Comments on Seven Phrases and Ideas in the Haggadah

Comparing and Contrasting: Israelite Enslavement vs African-American Enslavement

Rabbi Kenneth Chelst

Ha Lachma Anya - Invitations for Passover: Egypt and US Civil W

This is Rabbi Kenneth Chelst

In this presentation, I explore the invitation to share the Seder of Israelites and Americans During the Civil War

In *Festival of Freedom*, the Rav analyzes Ha Lahma Anya and explains that this opening captures the essence of the transition from slavery to a free community of chesed. The Rav chose to translate the opening term, לַחְמָא עַנְיָא as "poor person's bread" or" bread of poverty"

לֶחֶם עוֹנִי״ — ״עֹנִי״ כְּתִיב ,מֶה עָנִי שֶׁדַּרְכּוֹ בִּפְרוּסָה אַף כָּאן בִּפְרוּסָה

"Just as a poor person commonly eats only a small piece of his food ration, saving the rest for a later time, so we too we limit ourselves to a piece."

The Rav expands on a second aspect of the symbolism of the broken piece of Matzoh,

"One slave had a matzoh and another had none; the former split the matzah in two and passed half to his unfortunate brother."

The Rav continues:

"With the paschal lamb, we became a nation of people who unite, give things away, care for each other, share what they possess."

The Haggadah continues:

כָּל דִּצְרִיךְ יֵיתֵי וְיִפְסַח   **Whoever Needs: Come and Join Passover**

The second offer to join our Passover Seder, is directed to the spiritually needy.

"A person can be fully sated physically, but emotionally needy, and searching for the community that offered an opportunity to attend a Seder."

This tradition of sharing can stretch far beyond the neighborhood needy. During the Civil War, many Southern Jewish communities were decimated and disheartened. Only weeks after Sherman's army completed its March to the Sea, the Jews of Savannah, Georgia appealed for help because they no longer had the means to bake matzo. Northerners responded with contributions, paying $2 per pound for 3,000 pounds of unleavened bread to be shipped from New York and an

additional 2,000 pounds from Philadelphia. This altruism demonstrates how Passover can unite Jews, regardless of divergent political beliefs.

Jewish soldiers of the 23rd Ohio regiment, in winter camp in 1862, received permission from their commanding officer to be excused from active duty for a few days. The butler for the army, who had responsibility for provisioning, was Jewish and was heading home to Cincinnati for Passover. At the regiment's request, seven barrels of matzot arrived by train the day before Passover, along with Haggadot. The group foraged for other Passover foods and even built a log cabin for eating the Seder meal.

J. A. Joel wrote home:

> "The necessaries for charoset we could not obtain, so we got a brick, which rather hard to digest, reminded us by looking at it for what purpose it was intended."

The group members could not recall the appropriate animal part used to symbolize the paschal lamb on the Seder plate. Yankee ingenuity prevailed. They placed the entire cooked lamb on the table ensuring they had the right part.

Joel later recalled the experience:

> "There in the wild woods of West Virginia, away from home and friends, we consecrated and offered up to the ever-loving God of Israel prayers and sacrifice…
>
> There is no occasion in my life that gives me more pleasure and satisfaction than when I remember the celebration of Passover of 1862.

There was no lonelier Jew than a northern soldier walking the streets of a rebellious southern city with Passover approaching. Yet, the commonality of the Passover experience enabled one lonely soldier to join a Jewish Community

> "Myer Levy of Philadelphia, around Passover time was strolling through the streets of a Virginia town captured by the Federals, and noticed a little boy sitting on the steps of a house eating matzo. When he asked the boy for a piece, the child fled indoors, shouting at the top of his lungs, 'Mother! There's a damn Yankee Jew outside!' The boy's mother came out immediately and invited him to return for a Passover dinner that night."

From Bertram W. Korn American Jewry in the Civil War

Avadim Hayinu (Part 1): Brutality - Egyptian vs. Southern Slavery

This is Rabbi Kenneth Chelst continuing an exploration of parallels and contrasts between the slavery of Israelites in Egypt and the African-Americans in the South. March 14, 2023

Our history begins with

<div align="center">עֲבָדִים הָיִינוּ לְפַרְעֹה בְּמִצְרָיִם</div>

The phrase, "We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt" succinctly captures the core difference between "Egyptian" Slavery and "Southern" slavery.

The Rav interprets this idiom עֲבָדִים הָיִינוּ לְפַרְעֹה בְּמִצְרָיִם to refer to the difficult living conditions of the Israelite slaves. There they were: slaves of the Egyptian state which was headed by an unnamed Pharaoh. From the state's perspective, their individuality was submerged into a single, common pool – a faceless and nameless crowd of slaves. With thousands of slaves working on large public buildings, a taskmaster maiming or even killing a slave would suffer no consequences. And as Moses observed no one would interfere with an Egyptian beating a Hebrew slave.

In contrast, Chattel slaves have opportunities to improve their living conditions by developing a relationship and winning the favor of the slave owner, as Joseph had done in the Bible. This was likewise true of Sally Hemings, a slave of Thomas Jefferson. In fiction, Uncle Tom's relationship with his first master, Arthur Shelby, was very different than after he was sold down River to work under the brutal Simon Legree. The degree of southern brutality varied, based on the personality and values of the individual slave owner and the slaves he owned. Often slaves were the most valuable capital that Southerners owned. Indeed, these workers could be sold for more than a thousand dollars each on the slave market. This could create a financial incentive for the master and inspire him to keep the slave healthy enough to work.

One of the fears of a favored, house slave, was that the master might die and be replaced by his brutal inheritor. Equally worrisome, was that due to exigent circumstances, an owner, such as Arthur Shelby, might sell the slave down river far from his family and social group. Conversely

there was hope that the current brutality might decrease when a slave were inherited or sold to a less brutal owner. Rabbi S. R. Hirsch writes, in contrast, the hope available to the Israelites in Egypt was that a change in political leadership might lead to cancellation of harsh policies. And yet, upon the death of the Pharaoh in Egypt, the slavery continued as before.

Exodus 2:23	שמות ב':כ"ג
3) A long time after that, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites were groaning under the bondage and cried out; and their cry for help from the bondage rose up to God.	(כג) וַיְהִי בַיָּמִים הָרַבִּים הָהֵם וַיָּמָת מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם וַיֵּאָנְחוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן־הָעֲבֹדָה וַיִּזְעָקוּ וַתַּעַל שַׁוְעָתָם אֶל־הָאֱלֹקִים מִן־הָעֲבֹדָה:

Rather than the hoped for change in regime leading to reform, the Israelites saw themselves instead condemned forever to slavery. They groaned and called out, their pitch reaching a crescendo that God Himself heard and remembered His covenant.

The Rav also highlights the phrasing, "We were slaves *to Pharaoh*," and it does not say, We were "Pharaoh's slaves." Jews belonged legally to Pharaoh, but spiritually they were a free people with their own minds and independent approaches to reality. They were slaves in politico-economic sense to Pharaoh and not Pharaoh's slaves. Slavery was extrinsic not intrinsic. The Israelites had not forfeited their sense of dignity; they remained loyal to the dreams of the patriarchs.

This subtle difference in language has a parallel in modern discussion of the African-American experience. Listen carefully to current references to African-American slaves and slavery. There has been a concerted effort to replace the term "slave" with "enslaved". The argument is made that the African-American experience did not erase the humanity and dignity of those enslaved. It is the same distinction between being referred to as Pharaoh's slaves and "slaves to Pharaoh. This rephrasing was especially noticeable when I recently visited Monticello, Jefferson's home. The guide pointed to a cabin and said "This is the cabin wherein the enslaved lived."

This ends one of two explorations of the difference between chattel slavery and political slavery. The other explores the slave population's ability to maintain their cultural identity.

Avadim Hayinu (Part 2): Cultural Identity - Egyptian vs Southern Slavery

This is Rabbi Kenneth Chelst continuing an exploration of parallels and contrasts between the slavery of Israelites in Egypt and the African-Americans in the South. 2023

Our history begins with

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עֲבָדִים הָיִינוּ לְפַרְעֹה בְּמִצְרָיִם

We were Political Slaves of the Pharaoh of Egypt

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In another segment, I quoted the Rav's explanation of why political slavery was more brutal than chattel slavery. In this essay I will highlight the *advantage* of political slavery over chattel slavery.

The Mechilta states:

For four reasons Israel was worthy of redemption from Egypt:

- they did not change their names,

- they did not change their language,

- they did not speak *lashon hara* [slander; reveal their secrets], and

- not even one of them was found to be promiscuous.

All of the above behaviors were viable in political slavery under which the Israelites lived together as a large community in the land of Goshen. When slave work was completed, they returned home to their families, used their Hebrew names and language.[1] In addition, there was no natural opportunity for Egyptian task masters to seduce the wives of the Israelite slaves.

In contrast, the African slave, upon arriving on the North American continent was not in an environment that would enable the slave to stem the cultural erosion.

> One of the first acts of the slave owner was to strip away the slave's cultural identity by giving him a new name. Overseers continued to drill the new names into recent arrivals and made sure to call them "always by ye names we gave them."

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[1] The Bible also states that Egyptian masters took advantage of the diminished status of the Israelites and made them do local agriculture work. Exodus 1:14.

Moreover, the African arrival would have found it impossible to maintain his native language and pass it on to succeeding generations in this foreign land. Mastering the new language was critical for the new arrival so that he might gain status within his local plantation society. An inability to communicate in English would leave the slave feeling isolated.

Harriet Jacobs's (aka Linda Brent) autobiography, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl (1861), is the most widely-read female antebellum slave narrative. In recounting her life experiences before she was freed, Jacobs offered her contemporary readers a startlingly realistic portrayal of her sexual history while a slave. She describes her attempts at the age of fifteen to ward off the advances of her master, who was forty years her senior.

> At fifteen "My master began to whisper foul words in my ear. He peopled my young mind with unclean images, such as only a vile monster could think of. He told [me] I was his property; that I must be subject to his will in all things.

As noted in the Mechilta "not even one of Israelite was found to be promiscuous." Marriages of enslaved Blacks were not legally recognized in almost every slave state. Furthermore, marriage between slaves – where it was permitted - could provide only limited protection for the female slave. As Henry Bibb wrote in his narrative, "A poor slave's wife can never be … true to her husband contrary to the will of her master. She dare not refuse to be reduced to the state of adultery at the will of her master."

Nevertheless, slaves on large plantations often married and after the Civil War they sanctified their vows, at times en masse. Chaplain Asa S. Fiske married one hundred eighteen couples in a single hour in the Memphis District.

It was also critical that these "slave marriages" be recorded for legal reasons. For example, the recorded marriage would enable a wife to draw a pension for her husband's service in the US military.

This ends one of two explorations of the difference between chattel slavery and political slavery. The other explores the brutality of overseers in these two slave frameworks.

Avadim Hayinu (Part 3): Israelites Taken out vs. Black Experience of Staying

This is Rabbi Kenneth Chelst.

In this talk, I will contrast the post-slavery experience in Egypt and in the Southern United States.

The Haggadah posits the following:

. וְאִלּוּ לֹא הוֹצִיא הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא אֶת אֲבוֹתֵינוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם, הֲרֵי אָנוּ וּבָנֵינוּ וּבְנֵי בָנֵינוּ

<mark>מְשֻׁעְבָּדִים הָיִינוּ לְפַרְעֹה בְּמִצְרַיִם</mark>

If God had not taken our ancestors out of Egypt, we and our children, and children's children <mark>would still be enslaved by Pharaoh in Egypt.</mark>

The focus of this hypothetical is "taking our ancestors out of Egypt." God could have freed the Israelites, but might have left them in Egypt. If that were the case, generation after generation of Israelites would have been subject to the authority of the Egyptian political state. The Black experience after the Civil War illustrates what might have happened had the freed slaves remained in their geographical and social context.

All blacks became legally free with the passage of the 13th Amendment in 1865 which outlawed slavery except as punishment for a crime. Congress also passed the Freedman's Act, Reconstruction Acts, and the Civil Rights Act to protect Blacks from being forced into labor situations that were likely to leave them free in name only. Congress also placed the South under military rule.

Southern states used the exception for criminal acts as a way to work around the aforementioned Amendment. The states passed Black Codes which restricted the economic freedom of Blacks. One common clause required all Blacks to procure jobs within the first weeks of 1866 at the penalty of being declared vagrants. As vagrants, the Blacks could then be hired out arbitrarily and against their will. Worse yet, former male slave children under the age of 21 and females under the age of 18, faced mandatory apprenticeship if they did not have adequate financial wherewithal to meet their daily needs. They received no compensation for this apprenticeship,

but the owner was obligated by law to provide for the Blacks' basic needs for food, clothing,

etc.. In addition, masters had the right to inflict <mark>moderate</mark> punishment.

Fortunately, within a decade, these extreme economic restrictions were ameliorated. The severe shortage of workers due to Civil War casualties gave Blacks increased bargaining power. They used this power to negotiate sharecropper agreements or field rentals which gave them control over their workday and some control over their financial destiny. The typical sharecropper kept between one-third and one-half of his land's produce. This contrasts with the Joseph mandate of 80% of the profits to be retained by the sharecropper.

Southern Democrats goal post-slavery was to ensure that through elections, they regained control over state government. As a result, Black freedmen made only limited progress towards actual equality in their economic, political, and social status – all this despite the series of Federal Laws that had been enacted to protect the Blacks and safeguard their right to vote. The gains that were won at the end of the Civil War took a major step backwards in 1877. All federal troops were removed from the South as a result of the 1876 Compromise that gave the election to President Hayes.

The Black experience post-slavery can be depicted as the attainment of second-class status, along with bowed heads and limited true freedom. Freed blacks still bore weighty yokes and had to be careful not to walk in an overly erect manner to assure that they did not appear "uppity," a popular term of the times, meaning that these people did not know their place in Southern Society.

In sharp contrast, God summarized His accomplishments as recorded in VaYikra 26:13

I broke the bars of your yoke and made you walk erect וָאֶשְׁבֹּר מֹטֹת עֻלְּכֶם וָאוֹלֵךְ אֶתְכֶם קוֹמְמִיּוּת

Thus, the newly freed Israelites did not contend with feelings of inferiority.

eviticus 26:13	ויקרא כ״ו:י״ג
3) I יקוק am your God who brought you out from the land of the Egyptians to be their slaves no more, who ==broke the bars of your yoke and made you walk erect==.	(אֲנִי יקוק אֱלֹקֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִהְיֹת לָהֶם עֲבָדִים ==וָאֶשְׁבֹּר== ==מֹטֹת עֻלְּכֶם וָאוֹלֵךְ אֶתְכֶם קוֹמְמִיּוּת==:

Arami Oved Avi (Bimsai Ma'at): Enslaved Population Growth - Egypt vs. South

פְּרוּ וַיִּשְׁרְצ֛וּ וַיִּרְבּ֥וּ וַיַּעַצְמ֖וּ

This is Rabbi Kenneth Chelst.

In this talk, I Explore Population Growth of the Enslaved Populations in Egypt and in America's Southern States

Towards the end of the Seder, the author of the Haggadah summarizes the Exodus story with four verses, Devorim Chapter 26 verses 5-8 These were recited word-for-word by the bearer of first fruits to God's chosen place. Its recitation begins with

Deuteronomy 26:5	דברים כ״ו:ה׳-ח׳
(5) You shall then recite as follows before the Lord your God: "My father was a fugitive Aramean. He went down to Egypt with meager numbers and sojourned there; but there he became a great and very populous nation.	(ה) וְעָנִ֨יתָ וְאָמַרְתָּ֜ לִפְנֵ֣י ׀ יקוק אֱלֹקֶ֗יךָ אֲרַמִּי֙ אֹבֵ֣ד אָבִ֔י וַיֵּ֣רֶד מִצְרַ֔יְמָה וַיָּ֥גׇר שָׁ֖ם <mark>בִּמְתֵ֣י מְעָ֑ט</mark> וַֽיְהִי־שָׁ֕ם לְג֥וֹי גָּד֖וֹל <mark>עָצ֥וּם וָרָֽב</mark> :

The Haggadah expands on the meaning of the phrase meager numbers, בִּמְתֵ֣י מְעָ֑ט by citing Devorim Chapter 10 verse 22 that establishes the starting number as 70.

Deuteronomy 10:22	דברים י׳:כ״ב
(22) Your ancestors went down to Egypt seventy persons; and now the Lord your God has made you as numerous as the stars of heaven.	(כב) בְּשִׁבְעִ֣ים נֶ֔פֶשׁ יָרְד֥וּ אֲבֹתֶ֖יךָ מִצְרָ֑יְמָה וְעַתָּ֗ה שָֽׂמְךָ֙ יקוק אֱלֹקֶ֔יךָ כְּכוֹכְבֵ֥י הַשָּׁמַ֖יִם לָרֹֽב:

This population became, עָצ֥וּם וָרָֽב strong and populous. The prooftext Shemot Exodus Chapter 1 verse 7 characterizes the explosive growth:

Exodus 1:7	שמות א׳:ז׳

(7) But the Israelites were fertile and prolific; they multiplied and increased very greatly, so that the land was filled with them.	(ז) וּבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל פָּרוּ וַיִּשְׁרְצוּ וַיִּרְבּוּ וַיַּעַצְמוּ בִּמְאֹד מְאֹד וַתִּמָּלֵא הָאָרֶץ אֹתָם:

The family of 70 descendants of Jacob experienced explosive growth that frightened Pharaoh. More than one hundred years later a Pharaoh began the oppression and enslavement of their descendants. By the time of the Exodus, there were 600,000 military age males and an estimated total of more than two million Israelites. The Bible uses a multiplicity of verbs,

פָּרוּ וַיִּשְׁרְצוּ וַיִּרְבּוּ וַיַּעַצְמוּ

to convey this amazing growth. As if that were not enough, the text repeats the adverb *me'od*, saying that they increased *"me'od, me'od,"* **very** greatly." Professor Nechama Lebowitz characterizes this unusual sequence of words as a "concentrated crescendo" serving to emphasize the extraordinary population explosion. These verbs could likewise apply to the birth rate among enslaved blacks. According to the 1830 census, the slaves' birth rate averaged more than 8 children for women of childbearing age, although an estimated one slave out of five died in childhood.

The colonials imported and enslaved an estimated 400,000 Africans during the 17th and 18th centuries. The peak decade for importation was 1761 – 1770 with an average of almost 7,000 Africans per year arriving in the America. The first US census, that of 1790, reported 757,208 African Americans; twenty years later, the census in 1810 reported 1.37 million people, a number that nearly doubled the earlier account. Fifty years later, long after the slave trading was made illegal in 1808, the 1860 census counted approximately 4,000,000 slaves and almost 500,000 freemen.

The American colonies' enslaved population was unique in that it was self-sustaining, due to natural population growth, as was the case for the Israelites in Ancient Egypt. All other slave populations, however, were compelled to rely upon a steady flow of new imports to satisfy their demand for slaves. For example, in 1834, Great Britain freed their 781,000 slaves in the British West Indies, but this vast number was less than half the total of 1,665,000 who had been imported earlier.

The concluding phrase from the Torah text cited above is

וַתִּמָּלֵא הָאָרֶץ אֹתָם   **"the land became filled with them."**

Commentaries offer different interpretations of the word "***land***". Most say it referred only to the District of Goshen, but the Netziv opines that the Israelite population had expanded well beyond the boundaries of Goshen. One interesting interpretation claims that this phrase, "the land became full of them," reflects the Egyptians' perception. Wherever the Egyptians went, they saw Israelites, at the circus, bath houses, etc.

Centuries later, in America's 1860 census, enslaved blacks accounted for at least 44% of the population in each of six Southern states from South Carolina to Louisiana. In Mississippi, slaves constituted 55% of the total population and, in South Carolina, the proportion rose to 59%. Truly the slave states were filled with them.

One can well imagine the Ancient Egyptians' resentment towards the Israelite population – that threatened their nation – In contrast, slaveowners benefited financially from the growth of the enslaved population. They grew especially concerned when the enslaved population exceeded the number of whites as in Mississippi and South Carolina.

Va'yarau (Hava Nischakma): Fear of Joining Enemies - Egypt vs. South

This is Rabbi Kenneth Chelst.

In this talk, I explore the fears of the Ancient Egyptians and 19th Century Southerners that slaves might join an enemy army.

The new Pharaoh observed the large, growing Israelite population and was fearful of the size and power of this alien people. He justified the oppression and subsequent enslavement of the Israelites with

וְהָיָה כִּי תִקְרֶאנָה מִלְחָמָה וְנוֹסַף גַּם הוּא עַל שֹׂנְאֵינוּ וְנִלְחַם בָּנוּ, וְעָלָה מִן הָאָרֶץ.

So it shall be that when war comes, it [the Israelite nation] might join with our enemies, wage war against us, and go up from the Land.

But how valid was Pharaoh's concern?

To be sure, the much later history of slavery in the New World seems to support Pharaoh's fear.

Pharaoh expressed no fear of the slaves rebelling on their own. Indeed, the Bible records no acts of physical aggression on the part of the Israelite slaves to break free of slavery – One exception, Moses's actions when he interrupted the beating of an Israelite.

In the South, however, owners were fearful of a local uprising that would lead to the death of plantation families as well as other whites who managed the slave population. The rebellion goal was often to gain freedom for a group of slaves who would then escape to a non-slave area. Some of the better planned rebellions included more than one hundred slaves. However, many uprisings were stopped before any act of violence occurred because of fellow slaves who chose not to rebel and notified the authorities.

The Nat Turner Rebellion of 1831was the exception that spread fear throughout the South. It gained notoriety with the publication of *Confessions of Nat Turner*. During the years just prior to the Civil War, the fear of local insurrection reached a level bordering on paranoia. Women in Georgia "would not dare to go to sleep without one or two pistols under their pillows." In Mississippi in the late 1850s, the increasing number of slaves "was now felt to be so alarmingly great that many people never lay down at night without fears that their throats might be cut in this sleep." Nonetheless, there was never any realistic fear that the slaves would gather a large enough group to pose a threat to Southern society.

However, the roles played by African Americans in the Civil War gave credence to Pharaoh's concerns so many millennium before. In the nineteenth century, one hundred and eighty thousand Blacks joined the Union Army – initially for logistics support as stated at the end of the Emancipation Proclamation. However, as the war proceeded, Black soldiers saw action in a number of famous battles and earned respect in the North. In addition, hundreds of thousands of slaves left their homes and escaped slavery when the Union Army approached their plantations. Many of these slaves became informants, giving directions to their owners' hidden valuables.

Furthermore, the history of the Haitian fight for freedom and independence from France presents an even more comprehensive example of slaves joining one side or the other. On August 21, 1791, tens of thousands of slaves in the northern section of Haiti rebelled against the French and joined with attacking Spanish forces to overwhelm the French-controlled northern part of the island.

This scenario of joining the enemy was repeated soon after the French Revolution, when France was committed to end slavery. Toussaint L'Ouverture moved to the side of France and together they drove the Spanish out of Santo Domingo and freed the slaves in the Spanish half of that island.

Twice, the Haitian Revolution confirmed Pharaoh's fears of long before, "that if a war will occur, it [the Israelites], too might join our enemies, wage war against us, and go up from the land."

Va'nitzak El Hashem: Changes in Egyptian vs. US Leadership

This is Rabbi Kenneth Chelst

In this presentation, I explore the impact of changes in administration on public policy with regard to the oppression of Israelites and African Americans

The author of the Haggadah provides prooftext for the phrase "and they cried out to the Lord, the god of their forefathers. The author cites Exodus 2:23

(לז) וַנִּצְעַק אֶל יְהֹוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹתֵינוּ - כְּמָה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: וַיְהִי בַיָּמִים הָרַבִּים הָהֵם וַיָּמָת מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם, וַיֵּאָנְחוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן הָעֲבוֹדָה וַיִּזְעָקוּ, וַתַּעַל שַׁוְעָתָם אֶל הָאֱלֹהִים מִן הָעֲבֹדָה

Exodus 2:23-25	שמות ב':כ"ג-כ"ה
23) A long time after that, the king of Egypt died. The Israelites were groaning under the bondage and cried out; and their cry for help from the bondage rose up to God.	(כג) וַיְהִי בַיָּמִים הָרַבִּים הָהֵם וַיָּמָת מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם וַיֵּאָנְחוּ בְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן־הָעֲבֹדָה וַיִּזְעָקוּ וַתַּעַל שַׁוְעָתָם אֶל־הָאֱלֹקִים מִן־הָעֲבֹדָה:

Why did the King of Egypt's death trigger more substantial cries such that God heard and responded, as opposed to when they had cried out previously? Rav S. Hirsch explained that political slaves' hope for a better future was linked to changes in leadership. Just as slavery was initiated with the rise of a new King over Egypt, perhaps this leadership change would reverse the Egyptian policy towards slavery as an institution. However, when that did not happen, the Israelites sensed that their enslavement had been institutionalized into Egyptian society and was not subject to changes in administration for many generations to come.

The social, economic, and political status of African Americans, on the other hand, changed dramatically with each change in Presidential administration. During his last year, Lincoln had been working with Congress to pass legislation that would use land that had been confiscated

during the Civil War to provide an economic base that would allow up to 40 acres to be distributed to each freed African-American. However, Vice President Andrew Johnson, a southern Democrat, became President in April 1865 with the assassination of Lincoln. President Johnson eliminated the use of confiscated land when he issued a pardon to the Southern States that included the return of confiscated property. This included even the land that been already distributed to former slaves. In addition, during Johnson's administration, the Ku Klux Klan was founded and spread terror, as few state governments would allocate resources to protect blacks. When Ulysses S. Grant took office, in 1869, he and the Radical Republican congress were appalled by the declining status and increasing intimidation of African Americans. He worked with Congress to pass the KKK Act of 1871; this outlawed all forms of political intimidation. Grant also sent Federal troops to locations across the South to enforce this act and protect freedmen's rights.

In 1876, **Rutherford B. Hayes** was selected by Congress to be President in a compromise that called for the withdrawal of federal soldiers throughout the South. Through intimidation and discriminatory voting rules, Southern Democrats took control of all state legislatures, ending the Era of Reconstruction.