



Folkways
RECORDS
N.Y.



Hagadah

RECORDED IN ISRAEL
IN A YEMENITE HOME
PASSOVER 1953 BY SAM ESKIN
Notes by Theodore Gaster FW 8921



קרלן



הוקלט
בישראל
בבית תימני
פסח תרי"ג

DAVID KURLAN



M
1851
Y44
1957

MUSIC LP

FOLKWAYS FW 8921

Hagadah

Notes by Theodore Gaster

Library of Congress Catalogue Card No. R 57-711
©1957 FOLKWAYS RECORDS AND SERVICE CORP.
701 SEVENTH AVE., N.Y.C., U.S.A.

FOLKWAYS FW 8921

RECORDED IN ISRAEL
IN A YEMENITE HOME
PASSOVER 1953 BY SAM ESKIN

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

Hagadah

RECORDED IN ISRAEL
IN A YEMENITE HOME
PASSOVER 1953 BY SAM ESKIN

Notes by Theodore Gaster

FW 8921

M
1851
Y44
1957

MUSIC LP

YEMENITE PASSOVER SERVICE

by Sam Eskin

The ancient people of Israel saw the birth of several great religions. As with the others, that of the Hebrews saw the development of various rituals which at some point became formalized and from then on were observed more or less in the same formal manner.

The Yemenite Passover service is one of these.

Since I was in Jerusalem during the Passover celebration in 1955, arrangements were made to record this particular family group as the ceremony was passed on to them through unremembered generations. The recording was made in the home of this family. They lived in the section of Jerusalem occupied by the very religious Jews, not far from the Jordan border.

It was hard to find at night, inaccessible by car, and in that section of town there were no sidewalks or surfaced pavements. A small bare room furnished only with chairs and a table was the setting for this Yemenite Passover service.

The recording was done by Sam Eskin in Jerusalem, Passover 1955
The cover and Hebrew script in the notes by David Kurlan
The idea for the layout of this Hagadah was by Theodor Gaster
Mastered by Peter Bartok
Production director, Moses Asch.

Introduction and Notes by Theodor H. Gaster

• ALL over the world, on the eve of the festival of Passover, Jewish families gather in their homes to retell the story of how their forefathers were delivered from the bondage of Egypt. The recital is known as the Haggadah, which is the Hebrew word for Narrative. It is based on the account given in the Book of Exodus, but -- in accordance with a traditional precept that "whoever enlarges on the tale is to be commended" -- the Biblical text is embellished and rounded out by fanciful legends and comments and by the chanting of psalms, hymns and even secular folk-songs. Although many of these accretions have long since acquired universal currency, there are others which still retain a strictly local character and vary from place to place.

This recording presents selections from the form of the Haggadah current among the Yemenite Jews now living in Jerusalem.

• YEMEN ("Southland") is the Hebrew name for the southwestern portion of Arabia, and the Yemenite Jews are believed to be the oldest Jewish community in the world, their ancestors having settled in the area as early as the second century C.E. They are distinguished by their extreme religious conservatism and their almost medieval cast of life. Living in the midst of fanatical Moslem sects, they were subjected to constant persecution and even as late as 1947 enjoyed no full civil rights. Their houses had to be built lower than those of their Moslem neighbors and they were not allowed to ride camels or any other beasts lest they might thus be able to look down upon a Moslem traveling on foot! Most of them earned precarious livelihoods as artisans; their skill as smiths and weavers is well known.

At the end of the nineteenth century, many Yemenite Jews migrated to Palestine, where they established a series of agricultural colonies and also plied their crafts in the larger cities. Following the creation of the State of Israel, the bulk of those still remaining in Arabia were flown en masse to the Holy Land in an operation (sponsored by the American Joint Distribution Committee) romantically known as "Flying Carpet," and they now constitute a significant Oriental element of the diversified Israeli population.

בְּחַר בָּנוּ וַיַּגְדֵּלנוּ.
 רָצָה בָנוּ וַיַּפְאֲרֵנוּ.
 תְּרוּמָה הִבְדֵּלנוּ מִכָּל עַם
 אֶרֶץ חֲמֻדָּה הִנְחִיל אוֹתָנוּ
 קָדַשׁ אֶת שְׁמוֹ בְּעוֹלָם כָּל
 בְּגִלְל אָבוֹת שָׁעֲשׂוּ אֶת רְצוֹנוֹ
 גְּבוּרֹת עָשָׂה לְמַעֲנֵהוּ
 וְאֵין חֶקֶר לִנְפִלְאוֹתָיו
 עַד כְּרוֹשִׁים אוֹתָנוּ קָדָא
 כָּרָם חֲמֻדָּה וְנִטְעַ שְׁעִשׂוּעִים
 וַיִּקְרָאם סִגְלָה לְשִׁמּוֹ
 וְרֵאשִׁית לְקַחָם מִכָּל גּוֹי הָאֲרָצוֹת
 שֶׁהֵם מְשׁוּלִים בְּצִבְאָ מְרוֹם
 וּמְכֻנָּנִים כְּלוֹכֵי רִקִּיעַ
 זֵיו פְּכִיָּהִם כְּזֵיו הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ
 וּמֵרָאָה דְּמוּתָם כְּמֵלָאכִי שְׂרֵת

הוֹדִיעַ
 כִּי בּוֹ הוֹצִיא ה' אֶת עַבְדּוֹ מִמִּצְרַיִם
 מִכּוּר הַבְּרָזֵל אוֹתָנוּ מִלֵּט

הוֹדִיעַ
 כִּי בּוֹ עָשָׂה ה' גְּבוּרֹת לְאוֹהֲבָיו
 וְנִפְלְאוֹת רַבּוֹת לְבָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

וְכוֹ, וְכוֹ

קידוש The proceedings open with the chanting in unison of the Kiddush or Sanctification of the Festival, which consists in a Blessing over Wine and an acknowledgment of God's bounty in choosing Israel from all peoples, hallowing it with His commandments, granting it festive seasons for rejoicing and, in particular, the present festival of the Passover.

The Yemenite ritual expands the traditional formula into a lengthy chant, recorded already in the liturgy drawn up by the illustrious Saadya Gaon (892-942) and by Maimonides (1135-1204):

He chose us and made us great,
favoured us and made us glorious.

He set us apart from all peoples as a portion claimed
for Himself;
He gave us as our heritage a delightful land.

On account of our fathers who did His will
He evinced His holiness throughout the world.

He wrought mighty deeds for His own sake,
and His wonders are past searching out.

He called us a congregation of saints,
a 'pleasant vineyard',⁽¹⁾ a 'plant of delights'.⁽²⁾

He called our fathers His 'peculiar treasure' ⁽³⁾
and claimed them as the firstfruit of all earth's peoples.

They were likened to the host of heaven
and stablished (innumerable) like the stars of the firmament.

They were exalted in the midst of the world
and raised to honor above all peoples.

Radiant they were as the sunlight
and in outward seeming like the ministering angels.

Moreover, O Lord our God, Thou has given us in love set times for rejoicing, festivals and seasonal feasts for gladness -- even this Feast of Unleavened Bread, this Season of our Liberation, a remembrance of the Going Forth from Egypt,

to make known
that thereon the Lord brought out His servants from Egypt
and rescued us from the 'iron furnace';⁽⁴⁾

to make known
that thereon the Lord wrought mighty deeds for them that loved Him
and manifold wonders for His beloved children,
 etc., etc.

1) Cp. Isa. 27:2

2) Isa. 5:7

3) Ex. 19:5; Deut. 7:6; 14:2

4) Deut. 4:20; I Kings 8:51; Jer. 11:4

הָאָא לְהוֹכִיָּא
 chant together:

The celebrant then points to the unleavened bread, and all

IN HASTE went we forth out of Egypt.
Behold, the lowly bread which our fathers ate
when they went forth out of Egypt. Let all who
are hungry come and eat, all who are in need
of a paschal meal come and partake. This

year, here; in the year to come, in the Land of Israel. This year, slaves; in the year to come, free men.

The initial words, In haste went we forth out of Egypt are omitted in the form of the Haggadah current in America and in Western Europe, but they likewise appear in the Italian and Provencal versions and in that drawn up by Maimonides.

The rest of the formula is recited in Aramaic rather than in Hebrew. This is curiously explained in Jewish legend. Demons, it is said, understand Hebrew but not Aramaic. Hence, by reciting the words in the latter tongue, precaution is taken against their accepting the open invitation!

וְהָיָה בְּעֵת הַזֶּה

The service continues with the famous Four Questions, enumerating the differences between the paschal meal and a normal dinner and seeking explanations of them. The subsequent narrative is taken to supply the answers.

The Questions are then translated -- as is most of the ensuing Haggadah -- into Arabic, which is (or was) the vernacular of the Yemenite Jews. The Arabic rendering, however, is in the nature of a paraphrase rather than a literal reproduction of the Hebrew:

ALL of the difference which obtains tonight is designed to point up the fact that God freed us from under the hand of the Egyptians--a freedom which we could not accomplish for ourselves inasmuch as we were enslaved to Pharaoh. When, on account of His Covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, God purposed to free the people from Egypt, he announced the glad tidings to them through our master Moses. . . . Even so will He eventually announce similar glad tidings through the scion of our master David, who will bring us forth from among the nations, from bondage to freedom, even as Scripture foretells (cf. Ezekiel 34:13),

וְהָיָה בְּעֵת הַזֶּה

In reply to the Four Questions, the narrative of the Exodus is then recited: Slaves we were unto Pharaoh in Egypt . . . but the Lord our God brought us thence with a strong hand and an outstretched arm. The narrative is interspersed with rabbinic comments and anecdotes relating to the reason for reciting the story at night, the various types of persons (viz. the wise, wicked, simple and infant) who might pose the questions to which it gives the answers, and the precise calculation of the number of plagues visited upon the Egyptians. When it reaches the traditional words (based on Exodus 12:12), I will pass through the land of Egypt this night -- I and no angel -- and smite all the firstborn -- I and no seraph -- and against all the gods of Egypt will I wreak judgment -- I and no envoy; I am the Lord -- I am He and none other, the following legend (mentioned already in the medieval French Mahzor Vitry, in the liturgies of Saadya and Amram, but dropped from the usual version of the Haggadah) is inserted:

THUS say our sages (be their memory for a blessing): When the Holy One, blessed be He, went down against the Egyptians in Egypt, nine million angels went down with Him; some of them angels of fire, some of them angels of

אמרו רז"ל:

כשירר הקב"ה על המצרים במצרים,
ירדו עמו תשעה אלפי רבבות;
מהם מלאכי אש; מהם מלאכי ברד;
מהם מלאכי רתת; ומהם מלאכי זיע;
ומהם מלאכי חלחלה. אמרו לפניו ויש"ע
והלא מלך בן"ד שבראת בעולמך כשהוא
יורד למלחמה שריו ועבדיו מקיפין
בכבודו: ואתה מלך מלכי המלכים
הקב"ה דיין עלינו שאנו עבדיך (והם
בני בריתך) נרד ונעשה עמם מלחמה:
אמר להם אין דעתי מתקררת עד שארד
אני בכבודי, אני כגדולתי, אני בקדושת
אני ה' אני הוא ולא אחר

hail; some of them angels of trembling; some of them angels of quaking; some of them angels of quailing. They said unto Him: 'Master of the World, when a mortal king goes down to battle, his courtiers and servants surround him lest harm befall him. Now, Thou art the King of Kings and Thou knowest full well that we are Thy servants. Let us, then, go down and wreak vengeance on this people.' But the Holy One replied: 'I will have no peace of mind until I Myself go down in My glory, I Myself in My grandeur, I Myself in My holiness. I am the Lord, I am He, and none other.'

וְעַתָּה NOW follows the famous Litany of Wonders -- a cumulative poem reciting the successive benefits conferred by God upon Israel in connection with the Exodus. Each verse ends in the ringing refrain Dayyenū, "Alone 'twould have sufficed us!" chanted as a response by the company, e.g.

If He had cleft the sea for us,
nor led us past dryshod,
DAYYENŪ !

If He had let us pass dryshod,
nor sunk our foes therein,
DAYYENŪ !

If He had led us to the Mount,
nor given us the Law,
DAYYENŪ !

וְעַתָּה THE company then proceeds to intone the Hallel, or Psalms of Praise (Ps. 113-118) which are recited on all new moons and festivals. The Yemenite Jews associate with this recital a number of special customs and traditions:

(a) In chanting the One Hundred and Thirteenth Psalm, they repeat the initial word Hallelujah at the end of each phrase, in the manner of negro spirituals;

(b) The verse, The stone which the builders rejected is become the head stone of the corner (Ps. 118:22) is taken to refer to Abraham or, alternately, to the Law of God which was indeed engraven on tablets of stone;

(c) In chanting the words, Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord (Ps. 118:26), a slight pause is made after cometh because -- say the sages -- when a righteous man departs this world, the ministering angels exclaim, Blessed be he that cometh, and the Holy Spirit itself completes the sentence, In the name of the Lord.

וְעַתָּה THE Hallel is followed by the chanting in chorus of the One Hundred and Thirty-sixth Psalm, each verse of which ends in the refrain, For His mercy endureth for ever (Hebrew: Kî le-ʿolam hasdô).

נִשְׁמַת כָּל-חַיִּי THE selections from the Psalms are rounded out by the chanting of a hymn entitled -- from its opening words -- Nishmat Kôl Hai ("The breath of all living"):

The breath of all living shall bless Thy name,
O Lord our God, and the spirit of all flesh
shall glorify Thy memorial alway. From everlasting
unto everlasting Thou art God, and beside
Thee have we no king, redeemer or savior
none to deliver and none to rescue, none to sustain
and none to show pity in all times of trouble
and stress ... God of the first and God of the last ...
Who rouseth them that sleep and waketh
them that slumber, giveth speech to the dumb,
looseth the bounden, stayeth the falling, up-
raiseth the bowed ...

This doxology is believed to be the "Benediction over Song" mentioned in the Mishnah (Pesahim, 10.7) as having been recited in ancient times immediately after the Hallel in the service for the Eve of Passover. It likewise concludes the recital of extracts from the Psalms (Pesuqê dē-Zimrâ) in the morning devotions of sabbaths and festivals, and is attributed by some authorities to the illustrious Simeon ben Shetaḥ, president of the Sanhedrin in the time of Alexander Jannaeus (first century B.C.E.).

שִׁיר הַשְּׁרִיר IT IS an ancient Jewish custom to read the Song of Songs during Passover, the reason being that this Biblical idyll is traditionally interpreted as an allegory of the love between God and Israel, manifested especially in the Exodus from Egypt and in the subsequent conclusion of the Covenant at Mount Sinai.

In keeping with this tradition, our recording presents the opening verses of the Song in the characteristic Yemenite form of cantillation:

Though he kiss me with the kisses of his mouth,
yet is thy love better than wine!
Thine ointments are of goodly savor;
thy very name is as ointment poured forth;
therefore do maidens love thee.
Draw me; we will run after thee.
E'en though the king were to bring me to his chambers,
'tis in thee that we would exult and rejoice;
we would value thy love above all wine;
rightly do they love thee!

אִיוֹמָה הַחֹשֶׁה The Haggadah is usually followed by the singing of secular folksongs. Those which are familiar to Western Jews (e.g. Ehad Mî Yode'a, "Who knows one?" and Had Gadyâ, "Only One Kid") are, however, unknown to their Yemenite brethren, being adaptations of European chants seemingly no older than the fifteenth century. The Yemenites, like other Oriental communities, have their own repertoire. The specimen here presented is drawn from the composi-

tions of their poet laureate, Salim ben Joseph of Shebez, who lived in the latter part of the seventeenth century. Entitled (from its opening words) Ayyumah hemshî, it is an impassioned plea for the restoration of Israel from that 'slough of despond' with which the chronically persecuted Jews of Yemen were especially familiar:

O Israel, that wast erst as bannered hosts, ⁽¹⁾
 Draw out thy legions' banners from the slough!
 Seek thou thy Lover; bid Him raise again
 Thy tabernacle which is fallen low!
 Go, seek His grace that, in abounding joy,
 He may thee once more for His treasure know! . . .

The poem consists of six verses. In the Hebrew original, the initial letters of these verses spell out the word Al-Shibzî, "the man of Shebez."

Theodor K. Gaster

(1) Compare Song of Songs, 6:4.

אִיזְמָה הַמִּשִּׁי דַגְלֵי הַמוֹנִי מִמְצוּלָה
 לְדוֹדֶךָ בִּקְשֵׁי יָקִים לִסְפָּה הַנְּפֹלָה
 לְחַסְדּוֹ דְּרִשִּׁי, תִּהְיִי בָרוּב שְׂמִיחָה סְגוּלָה

וְהִנְחִי בָנִים

עֲדַת אֵיתָנִים

שֶׁהֵם נְאֻמָּנִים

בְּאַרְצְךָ קִדְשִׁי, נִשְׁמַח בְּבֹא כְּלָה כְּלוּלָה
 וְמָה טוֹב שְׂרַשִּׁי, צִמְרַת אֶרֶץ הַטְּתוּלָה
 לְדוֹדִי חוֹשֶׁק, כִּי הוּא מִנֵּת כּוֹסִי וְחִלְקִי
 וְאִיד עוֹשֶׁק הוּא גּוֹאֲלִי תַמִּיד וְחִזְקִי
 וְדַתּוֹ נוֹשֶׁק הוּא יִתְּנָה צִרְכִּי וְסַפְקִי

מִפְרָנִס לְכָל

זֶזֶן וּמִכְלָכֵל

עַל יָד בֵּת כָּל

בַּחֵן זֶבְרַחֲשִׁי טוֹבִי כָּכֵל מְקוֹם מִמּוּלָא
 וְקוֹ הַשִּׁשִּׁי הַנְּחִיל עֲדַתּוֹ הָאֲצוּלָה

שְׁמוֹ יִתְּבַרֵךְ, מִעֶזֶן כָּל הַבְּרִכוֹת
 לְשׁוֹלְחַן עֶרֶךְ לָנוּ וְרֵב טוֹבוֹת מִשׁוֹכוֹת
 יַעֲוֹרֵר הַדֶּרֶךְ וּפְרָנְסָה שׁוֹנֵי הַלְכוֹת

יֵצֵו אֲרָאִלִּים

וְהַגְלִילִים

לְהוֹסִיף טָלִים

וַיִּזְרִיחַ שְׁמִשִּׁי וַיְקוֹמְמָה קָרִיָּה שְׁכוּלָה
 וַיְרוֹם רֹאשִׁי נִפְשִׁי בַּחֵן תִּהְיֶה גְאוּלָּה