

It is customary to spill a drop of wine for each of the three statements

For the final part of the verse we again see a quote from outside of the Torah. This one comes from the book of Joel and in context is speaks of God showing his glory to the world in advance of what the text calls the “day of the Lord.” For the purpose of the Haggadah, the verse has both wonders and blood in it, and since we will now bring in the plagues, it is a perfect segue.

“with wonders” this is the blood, as it is written, “and I will show wonders in the heavens and the earth, *blood*, fire and pillars of smoke.”

וּבְמוֹפְתִים. זֶה הַדָּם. כְּמָה
שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: וְנִתְּתִי מוֹפְתִים,
בְּשָׁמַיִם וּבָאָרֶץ דָּם וְאֵשׁ
וְתִימְרוֹת עָשָׁן:

Joel 3:3

The Haggadah brings another midrashic understanding to the verse “with a strong hand...” There are two lists of ten that can be found in the Torah. One is of course the Ten Commandments and the other is the Ten Plagues. The Ten Commandments are split into two groups of five while the plagues here are split into five groups of two. In the Ten Commandments, one group deals with laws between God and Man and the other group deals with laws between man and man. Here we see connections in our groups as well. Blood and Frogs are both related to the Nile river. Lice and Wild Animals are living creatures. Cattle Disease and Boils are both similar afflictions on man and animals. Hail and Locust both destroy crops. Darkness and Death of the Firstborn are both types of darkness.

Another explanation, with a strong hand is two, with an outstretched arm is two, with great awe is two, with signs is two and with wonders is two. These are the ten plagues that the Holy One blessed is He brought onto the Egyptians in Egypt, and they are:

דָּבָר אַחֵר. בְּיַד חֲזָקָה שְׁתֵּימָס.
וּבְזֵרַע נְטוּיָה שְׁתֵּימָס. וּבְמוֹרָא
גָּדוֹל שְׁתֵּימָס. וּבְאֵתוֹת שְׁתֵּימָס.
וּבְמוֹפְתִים שְׁתֵּימָס: אֵלּוּ עָשָׂר
מִכּוֹת שֶׁהֵבִיא הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ
הוּא עַל הַמִּצְרַיִם בְּמִצְרַיִם,
וְאֵלּוּ הֵן:

(Nechama Leibowitz)

It is customary to spill a drop of wine for each of the ten plagues and each part of the mnemonic.

דָּם. צַפְרִידָע. כְּנִיִּים. עָרוֹב. דְּבַר. שְׁחִין. בְּרָד.
אַרְבֶּה. חֲשׂוֹךְ. מַכַּת בְּכוֹרוֹת:

Blood. Frogs. Lice. Wild Animals, Cattle Disease, Boils. Hail. Locust. Darkness. Death of the firstborn.

רַבִּי יְהוּדָה הָיָה נוֹתֵן בָּהֶם סְמָנִים:
דַּצְּ”ךְ עַד”ש בְּאַח”ב:

Rabi Yehuda created a mnemonic for the plagues:
D’tzach, Adash, B’ahav

The plagues can also be seen as three groups of three, plus one. First the sea turned into blood. This caused the fish to die and the frogs to leave the water. The frogs die without the water, and the lice and flies that the frogs prey on swarm. The second group begins with the Wild Animals which kill many other animals. The dead animals cause both the Cattle Disease and the Boils (skin disease). The third groups can be explained in nature, they would not come one after the other. Hail, while uncommon can happen. Locust swarms do happen and darkness can be explained in many ways. The final plague, however, cannot be explained by natural means or by uncommon occurrences. Rashi understands the plagues as a way to educate the Egyptians that God exists. It is through this last and final plague that Gods existence cannot be denied.

We get a final mnemonic here in our text. Again it is inserted to make sure people will remember the words.

Traditionally we spill a drop of wine for each of the ten plagues and for each of the three contractions. Why do we do this? This is most commonly understood to mean that we should not rejoice in our enemies destruction. The Talmud teaches us (referring to the Egyptians drowning in the sea) that the angels wanted to sing when the Egyptians were drowning but God said “the works of my hand are drowning in the sea and you are singing!?” (Megillah 10b). To show that our joy is slightly diminished, we spill a drop of blood for each of the plagues.

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