

**PESACH DURING TIMES OF PERIL
SHABBAT HAGAGOL 5780**

Blood libels

Shulchan Aruch

מצוה לחזור^ט אחר יין אדום (אם אין הלבן משובח ממנו) (טור):

It is a mitzvah to find red one, unless the white is better.

**Taz, Rav David Halevi Sigel 17th century commentator on the
Shulchan Aruch**

אחר יין אדום. דכתיב אל תרא יין כי יתאדם ש"מ שהאדמומי' הוא מעלה והקפיד הטו' כן בד' כוסות בזה ולא בקידוש בסי' ער"ב דיש עוד רמז לאדום זכר לדם שהי' פרעה שוחט בני ישראל והאידינא נמנעו מליקח יין אדום מפני עלילות שקרים בעו"ה:

After red wine. As it says, Don't look at wine, though it is red (we see it is red), so we see that its redness is an asset and the Tur insists on red here but not for kiddush, for there is another hint to red to remember the blood, when Paro killed the Children of Israel. And now we refrain from taking red wine because of the false libels due to our sins.

Baer Hetev on Shulchan Aruch

באר היטב אורח חיים סימן תעב

ובמקומות שמצויים לעלול עלילות שקרים נמנעו מליקח יין אדום. ט"ז

In places where they are likely to libel falsely, we refrain from taking red wine. Taz

Same in Mishneh Berura

Kitzur Shulchan Aruch, Rabbi Shlomo Ganzfried, 19th cent.

קיצור שולחן ערוך סימן קיח

ובמדינות שהאומות טפשים וסכלים להעליל עלילות שקרים נמנעו מליקח יין אדום לפסח ,
In countries that the stupid and foolish nations slander false libels, we refrain from taking red wine for Pesach.

Rabbi Shneiur Zalman of Liadi, d. 1815 (founder of Chabad, Tanya)

Shulchan Aruch Harav

שולחן ערוך הרב אורח חיים סימן תעב

ועכשיו שמצוים לעלול עלילות שקרים נמנעו מליקח יין אדום לפסח:

Now that it is common to libel false libels, we refrain from taking red wine.

The Chofetz Chaim Theory

חשוקי חמד בכורות דף לה עמוד א

וידוע שרבנו הגדול אלחנן וסרמן הי"ד סיפר בשם החפץ חיים שכל עלילות דם מדור דור היו בעון הנורא של שחיטת גדי עזים והטבלתו בדם ואמירתם ליעקב אבינו הכר נא, ולכן בושתם היתה גדולה מאד כי ראו שטעו בדין.

It is known that our great Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman, may his blood be avenged, told in the name of the Chofetz Chaim that all blood libels in every generation were in the sin of the slaughter of the goat and dipping it in blood and saying to Jacob Do you recognize to whom is this coat? ...

Pesach and Black Plague

The first massacres directly related to the plague took place in April 1348 in [Toulon, Provence](#) where the Jewish quarter was sacked, and forty Jews were murdered in their homes; the next occurred in [Barcelona](#).^[6] In 1349, massacres and persecution spread across Europe, including the [Erfurt massacre](#), the [Basel massacre](#), massacres in [Aragon](#), and [Flanders](#).^{[7][8]} 2,000 Jews were burnt alive on 14 February 1349 in the "Valentine's Day" [Strasbourg massacre](#), where the plague had not yet affected the city. While the ashes smouldered, Christian residents of Strasbourg sifted through and collected the valuable possessions of Jews not burnt by the fires.^{[9][10]} Many hundreds of Jewish communities were destroyed in this period. Within the 510 Jewish communities destroyed in this period, some members killed themselves to avoid the persecutions.^[11] In the spring of 1349 the Jewish community in [Frankfurt am Main](#) was annihilated. This was followed by the destruction of Jewish communities in [Mainz](#) and [Cologne](#). The 3,000 strong Jewish population of Mainz initially defended themselves and managed to hold off the Christian attackers. But the Christians managed to overwhelm the Jewish [ghetto](#) in the end and killed all of its Jews.^[9]

Martin Blaser, an infectious-diseases physician at Vanderbilt University, has a different idea about how the Jews may have been saved. He thinks that the removal each spring of bread and grain from Israelite homes may have protected them from a rat-borne scourge: *Yersinia pestis*, the bacterial cause of the plague infamous in medieval Europe as the black death.

Maaseh Nissim, self defense

In 1349, he begins, when many non-Jews were dying of the plague while Jews generally were not, the former falsely accused the latter of having poisoned the wells, and made plans to kill the Jews on the tenth of Adar. When the Jews appealed to the bishop for help, he promised that no harm would befall them. However, after an omen had revealed that the decree was inescapable, he refused to intervene in any way. Knowing they would have to die anyway, the Jews decided to revenge themselves on their tormentors. Early one morning when the community's council of twelve *parnasim* were summoned to the town hall to hear the Jews sentenced to death, they arrived concealing knives under their overcoats, locked the doors, and killed the members of the city council to a man. Meanwhile, the rest of the community was fighting the burghers in the streets while the Jewish women set fire to the four corners of the town. In the end, of course, none of this could avert their fate, and nearly all of them died.⁹

Too bad most people consider it wishful thinking...

Jews on Passover in the Civil War

Jewish virtual library

More problematic was the situation of Union soldiers who, unable to form their own seders, were forced to "fraternize" with local Jews. Myer Levy of Philadelphia, for example, was in a Virginia town one Passover late in the war when he saw a young boy sitting on his front steps eating a piece of Matzah. According to Korn, when Levy "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 invited Levy to seder that night. One wonders how the Virginian family and the Yankee soldier each interpreted the hagadah portions describing the evils of bondage. On the eve of the fifth day of Passover (April 14), 1865, Abraham Lincoln was shot and died of his wounds in the early morning of April 15th, which had already been scheduled as a national day of prayer to mark the end of the Civil War. Jews across the land were gathering in synagogues to give thanks. When news of Lincoln's death arrived, Korn notes, the synagogue altars were quickly draped in black and, instead of Passover melodies, the congregations chanted [Yom Kippur](#) hymns. Rabbis set aside their sermons and wept openly at their pulpits, as did their congregants. Lincoln had been protective of American Jewry, overturning General Grant's infamous [General Order #11](#) expelling Jews from the Department of the Tennessee and supporting legislation allowing Jewish chaplains to serve in the military. The Jewish Record drew the analogy between Lincoln not having lived to see the reconciliation of North and South and Moses dying on Mount Pisgah before he saw the Israelites enter the Promised Land.

Warsaw Ghetto Seder



Lodz Ghetto 1943, in hiding

Piatetzner Rebbe, Eish Kodesh

אבל בעת צרה גדולה ויצום אל בני צוה בגזרה שיפעלו הנהגה של רחמים, ואז פסק השעבוד ושוב התחילו גם במצרים לאמור שירות ותשבחות לד', וכן להכין א"ע לשירה ולזמרה לכשיגאלם, וזה וירא ישראל את היד הגדולה אשר עשה ד' במצרים, עוד במצרים ראו ישועת ד', אז ישיר ע"ש מחשבה, משה ובנ"י וכו', שפעלו גם על דורות
הרעות לעמוד ויזמרו אלך ויבא זמ זמל זיה זטווי מווי

In a time of great distress, G-d commanded to the Children of Israel that they should live through rachamim and at that point the slavery was over and in Egypt they began to sing songs and to prepare for the songs when they would be redeemed.. And also for future generations to do the same

לבד עיקרית, אבל מש"ר התפלל זכור לאברהם וכו' יהצדיקים מצטערים בקבר כנ"ל גם על גופי ישראל, והתפלל מש"ר שגם לגופם יחי' ד' ויושיעם, וזה שאומרים טובתי בל עליך לקדושים אשר בארץ המה, לא לנשמותיהם לבד שהם במרום רק גם אשר בארץ כי מצטערים בקבר על יסורי הגוף של ישראל ג"כ, וגם בענינים אלו תושיענו ואז נוכל לעבדהו ית' מתוך הרחבה אמן כי"ר

The righteous suffer in the grave about Israel and G-d prayed to help Avraham and Yitzchak and Yaakov and with these things too (nowadays?) save us and we can worship you in luxury...

Tzror Hamor

צרור המור שמות פרשת בא

ולא הזכיר בכאן מרורים כי פסח דורות אין מצותו במרורים. לפי שהמרור הוא זכר לוימררו את חייהם. כי רצה שהם שאע"פ שהיו בשמחה גודלה כמי שיוצא מבית השביה. שיזכרו ימי העוני. בענין שלא יבואו לחטוא כאומרם וגילו ברעדה.

וכן הטעם שני צוה במרור להודיענו כי שומר מצוה לא ידע דבר רע. וידוע כי במצרים היו מתים בלי סבה. וכן באו עליהם חלאים רעים. ולכן הבטיחם והסיר ה' ממך כל חולי. ועכשיו צוה השם שיאכלו מרורים ועשבים מרים מטובלים בחומץ בתחלת אכילתם והם רעבים ועיפים. ואולי יאמרו כי זה יזיק להם. כי במצרים היו מתים בלי סבה. כ"ש עכשיו שההיזק בעין. לזה צוה התורה באכילת מרור. להודיע שלא יגיע לו נזק באכילת אלו הדברים. אחר שעושה לשם מצוה. ושומר מצוה לא ידע דבר רע.

ובזאת הפרשה לא הזכיר מרורים אלא מצה. לפי שלדורות לא היו צריכין מרור שהוא רמז לגלות. אלא מצה שזה סימן גאולה. ולפי שזאת פרשה ראשונה של תפילין נאמר בה והיה לך לאות על ירך וגומר. ולפי שזאת המצוה היא לדורות. אמר ושמרת את החוקה הזאת של פסח משנה לשנה

(in this section) it did not mention maror for in the future the mitzvah will not be with maror because we won't need moror which is an allusion to the galut, exile.

Why is there maror? To remember even in joy our days of sorrow and to know that if you follow the torah you will know no harm for in Egypt they would die for no reason but

now we can eat this harmful food and no harm will come because all the plagues G-d put on Egypt he will not put on us...

Where does the Haggadah show signs of the stress of Galut, Exile? Ha Lachma anya

הָא לַחֲמַא עֲנִיָא דִּי אָכְלוּ אַבְהֵתְנָא בְּאַרְעָא דְמִצְרַיִם. כָּל דְכָפִין יִיתִי וְיִיכַל, כָּל דְצָרִיךְ יִיתִי וְיִפְסַח. הַשְּׁתָא הָכָא, לְשָׁנָה הַבְּאָה בְּאַרְעָא דְיִשְׂרָאֵל. הַשְּׁתָא עַבְדֵּי, לְשָׁנָה הַבְּאָה בְּנֵי חוֹרֵין.

This is the bread of destitution that our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. Anyone who is famished should come and eat, anyone who is in need should come and partake of the Pesach sacrifice. Now we are here, next year we will be in the land of Israel; this year we are slaves, next year we will be free people.

Shfoch hamatcha al hagoyim

שִׁפְךָ חֲמַתְךָ אֶל-הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר לֹא יָדְעוּךָ וְעַל-מַמְלָכוֹת אֲשֶׁר בְּשִׁמְךָ לֹא קָרְאוּ. כִּי אָכַל אֶת-יַעֲקֹב וְאֶת-נְוֵהוּ הִשְׁמָו.
'שִׁפְךָ-עֲלֵיהֶם זַעֲמֶךָ וְחָרוֹן אַפֶּךָ יִשְׁיגֵם. תִּרְדֹּף בָּאָף וְתִשְׁמִידֵם מִתַּחַת שָׁמַי הַ

Pour your wrath upon the nations that did not know You and upon the kingdoms that did not call upon Your Name! Since they have consumed Ya'akov and laid waste his habitation (Psalms 79:6-7). Pour out Your fury upon them and the fierceness of Your anger shall reach them (Psalms 69:25)! You shall pursue them with anger and eradicate them from under the skies of the Lord (Lamentations 3:66).

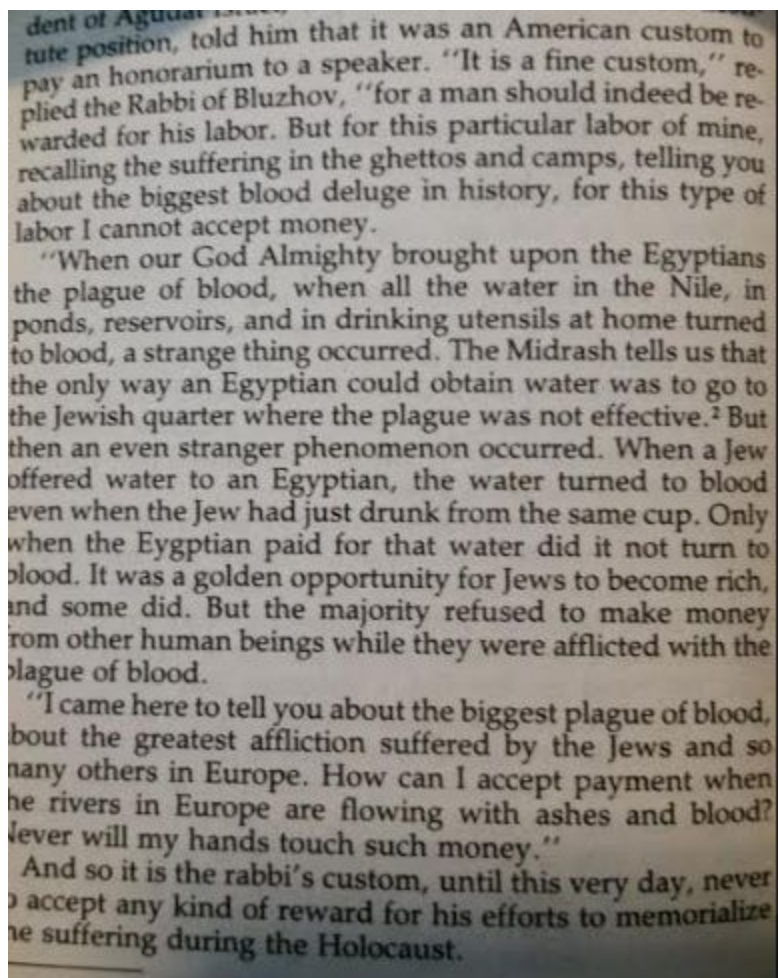
I read a hagadah written by hand and he didn't mention the nazis in this section!

Hagadah of Rav Kasher: Some say we open the door to check if any informers lurk outside who would tell the authorities what we are saying.

My dad a'h said that this is like a valve to release all the anger at the gentiles just once a year.

Yafa Eliach book, Hasidic Tales of the Holocaust

Tales from the Blushuver. Not a dime



dent of Agudat...
tute position, told him that it was an American custom to pay an honorarium to a speaker. "It is a fine custom," replied the Rabbi of Bluzhov, "for a man should indeed be rewarded for his labor. But for this particular labor of mine, recalling the suffering in the ghettos and camps, telling you about the biggest blood deluge in history, for this type of labor I cannot accept money.

"When our God Almighty brought upon the Egyptians the plague of blood, when all the water in the Nile, in ponds, reservoirs, and in drinking utensils at home turned to blood, a strange thing occurred. The Midrash tells us that the only way an Egyptian could obtain water was to go to the Jewish quarter where the plague was not effective.² But then an even stranger phenomenon occurred. When a Jew offered water to an Egyptian, the water turned to blood even when the Jew had just drunk from the same cup. Only when the Egyptian paid for that water did it not turn to blood. It was a golden opportunity for Jews to become rich, and some did. But the majority refused to make money from other human beings while they were afflicted with the plague of blood.

"I came here to tell you about the biggest plague of blood, about the greatest affliction suffered by the Jews and so many others in Europe. How can I accept payment when the rivers in Europe are flowing with ashes and blood? Never will my hands touch such money."

And so it is the rabbi's custom, until this very day, never to accept any kind of reward for his efforts to memorialize the suffering during the Holocaust.

rabbi's questions. Rabbi Israel Spira continued.

"For on all other nights we eat either bread or matzah, but tonight only matzah. Bread is leavened; it has height. Matzah is unleavened and is totally flat. During all our previous sufferings, during all our previous nights in exile, we Jews had bread and matzah. We had moments of bread, of creativity, and light, and moments of matzah, of suffering and despair. But tonight, the night of the Holocaust, we experience our greatest suffering. We have reached the depths of the abyss, the nadir of humiliation. Tonight we have only matzah, we have no moments of relief, not a moment of respite for our humiliated spirits. . . . But do not despair, my young friends."

The rabbi continued in a forceful voice filled with faith.

"For this is also the beginning of our redemption. We are slaves who served Pharaoh in Egypt. Slaves in Hebrew are *avadim*; the Hebrew letters of the word *avadim* form an acronym for the Hebrew phrase: David, the son of Jesse, your servant, your Messiah.³ Thus, even in our state of slavery we find intimations of our eventual freedom through the coming of the Messiah.

"We who are witnessing the darkest night in history, the lowest moment of civilization, will also witness the great light of redemption, for before the great light there will be a long night, as was promised by our Prophets. 'But it shall come to pass, that at evening time there shall be light,' and 'The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.'³ It was to us, my dear children, that our prophets have spoken, to us who dwell in the shadow of death, to us who will live to witness the great light of redemption."

The Seder concluded. Somewhere above, the silvery glow of the moon was dimmed by dark clouds. The Rabbi of Bluzhov kissed each child on the forehead and reassured them that the darkest night of mankind would be followed by the brightest of all days.

As the children returned to their barracks, slaves of a modern Pharaoh amidst a desert of mankind, the

The seder at Bergen Belson

Rituals for a time of plague

Abraham Yagel, a sixteenth-century physician, mentions the story of Aharon and the *ketoret* and supports the recitation of *ma'aseh ketoret* in times of plague.^[9] He also cites Rabbi Judah Muscato who adds that by delving into the *ketoret*, the infestation will stop by natural means and the air will be purified.^[10] The Ari z"l likewise recommends the recitation of *pitum ha-ketoret* in times of plague.^[11] Even in his primarily medical

treatise published in 1631, Abraham Catalano mentions the value of the recitation of the *ketoret*. In the early twentieth century, David Macht performed experiments which identified antiseptic properties of the ingredients of the *ketoret*.^[12] Indeed, he penned an entire volume dedicated to identifying the exact ingredients of the Temple incense.^[13]

The *Pitum ha-Ketoret* of the Italian Rabbinate is thus simply the perpetuation of a longstanding tradition, tracing its origins back to the Torah itself, of invoking the *ketoret* as a form of protection against plague or epidemic diseases. This hopefully gives us not only an historical appreciation of this prayer, which has been part of our history for centuries, but also an appreciation of the scientific advances that have led to our collective amnesia of its significance.^[14]

Tradition Spring 2020, Dr. Rabbi Eddie Reichman