



Not Through an Angel

And Hashem brought us out of Egypt – not through an angel, not through a seraph... but rather the Holy One, blessed be He, alone and in His glory...

Q: The Haggadah states that Hashem liberated us directly, not via an intermediary. It proves this from Shemos 12:12: “And I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night and I will smite every firstborn...” - that G-d Himself will smite the Egyptian firstborn. The Haggadah sets off to prove that Hashem “brought us out” of Egypt directly. The verse cited only discusses how Hashem slew the firstborn directly! How does this relate to our redemption?

A: We can understand this only after answering a related question. For nearly the entire story of the Exodus, Moshe requested from Pharaoh one thing alone – that Bnei Yisrael be granted a three day journey to the desert to serve Hashem, not permanent freedom. If this was all that was at stake, why was Pharaoh so adamant that Bnei Yisrael not leave? Why did he bring his kingdom to the brink of destruction over a mere three days? It certainly was not over the loss of a few days’ labor. In fact, the Sages teach that the bondage ended towards the start of the plagues, several months earlier (Rosh Hashanah

11a). If so, what was the reason for Pharaoh's stubbornness?

The answer is that Israel's journey meant one thing – that we were first and foremost Hashem's servants and only afterwards servants to Pharaoh. Pharaoh refused to concede this notion. Thus, the entire showdown between Pharaoh and Hashem regarding those three days was over control of Bnei Yisrael.

Now we can answer the original question. When Hashem slew the Egyptian firstborn, Pharaoh came running to Moshe, begging us to leave. He had finally capitulated, accepting that we were servants of Hashem first. Even though Hashem could have miraculously taken us out at any time, he waited until Pharaoh sent us willingly, showing his acquiescence to Bnei Yisrael being Hashem's servants. That happened only by the Plague of the Firstborn. Thus it was after the plague of the firstborn that our redemption began.

Therefore, the Haggadah states that Hashem, by slaying the firstborn Himself, rescued us from Egypt Himself.