Leviticus and Dayenu

Developing an Attitude of Gratitude

Parashat Vayikra, 5777,

In the future, all sacrifices will be abolished except for the thanksgiving-offering. All prayers will be abolished except for prayers of gratitude - Leviticus Rabbah

Who is rich? Those who rejoice in their own portion
- Pirke Avot

נִשְׁמַת חַיַּי תְּבָרֵךְ
וְקֶרֶב לִבִּי יָשִׁיר:

כָּל עוֹד נְשָׁמָה בְּקִרְבִּי
מוֹדָה/מוֹדֶה אֲנִי.

Morning Blessing, by Marcia Falk

The breath of my life
will bless,

the cells of my being
sing

in gratitude,
reawakening.

The attribute of gratitude is reflected in his name, his identity, and shapes our essential character- Yehudi.

What does a good guest say? "How much trouble my host has taken [for me]! How much meat he set before me! How much wine he set before me! How many cakes he has set before me! And all the trouble he has taken was only for my sake!" But what does a bad guest say? "How much, after all, has my host put himself out? I have eaten one piece of bread, I have eaten one slice of meat, I have drunk one cup of wine! All the trouble my host has taken was only for the sake of his wife and his children. *Berachot 58a*

The Thanksgiving Offering

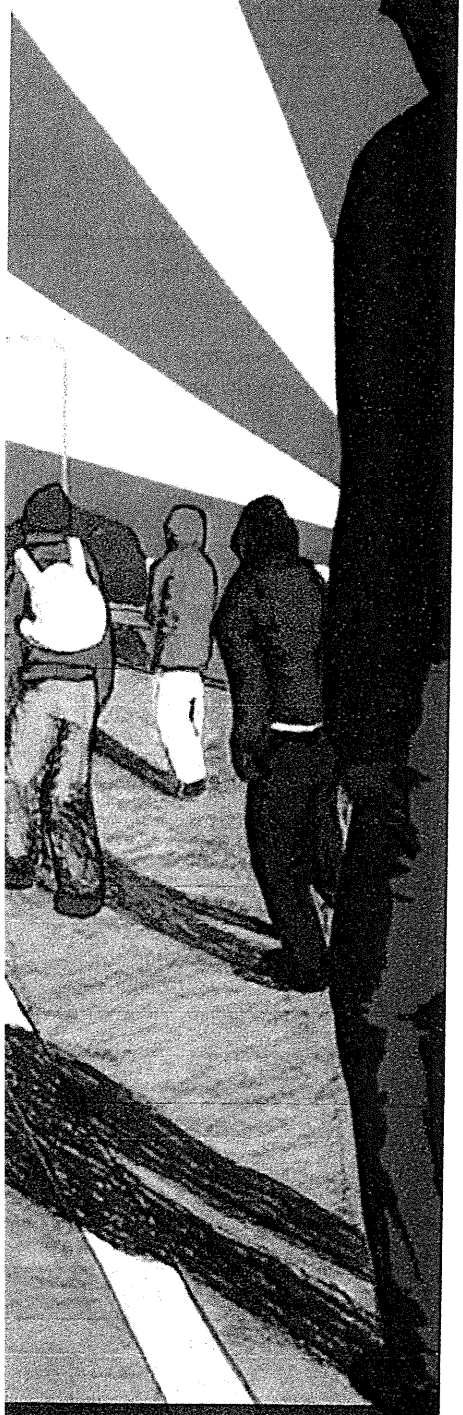
Our Rabbis teach us that a key aspect of the experience of bringing the Korbon Todah (thanks-offering) is the social component. When one brought a thanksgiving sacrifice after being saved from a life threatening event, he was required to bring forty loaves of bread in four different forms as well. One of each kind was given to the Kohen, leaving 36 loaves which had to be consumed that day and the following night. The medieval classic commentator on the Torah, the Sforno, explains that this was to ensure that at the time that one expressed gratitude for his good fortune, one had no choice but to make this a social event. Included in this occasion was sharing one's food while recounting to others the story of the life- saving incident
http://huc.edu/ckimages/files/Kalsman/Pelcovitz,%20D%20-%20GRATITUDE%20%20chapter%20from%20Pelcovitz%20and%20Pelcovitz.pdf

Shima Now
A Journal of Jewish Sensibilities
March 2017 | V.47 No. 725

דַּיֵּנוּ

Dayenu / It would have been enough.

What does it mean to be enough? To have enough?



Art by Akiva Miller
"Asylum Seekers Marching to Jerusalem"
paper collage with ink, 24" x 16"

Gratitude, Song, and the Small Steps of Redemption

Lisa Goldstein

Many years ago, I went to a seder at the home of a beloved teacher. Guests used a variety of Haggadot and shared commentaries as we wove our way through the story. We came to the song *"Dayenu,"* which outlines the miraculous process of the redemption from Egyptian bondage by listing fifteen separate divine acts of liberation and asserting that any one of them would have been enough. We paused. If God had taken us out of Egypt but not split the sea for us, would it have been enough? If God had led us through the desert but not given us the Torah or Shabbat, would it have been enough? No, we decided; it would not! So, we skipped the song for the sake of integrity and moved on.

In retrospect, we were too attached to the literal meaning of the words. While we read this passage as description, it is actually instruction for practice. The nineteenth-century Hasidic master, the Sfat Emet, noted in his commentary on the Haggadah that "taking us out of Egypt" is not simply the first step; rather, it is the overarching category, and each of the following fourteen steps provides the detail. It is like the blessing *Nishmat Kol Chai,* which we recite on Shabbat and festival mornings — noting that we cannot sufficiently thank God for even one of the thousands of blessings that have been bestowed upon us. Each step of *"Dayenu"* breaks down the enormity and abstraction of leaving Egypt into smaller component parts — each one miraculous — so that we might fall to our knees before the whole in gratitude and awe.

"Dayenu," then, is an instruction for cultivating gratitude. Sometimes, it is more difficult to summon real gratitude for the big things: My life is great. Ho hum. But when I break it down, I see: I have hot water and fresh ground coffee in the morning. I have people who love and support me when I am sad or discouraged. When I begin "labeling my praise," I see that, in fact, these things are wondrous. And the sum of them all is overwhelming. I can sincerely say, "It would have been enough. In fact, it *is* enough."

But sometimes, we feel it is not enough. When suffering comes to us or we deeply take in the darkness of the world around us, our awareness can constrict so that even the little miracles feel empty. Then, all we have is insufficient, not enough.

That's when *how* we recite *"Dayenu"* becomes as important as the text itself. The Hasidic Rebbe Nahman of Bratslav noticed, as did others, that the fifteen stages of *"Dayenu"* correspond to the fifteen steps that led from the women's court up to the Israelite Court in the Temple in Jerusalem. According to the Mishnah (Sukkot 5:4), the Levites stood on those steps during the festival of Sukkot with all kinds of instruments and joyously sang the fifteen songs of ascent from the Psalms (120-134). Nahman, who noted that *"Dayenu"* ends with the building of the Temple, the ultimate symbol of joy and redemption, taught that we can access a taste of that redemption through the act of singing. *"Dayenu"* reminds us that when we sing songs of holiness, we might hear the echo of the Levites' songs and add our voices to that chorus of hope and gratitude.

Singing has a way of opening us up to gratitude even when our heads don't fully understand. In the last year of my grandmother's life, it was too much for her to come to the family seder, so we brought one to her. She was confused and didn't understand what we were doing when we opened the Haggadah. But when we came to *"Dayenu,"* something lifted. Her face brightened, and she looked up and sang, *"Day-dayenu, day-dayenu."* It was a little Exodus from Egypt before our eyes.

I wish we had also sung *"Dayenu"* at my teacher's seder long ago, opening up and breaking down the enormity of the redemption so that we could gratefully receive it in joy. Indeed, doing so might even hasten the ultimate redemption for which we all long.

Rabbi Lisa Goldstein is the executive director of the Institute for Jewish Spirituality in New York City. At a Passover seder more than 30 years ago in Dresden, East Germany, she decided to become a rabbi.

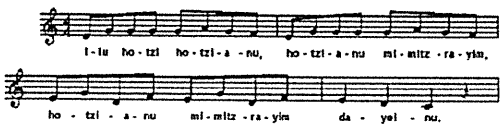
Please see pages 6–8 for *Consider and Converse*, our guide to this issue

NiSh'ma

On this page, we offer three takes on the first line of the song "Dayenu." Our commentators discuss the frailty of the Israelites as they left Egypt and how they anticipated and acknowledged God's miracles. Please visit jd.fo/shma2 and join the discussion about "enoughness." We welcome your comments on our new, interactive online version of NiSh'ma. —S.B.

Hannah Dresner: *Midrash Rabba* (*Kohelet* 3:15) helps us to understand the merit of pausing after each of the episodes chronicled in the "*Dayenu*," recalling that the Israelites were traumatized and in need of respite. They needed to eat rejuvenating manna and drink from healing wells before standing at Mount Sinai. Each event was "enough" in its moment; each required integration. But the implication is that redemption, alone, was not enough, and all else would follow in due course. Through this lens, redemption from Egypt already contains within it the eventuality of revelation at Sinai, conflating into that initiating episode a series of historical events that unfolded through the period of the Great Temple.

Zoë Klein: If God had only taken us out of Egypt, the likelihood is that we would have gone right back. We would have returned for the fish and onions, and because we lacked the experience, courage, and stamina to push forward. We would have returned because we had the self-worth of slaves, not the vision of leaders, and the unknown is often more frightening than familiar torments. We would have returned, because to be free without any direction, support, or purpose is to be lost.



אִלּוּ הוֹצִיאָנוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם דַּיֵּנוּ

"If God had only taken us out of Egypt, it would have been enough."

The Haggadah of Passover

The *Sfat Emet* (Reb Yehudah Leib Alter of Ger), teaches that in seeing ourselves as having participated in the Exodus, we must imagine emancipation from our own narrow straits, in an ever-occurring deliverance. Just as the Torah received at Sinai was an extension of the biblical redemption, so, too, "the redemptions of the future will be followed by quests into unknown territory, as we search for the new paths that will be created." (*Sfat Emet* 3:86)

In other words, we must do everything in our power to work toward liberation from the bondage of *our* time, and we must understand that this work will lead to a new, as yet unknown, torah that supports liberation from contemporary categories of evil. Emancipation in our moment is "enough" when it moves beyond tokenism, when it leads us to commandments that dissolve the enslaving constructs that pervade our society, and when it brings us to personal and collective sacrifice in the great temple devoted to human dignity.

In Los Angeles, 50 percent of youth emancipated from foster care become homeless. Nationally, 60 percent of sex-trafficked youth come from foster care. One such young woman, Roberta E. wrote: "I honestly feel I would have been better off in an abusive home with a father who beat me; at least he would have taught me how to get a job and pay the bills."

Is it enough, God, that You freed us after You allowed us to labor and languish for 400 years? Thanks for looking after Moses, but where were You when the rest of our children were drowning? And why now? Are we only convenient disposables on the campaign trail of Your glory? After all, our sacred texts make it clear that it was all about You when we read: "God saved them for His name's sake, to make His mighty power known." (Psalm 106:8)

God chose us to be partners in repairing this world. We're grateful, but also dissatisfied. Now, it's time roll up our sleeves and continue getting this place cleaned up.

Rabbi Hannah Dresner serves as spiritual leader of Or Shalom, a Jewish Renewal synagogue in Vancouver, B.C. A fellow with Rabbis Without Borders, she participates in the second cohort of CLAL's Clergy Leadership Incubator.

Rabbi Zoë Klein is the senior rabbi of Temple Isaiah in Los Angeles. She is the author of the novel *Drawing in the Dust* (Simon and Schuster, 2009) and the children's book *The Goblins of Knottingham: A History of Challah* (Apples and Honey, 2017).

Alicia Svigals: The fifteen stanzas of the Passover song *"Dayenu"* depict how we were rescued and then rescued again, and given gifts on top of gifts. But would even that first redemption have been enough, as the song has it? Pausing to appreciate how our road might have forked differently at each point in that miraculous story, we might say that the Exodus alone was already more than we could have hoped for. But, once redeemed, maybe it's our turn to emulate God. Just being grateful for freedom is, in fact, not nearly enough.

Hannah Dresner writes that the emancipation is "enough" if, in our own time, it leads us to "dissolve the enslaving constructs that pervade our society, and ... brings us to personal and collective sacrifice in the great temple devoted to human dignity." This makes me think: In the urgent here and now, the refugee crisis reminds us of just this understanding of Jewish history, and of the meaning of our emancipation.

We fled Egypt in desperation. Are we going to reject present-day refugees from Syria and elsewhere? And, if "redeeming" them comes with a certain degree of risk, then couldn't choosing to accept that risk be just the sacrifice in the name of human dignity that Dresner imagines? We make this sacrifice remembering that we were also strangers in a strange land — and not just in Egypt, but also in one country after another. Our own fears can be a form of slavery too, and breaking free of them can taste as sweet as manna.

Alicia Svigals is a musician and composer who co-wrote, with playwright Tony Kushner, the song "AnUndoing World," which is about the Statue of Liberty and refugees. See youtube.com/watch?v=1mrdokgqJzM.

Jewish sensibilities are approaches to living and learning that permeate Jewish culture. The ideas, values, emotions, and behaviors they express — emanating from Jewish history, stories, and sources — provide inspiration and guidance that help us to respond creatively and thoughtfully to life's challenges and opportunities. Sensibilities are culturally informed senses or memes. This month, *Sh'ma Now* explores *"Dayenu,"* what it means to be or have enough. Next month, we will reflect on *"Yovel,"* which means "release" and marks the 50th year since the Six-Day War in 1967. We will include essays by Ayelet S. Cohen, Yossi Klein Halevi, Sam Brody, and Stephen Hazan Arnoff.

It Wouldn't Have Been Enough

Rachel Brodie

"Ten fingers. Ten toes. *Dayenu.*" The synecdoche of pregnancy prayer. Primordial hope resonating in the time of ultrasound. And with the press of a magic wand, an image appears: a miracle with a beating heart, ten fingers and ten toes. Exhale with gratitude and inhale with greed. "Just let it be healthy, *dayenu.*"
"Seemingly healthy? Then if my child is also kind, *dayenu.*"
"Kind? Also wise, *dayenu.*"
"Wise? And creative, *dayenu.*"
"Creative? Then also..."

A truism of human nature: A desire satisfied yields additional desire. But where does one desire end and another begin? A healthy baby is the culmination of a seemingly infinite number of separate prayers. And only in retrospect can it be said that any one miracle would have been sufficient. At what point should we be satisfied with what we have? And when are we considered greedy for wanting more? Ten fingers, *dayenu*? Only three hospitalizations before age 10, *dayenu*? Only a mild form of anxiety, *dayenu*?

"Dayenu" is typically translated as "it would have been enough." Looking at the list of fifteen miracles performed for the Israelites — as enumerated in the *piyut* (liturgical song) — *dayenu* begs the question: "Enough of what?" Enough miracles? Enough of a miracle? Biblical texts point out that the people themselves give voice to the tragic irony of too few miracles (Exodus 14:11 and 16:2; Numbers 21:5): "Did you bring us out of Egypt to have us die in the wilderness?" It would be as if one said after a miscarriage, "It would have been enough to get pregnant, even if I were unable to stay pregnant — *dayenu.*" *Dayenu*? Not at all. Even having been freed from slavery but not given the Torah wouldn't have been enough. Freedom from slavery was a necessary but insufficient miracle in the process of getting us to the ultimate endgame of the exodus — the freedom to serve God.

So, if *"dayenu"* can't actually mean "it *was* enough" and not even "it *would have been* enough," then could it mean: "It *should* have been enough"? A guilt trip laid on Israelites past? Or "it *should* be enough"? A guilt trip laid on us? Many contemporary commentators take the opportunity to encourage us to be satisfied with what we have and not focus on what we don't have. More than that, we are encouraged to be grateful not just at the end (with redemption or the birth of a healthy baby), but at each step of the way (each developmental milestone). This is not because any one step *is* enough but because a miracle is a miracle and for that we must be grateful: However small or seemingly incomplete, it *should* be enough to prompt our gratitude.

Gratitude for being on the receiving end of a miracle is one thing, but responding to the challenge it presents is quite another. If God had taken the Israelites out of Egypt and they had been grateful but they'd refused to follow Moses, or if God had given them the Torah but they had not accepted it, then what? For all of God's efforts, the existence of free will has the potential to make miracles meaningless. Perhaps *"dayenu"* is a way of acknowledging the partnership between the giver and the recipients. "God, You did what only You can do. You gave us freedom. So, You've done Your part. You've given us enough (*'dayenu'*). And, now, it's up to us to accept the precious gift of freedom, of Torah... and to make these gifts meaningful."

> *"My attitude is never to be satisfied, never enough, never."*
>
> – Duke Ellington

Ten fingers, ten toes... Health, in and of itself, is a miracle. But, it's what we do with that great gift that makes it valuable. While the mandate of the seder — to "see ourselves as if *(k'ilu)* we had personally left Egypt" — is clearly addressed to the individual, *"dayenu"* may hold an imperative for the collective. Every generation is obligated to recognize the receipt of miracles past and present, and to act as if *(k'ilu)* we have been given enough *(dayenu)* to work with, and now we must work together to continue to make it matter.

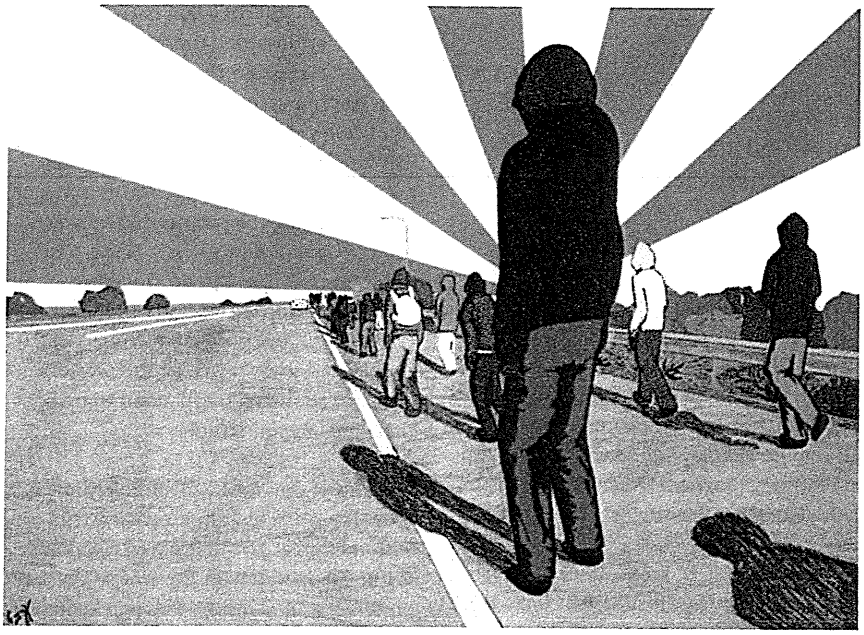
If Rachel Brodie were only a student of Torah, *dayenu*. But wait, there's more: www.rachelbrodie.net.

A Case for Parenting Well Enough

Uri Allen

Before the birth of our oldest son, Doron, my wife and I had many lengthy conversations about the kind of parents we wanted to be. The topics ran from the amount of screen time we would allow to the types of schooling and the religious environment we would foster. You name it and we had discussed our vision for being the ideal parent.

We thought we were so clever. What we didn't know then, and what we continue to discover now, is that forward planning is good but not absolute. Even our "birth plan" was upended for reasons beyond our control. Instead of being born in



"Asylum Seekers Marching to Jerusalem" *by Akiva Miller*

the natural birthing center with aromatherapy, our preselected birthing playlist, and yoga balls, our son entered the world through an emergency cesarean section operation. It was possibly the scariest 20 minutes of my life. We were instantly thrust from the world of our well-crafted and meticulously planned ideal to the world of the real.

And, since becoming parents, we no longer adhere rigidly to a plan; rather, we have adopted a more flexible strategy which acknowledges that we rarely know what is going to happen.

This strikes me as an authentically Jewish way to be parents. It calls to mind two terms from Jewish halakhic (legal) thinking: *"lechatchilah"* and *"bediavad."* *"Lechatchilah"* means "at first; in the first place" meaning that something is done ideally, with the full approval of Jewish law. This term is juxtaposed with *"bediavad,"* which means "after it has been done; after the fact." So, for example, it is preferable to say a blessing before shaking the *lulav* and *etrog* on Sukkot — *lechatchilah*. But if you forget and do not say the blessing you would have fulfilled your obligation of waving the four species anyway — *bediavad*.

In parenting language, that might translate into something like this: Ideally, my children should be wearing clean matching socks — *lechatchilah*. But, since there are still nine loads of laundry to wash, fold, and sort, they can wear yesterday's semi-dirty, mismatched socks again — *bediavad*. More seriously, I always want my children to hold hands and look both ways while crossing the street — *lechatchilah*. But sometimes, they run without looking and make it to the other side safely. It all works out in the end, so, *bediavad*, no harm, no foul. And yet, while I am mostly okay with a good enough outcome, I have to acknowledge that the ideal has been chipped away at and a disaster could have ensued.

Parenting may be the most profound and significant thing I ever do. Setting my children on (I hope) a path to be good people and good Jews is an enormous responsibility, which is why missing the mark can feel so demoralizing. But in my five-plus years of being a father (three children under age 6!), I have come to place more stock in living life as it is and as it comes than as it should be. In other words, my parenting philosophy has become heavily *bediavad* based.

That doesn't mean I don't dream of a time when we sit down to eat a home-cooked meal without various screens at the table, with animated conversations and excellent table manners. But for now, we often eat cereal and milk for dinner or have a pizza delivered. And that meal is just a prelude to the marathon of getting three small people ready for bed. I wonder whether my thoughts about *bediavad* will change when my children are older — when new technologies, dating, drinking, and questions about sex require more consistency and less compromise. Will I have less tolerance for *bediavad* when my children begin to make independent decisions that will have a lasting impact on their lives?

The concepts of *lechatchilah* and *bediavad* give me a focal point to continue striving toward ever better parenting. Like our parenting practice, our religious observance — and anything requiring a discipline — can be viewed through the lens of these two concepts. While we may not always reach our ideals, and while we may settle for "good enough," we remain committed to a path of excellence.

Rabbi Uri Allen is the associate rabbi at Har Zion Temple in Penn Valley, where he lives with his wife, Sari, and their three children, Doron, Aderet, and Yedidyah. He enjoys playing guitar and basketball, and attending musical concerts, especially of the group Phish.

Self-Audit for Sufficiency

Ruth Messinger

Let's begin with a few stories and statements:

- Chuck Feeney, a philanthropist who has just finished giving away $8 billion in resources, much of it to social justice causes, said recently in an interview about his simple life style, "You can only wear one pair of pants at a time."
- When I travel with rabbis to the developing world, they report that one of their worst moments is returning home and entering a supermarket that sells more than 50 kinds of cereal.
- We all, often, speak of what we need when we mean what we want. It is not that we should not have the item, it is that we

should learn to distinguish between want and need.

- On average, although the United States has 4.5 percent of the world's population, it uses 20 percent of the world's energy.
- Americans throw out 200,000 tons of edible food daily.
- The richest eight people in the world have assets equal to those of the 3.6 billion poorest people in the world (half the total world population).

As you imagine, this list could go on and on, either with broad statements about the use of the world's resources or with individual anecdotes about behavior that suggests excess in our own lives. But my core message is that these resources are being depleted in ways that jeopardize our future. While food excesses are common in parts of the world, close to 1 billion people go to bed hungry every night. When energy resources are used without limit, we create new problems for all societies. We cannot become overwhelmed by stories or statistics, and retreat in defeat. We need instead to think fiercely — as individuals and in family, congregational, and social settings — about this question of what is enough. Enough to live on? Enough to live a good life, whatever we mean by that?

Of course, no one answer works for all of us. There is, instead, the imperative of asking the questions, \of discussing the options, and of then making decisions as to how we — individually and collectively — will respond.

All of us need to do an audit of what we use. Focusing on one area of our lives at a time, we need to ask ourselves whether we are living with excess, or whether we are living efficiently: Are we using more electricity than we need? Are we serving food to excess, throwing away leftovers with little regard? Do we excessively buy the latest design in pants — even knowing we only "wear one pair of pants at a time"? As we move through our self-audit, we should consider which areas warrant change, and whether that change should remain personal or be shared with others, encouraging them to join us. We would want to think about how to give the greatest significance to the changes we are making.

One example: Many people take the "food stamp challenge," living for a week on a budget of $31 per person. I have done it, and it is appallingly difficult. I shopped differently. I realized that smaller-size cans yield larger corporate profits and that, often, the least expensive version of a product is on the lowest shelf, literally hard to find. I was hungry before the week finished.

No one should live this way.

The experience might ignite a fervor for advocating a hike in the minimum wage so that working families will have more money for food. The experience might suggest new ways to think about what we eat, when we eat, and how much we eat; how we treat leftovers and what example we set for children and friends about the difference between sufficiency — enoughness — and excess.

The same approach can be used with other purchases. Ask: "Do I really need this item?" and, "Am I helping my children think rationally about what they 'must have' in their closets?" Thinking through a lens of "sufficiency and excess" with regard to energy consumption takes four steps: auditing what we use, taking steps to lessen our consumption, recruiting others to join us, and investigating domestic or global policies that would improve the situation for others who have less than enough. As we develop our own guides to ethical consumption, we should follow our personal audits by engaging in policy advocacy to find ways to share resources more equitably.

Commenting on the phrase *"Kedoshim tihiu"* — "You shall be holy" (Leviticus 19:1), Rabbi Moshe ben Nahman Gerondi, known as the Ramban (1194 – c. 1270), teaches us that we should strive to be holy — that is, distinct and separate.The Ramban reminds us that the Torah urges us to "be separated from excess," to not abuse the resources of the world — to refrain from indulgence, even in things that are permissible.

Ruth W. Messinger is the global ambassador of the American Jewish World Service, and a Finkelstein Institute Social Justice Fellow at the Jewish Theological Seminary.

Editor-in-Chief
Susan Berrin

Founding Editor
Rabbi Eugene Borowitz, *z"l*

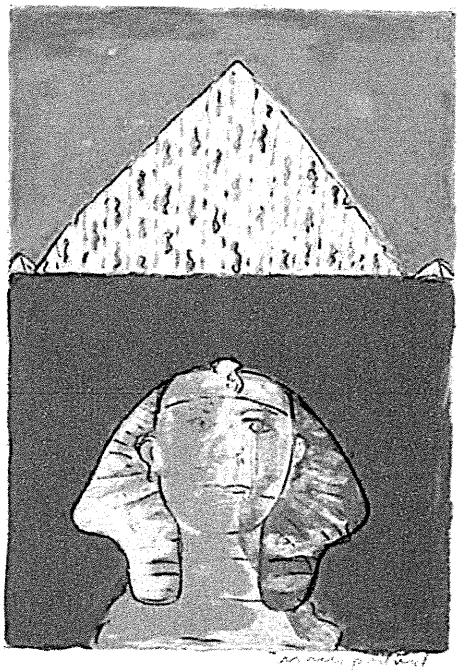
Design
Emily Rich

Contact
info@shma.com

For editorial inquiries, contact
sberrin@shma.com

Advisory Board
Rachel Brodie
Richard Hirsh
Jill Jacobs
Ari Y. Kelman
Shaul Magid
Lee Moore
Danya Ruttenberg
Robert J. Saferstein
Jon Woocher

Sh'ma and *Sh'ma Now* are trademarks of the Sh'ma Institute, an independent nonprofit supported by Lippman Kanfer Foundation for Living Torah.



"Bread of Affliction" from the Haggadah Sharing the Journey, *CCAR Press*
©Mark Podwal www.markpodwal.com
Reimagined: 45 Years of Jewish Art by Mark Podwal *is a monograph with 350 artworks published by Glitterati Inc.*

Consider & Converse

A Guide to *'Dayenu'*
'It would have been enough."

What does it mean to be enough? To have enough?

Introduction

Sh'ma Now curates conversations on a single theme rooted in Jewish tradition and the contemporary moment. At the heart of this issue of *Sh'ma Now* is the theme of *"Dayenu"* — **"It would have been enough."** The perspectives shared in these pages are meant to be expansive — to inspire reflections on Judaism and possibility in ways you may not have considered before. They aim to hold discord. We hope that the richness and diversity of these essays will show you new perspectives that are personally meaningful and edifying.

Sh'ma Now has never viewed learning or "meaning-making" as solely an individual activity. That's why we have included this guide, which is specifically designed to help you to consider the idea of going forth independently or with others, formally and informally.

How to Begin

This guide offers a variety of suggestions, including activities and conversation prompts for individual contemplation and informal or more structured conversations. We suggest that you use this guide to share reflections and thoughts over a Shabbat meal, or, for those who are more adventurous, to lead a planned, structured conversation, inviting a small group of friends and family to your home or to a coffee shop. If you would like more information about ways in which this journal might be used, please contact Susan Berrin, *Sh'ma Now* editor-in-chief, at SBerrin@shma.com. You can also print out a PDF file of the entire issue at http://forward.com/shma-now/.

Guidelines for Discussion

If you wish to hold a structured conversation, the following guidelines may help you to create a space that allows for honest personal exploration through sharing:

- Create a sense of shared purpose that can foster the kind of internal reflection that happens through group conversation.
- Remind participants of simple ground rules for conversations. For example: Avoid commenting on and critiquing each other's comments. Make room for everyone to speak. Step into or away from the conversation appropriately. No one participant should dominate the conversation. Let silence sit, allowing participants to gather their thoughts.
- For each of the questions below, we recommend that you print out the article in question, or provide the link to it, and we ask that you take a moment to read it in print or on screen, before the conversation begins.
- Allow people a few minutes to absorb the article, perhaps even to read it a second time, before moving into the discussion.

Consider & Converse

A Guide to *'Dayenu'*
'It would have been enough."

What does it mean to be enough? To have enough?

Interpretive Questions

can focus the reader on the ideas in the articles.

- Rabbi Lisa Goldstein [page 1] introduces readers to the idea that *"dayenu"* is a manual for building a life of gratitude. She suggests that it is more difficult, sometimes, to acknowledge "real gratitude for the big things: My life is great. Ho hum. But when I break it down, I see: I have hot water and fresh ground coffee in the morning. I have people who love and support me when I am sad or discouraged. When I begin 'labeling my praise,' I see that, in fact, these things are wondrous." And, of course, sometimes one doesn't feel a sense of gratitude at all — not when we are deep in sorrow or discouraged by life's challenges. How does Judaism balance a sense of gratitude with the acknowledgement of profound disappointment? How does it balance gratitude with enmity? Or, gratitude with anguished loss? Lisa points out that the fifteen stanzas of *"Dayenu"* are replicated in the teaching of Rebbe Nahman of Bratzlav about the steps of ascent that bring joy during the holiday of Sukkot. How does Jewish wisdom point us to a step-by-step path toward noticing what works in our lives, and how might we develop a more robust practice of gratitude?
- Rachel Brodie [page 3] challenges the concept of *"dayenu."* Rachel acknowledges that when she was pregnant, she prayed for a healthy child, but when her daughter was born in good health, she also asked that she grow to be kind and generous. She notes, "A desire satisfied yields additional desire. But where does one desire end and another begin?... At what point should we be satisfied with what we have? And when are we considered greedy for wanting more?" She posits this line of thinking in relation to the Passover song, *"Dayenu"*— "It would have been enough." "If God had taken the Israelites out of Egypt, [*dayenu*]..." But, it is not enough. God gave us Shabbat and the Torah, among much else. Rachel writes, "Perhaps *dayenu* is a way of acknowledging the partnership between the giver and the recipients: 'God, You did what only You can do. You gave us freedom. So, You've done Your part. You've given us enough (*'dayenu'*). And now, it's up to us to ... make these gifts meaningful.'" Set in the midst of the seder, how is the notion of partnering with God understood? How are we to understand the nature of miracles and the creator of miracles? How do you understand the enormity of this partnership?

Reflective Questions

can help to integrate the ideas in these articles with one's own sense of self.

- Ruth Messinger [page 4] writes about knowing the difference between what we want and what we need. She suggests that we do a self-audit of what we use to determine whether we live with excess. She writes, "Are we using more electricity than we need? Are we serving food to excess, throwing away leftovers with little regard? Do we excessively buy the latest design in pants — even knowing that we only 'wear one pair of pants at a time'? As we move through our self-audit, we should consider which areas warrant change, and whether that change should remain personal or be shared with others, encouraging them to join us. We would want to think about how

Consider & Converse

A Guide to *'Dayenu'*
'It would have been enough."

What does it mean to be enough? To have enough?

to give the greatest significance to the changes we are making." If you were interested in doing such a self-audit, where would you begin? What limits would you put on that inventory? What are the questions that you would want to discuss with your friends and family about consumption and limits?

- Rabbi Uri Allen [page 3] writes about being a "good enough" parent. While there is no doubt that he takes seriously the responsibilities of parenting, he writes this: "I have come to place more stock in living life as it is and as it comes than as it should be." How do you weigh in on the continuum of being a "good enough" parent? Are there some aspects of parenting that demand your perfection and resoluteness? If so, which? How does the notion of a "good enough" parent intersect with notions of being a "good enough" Jew?
- In *NiSh'ma,* [page 2] our simulated Talmud page, three writers explore the first line of the song *"Dayenu."* Our commentators discuss the frailty of the Israelites as they left Egypt and how they anticipated and acknowledged God's miracles. Rabbi Zoë Klein writes, "If God had only taken us out of Egypt, the likelihood is that we would have gone right back. We would have returned ...because we lacked the experience, courage, and stamina to push forward. We would have returned because we had the self-worth of slaves, not the vision of leaders, and the unknown is often more frightening than familiar torments. We would have returned, because to be free without any direction, support, or purpose is to be lost." Are we partners in the process of redemption? How so?

Additional Resources on '*Dayenu*'

- The website www.Haggadot.com includes numerous creative interpretations of the song "Dayenu" and offers opportunities to create your own Haggadah.
- See "The Deeper Meaning of Dayenu" by Rabbi Avi Weiss (http://www.jewishpress.com/judaism/parsha/the-deeper-meaning-of-dayenu/2015/04/02/). Weiss charts the slow process of redemption through the fifteen stanzas of the song "Dayenu."