his time:

²² R. Shmuel Baruch Eliezrov, *Devar Shmuel*, *Pesahim* 86a.

²³ R. Eli Baruch Shulman, *Haggadah Yisamah Av* (Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, 2017), 116-117. I am indebted to Rabbi Gil Student for this source. See R. Gil Student, "Seder on the Rooftops," *TorahMusings.com* (March 27, 2017).

²⁴ R. Moshe Yaakov Weingarten, *Ha-Seder Ha-Arukh*, vol. 2, *Siddur Leil Pesah bi-Agaddah* (Jerusalem, 1992), 249n20.

²⁵ R. Tzadok Rabinowitz, *Tzidkat ha-Tzadik*, no. 71.

These verses [are referring to] those who deny the fact of the Exodus with all of its signs and miracles. [However], it is very clear, that all non-Jews amongst whom the Jews are scattered, are aware of the Exodus, are convinced of its occurrence and understand its meaning. Therefore, we are saying specifically that G-d should not pour out His wrath upon those who do know His name...Only [pour out Your wrath upon] those who serve idols and who deny the creation of the world. Those who destroyed the Temple were idol-worshippers...But the Christians and Muslims of today do know G-d and recognize the fact of the Exodus. Heaven-forbid that our religion would require us to curse them.²⁶

In his thorough analysis of the passage, Dr. Michael A. Shmidman provides evidence that R. Ashkenazi's comments are not apologetics but part of R. Ashkenazi's systematic approach to other religions which emerges from his Biblical commentary *Ma'aseh Hashem*.²⁷

Later, in the 17th century, R. Ashkenazi's comments gained more prominence. Rabbi Moshe Rivkes (d. 1672), in his *Be'er Ha-Golah* commentary to *Shulḥan Arukh* cites this position of R. Ashkenazi. R. Rivkes argues that the discriminatory practices subscribed to by *Shulḥan Arukh* for heretics and idol worshipers, do not apply to contemporary non-Jews.²⁸ Jacob Katz notes that while R. Ashkenazi's original comment on the Haggadah was homiletic in nature, R. Rivkes adds additional force and legal weight by citing it in his gloss to *Shulḥan Arukh*.²⁹

In addition to being cited in a halakhic context, R. Ashkenazi's view was influential well beyond his day. Almost 300 years later, Rabbi Dr. Marcus Lehmann (1831–1890), the German rabbi and author, includes a lengthy translated excerpt of R. Ashkenazi's passage in his commentary on the Haggadah.³⁰

²⁶ R. Eliezer Ashkenazi, *Ma'aseh Hashem*, Part 2, "Ma'aseh Mitzrayim Pirush Ha-Haggadah" (Warsaw, 1871), 36-37.

²⁷ Michael A. Shmidman, "Pour Out Your Fury: Toward an Understanding of the Commentary of Rabbi Eliezer Ashkenazi," in Arnon Atzmon et. al., eds., *Carmi Sheli: Studies On Aggadab and Its Interpretation Presented to Professor Carmi Horowitz* (New York, 2012), i–xx.

²⁸ See R. Moshe Rivkes, *Be'er Ha-Golah*, *Hoshben Mishpat* 425:300. For more, see Michael A. Shmidman, *ibid*.

²⁹ Jacob Katz, *Exclusiveness and Tolerance* (Schocken, 1962), 166.

³⁰ *Lehmann's Passover Hagadah* (J. Lehmann, 1969), 272–274. The original can be found in Marcus Lehmann, *Hagadah shel Pessach mit Erläuterungen von Dr. M. Lehmann* (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1918), 162–164. I am indebted to Rabbi Dr. Moshe Y. Miller for this source. See his "Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch and Nineteenth

Along similar lines to R. Ashkenazi, Rabbi Eleazer Fleckeles, a student of Rabbi Yehezkel Landau, the author of the *Noda Bi-Yehudah*, clarifies who the subject of *Shfokh Hamatkeha* is. In the introduction to his halakhic responsa, *Teshuvah Mi-Ahavah*, R. Fleckeles argues that passages within the Talmud and other works that discriminate against gentiles refer only to ancient pagans and not to contemporary non-Jews. An example of one such passage is *Shfokh Hamatkeha*.³¹

In support of this distinction, Rabbi Hanan Balk, my father-in-law, suggested that in *Shfokh Hamatkeha*, the Psalmist specifically singles out the non-Jews who “do not know Your name.” This implies that non-Jews who do in fact know G-d’s name do not deserve any form of punishment or wrath. Indeed, it is none other than Pharaoh himself who says that he does not know G-d. As is recorded in the Torah, Pharaoh says, “Who is this G-d that I should listen to Him and let Israel go? I do not know G-d, nor will I let Israel go” (*Shemot* 5:1).³²

It should be noted that whatever explanation resonates most, we must recognize that before we question the morality of *Shfokh Hamatkeha* in our current social context, we need to remember that the world today is very different from the world of yesteryear. Anti-Semitism is still real today; however, in previous times, the Jews lived with it every day. The fact that there were those who “devoured Ya’akov” was not some abstract concept, it was their very reality. In that context, it is completely natural and understandable to associate redemption with the defeat of our enemies.

In fact, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks notes the level of restraint displayed in the Haggadah given the Jewish people’s history of persecution:

For centuries, Jews suffered a series of devastating blows—massacres, pogroms, forced conversions, inquisitions, confinement to

Century German Orthodoxy on Judaism’s Attitude Towards Non-Jews,” Doctoral Dissertation (Yeshiva University, 2014), 167–169. Miller notes that in the Hebrew edition of the Lehmann Haggadah, the R. Ashkenazi citation was removed without any editorial explanation. See *Haggadah Shel Pesah Im Peirush Meir Nativ* (Bnei Brak, 1967), 252–253. Miller suggests that the editors of this edition seem to have felt either that R. Ashkenazi’s words have no significance to the contemporary world of Haredi Jews in Israel, or perhaps that they were written apologetically.

³¹ R. Eleazer Fleckeles, *Teshuvah Mi-Ahavah*, 3 volumes (Prague, 1809-1821), introduction titled *Kesut Enayim*. For more on R. Fleckeles and this work, see my “Rabbi Eleazer Fleckeles: An Early Rabbinic Humanist,” *Tradition* 54:2 (Spring 2022), 133-149.

³² Subsequently I found that the *Arizal*, as recorded by his student Rabbi Hayyim Vital, makes this point in *Peri Eitz Hayyim, Shaar Hag Ha-Matzot*, 7:55.

ghettos, punitive taxation, and expulsions, culminating, in the very heart of “enlightened” Europe, in the Holocaust. Yet these verses—two from Psalms, one from the Book of Lamentations—are almost the only trace left by this experience on the Haggadah, the night we recall our past.³³

Rabbi Norman Lamm offers an astute psychological insight into how we as Jews have historically endured persecution, and yet did not allow hatred or vengefulness to poison us:

Those who give verbal expression to their enmity are usually the least likely to act upon it. Those who acknowledge, as we do every Wednesday morning, that G-d is a *Kel Nekamat* (“G-d of vengeance”) (Psalms 94:1), are least likely to appoint themselves the official executioners on His behalf. To keep your righteous resentment pent up within, without release, is like not being able to perspire. It keeps the poison inside your system and destroys it. When the steam of indignation at the humiliations and indignities we have had to endure over the centuries builds up pressure within us, we give it release—in this case, by reciting the *Shefokh Hamatkha*. Then both we and the world are all better for it.³⁴

Giving voice to the pain we have suffered as a people over the centuries has great therapeutic value. On Seder night, when we tell the story of our People and invoke our collective memory, we must make mention of our suffering because that is part of the Jewish story. By telling the uglier side of the story, within the context of hope and redemption, we are able to process the injustices we have suffered, while at the same time avoid carrying resentment and anger over our past with us.

In conclusion, the meaning of *Shefokh Hamatkha* is multidimensional. Some limit its subject to those who actively target Jews. Some interpret it not as a call to arms, but as a prayer for the fulfillment of the redemption; a prayer for Divine justice. Others see it as a therapeutic exercise to assuage our people’s suffering. Let us hope and pray for a time when evil will be destroyed and when all Jews and non-Jews will live in peace and know G-d’s name. May it come speedily in our days. ❧

³³ *The Koren Haggada, with commentary by Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks* (Koren, 2017), 133.

³⁴ R. Norman Lamm, *The Royal Table* (Ktav, 2010), 106-107.