Shabbat Hol HaMoed Pesah: Imagined Haroset

Rabbi Joshua Rabin, Astoria Center of Israel, Astoria, New York[1]

Shir HaShirim 7:9	
אָמַ֨רְתִּי֙ אֶעֱלֶ֣ה בְתָמָ֔ר אֹחֲזָ֖ה בְּסַנְסִנָּ֑יו וְיִֽהְיוּ־נָ֤א שָׁדַ֙יִךְ֙ כְּאֶשְׁכְּלֹ֣ות הַגֶּ֔פֶן וְרֵ֥יחַ אַפֵּ֖ךְ כַּתַּפּוּחִֽים׃	I say: Let me climb the palm, let me take hold of its branches; let your breasts be like clusters of grapes, your breath like the fragrance of apples,

1. **Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah**

Daniel 3:24-26	
אֱדַ֨יִן֙ נְבוּכַדְנֶצַּ֣ר מַלְכָּ֔א תְּוֵ֖הּ וְקָ֣ם בְּהִתְבְּהָלָ֑ה עָנֵ֨ה וְאָמַ֜ר לְהַדָּֽבְרֹ֗והִי הֲלָא֩ גֻבְרִ֨ין תְּלָתָ֜ה רְמֵ֤ינָא לְגוֹא־נוּרָא֙ מְכַפְּתִ֔ין עָנַ֖יִן וְאָמְרִין֙ לְמַלְכָּ֔א יַצִּיבָ֖א מַלְכָּֽא׃ עָנֵ֣ה וְאָמַ֗ר הָֽא־אֲנָ֨ה חָזֵ֜ה גֻּבְרִ֣ין אַרְבְּעָ֗ה שְׁרַ֨יִן֙ מַהְלְכִ֣ין בְּגֹוא־נוּרָ֔א וַחֲבָ֖ל לָא־אִיתַ֣י בְּה֑וֹן וְרֵוֵהּ֙ דִּ֣י (רביעיא) [רְבִיעָאָ֔ה] דָּמֵ֖ה לְבַר־אֱלָהִֽין׃ בֵּאדַ֜יִן קְרֵ֣ב נְבוּכַדְנֶצַּ֗ר לִתְרַע֮ אַתּ֣וּן נוּרָ֣א יָקֵֽדְתָּא֒ עָנֵ֣ה וְאָמַ֗ר שַׁדְרַ֨ךְ מֵישַׁ֣ךְ וַעֲבֵד־נְג֥וֹ עַבְדֹ֛והִי דִּֽי־אֱלָהָ֥א (עליא) [עִלָּאָ֖ה] פֵּ֣קוּ וֶאֱת֑וֹ בֵּאדַ֣יִן נָפְקִ֗ין שַׁדְרַ֥ךְ מֵישַׁ֛ךְ וַעֲבֵ֥ד נְג֖וֹ מִן־גּ֥וֹא נוּרָֽא׃	Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and, rising in haste, addressed his companions, saying, “Did we not throw three men, bound, into the fire?” They spoke in reply, “Surely, O king.” He answered, “But I see four figures walking about unbound and unharmed in the fire, and the fourth looks like a divine being.” Nebuchadnezzar then approached the hatch of the burning fiery furnace and called, “Shadrach, Meshach, Abed-nego, servants of the Most High God, come out!” So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego came out of the fire.

Bavli Sanhedrin 93a	
אָמַר רַבִּי תַּנְחוּם בַּר חֲנִילַאי: בְּשָׁעָה שֶׁיָּצְאוּ חֲנַנְיָה מִישָׁאֵל וַעֲזַרְיָה מִכִּבְשַׁן הָאֵשׁ, בָּאוּ כָּל אוּמּוֹת הָעוֹלָם וְטָפְחוּ לְשׂוֹנְאֵיהֶן שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל עַל פְּנֵיהֶם. אָמְרוּ לָהֶם: יֵשׁ לָכֶם אֱלוֹהַּ כָּזֶה, וְאַתֶּם מִשְׁתַּחֲוִים לַצֶּלֶם?! מִיָּד פָּתְחוּ וְאָמְרוּ: ״לְךָ ה׳ הַצְּדָקָה וְלָנוּ בֹּשֶׁת הַפָּנִים כַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה״.	**Rabbi Tanḥum bar Ḥanilai says: At the moment that Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah emerged from the fiery furnace, all the nations of the world came and struck the enemies of Israel,** a euphemism for the Jewish people, **in the face** and **said to them: You have a God** with capabilities **like that and you bow to the graven image? Immediately,** Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah **began and said: “Lord, righteousness is Yours, but we are shamefaced, as of this day”** (Daniel 9:7).
אָמַר רַבִּי שְׁמוּאֵל בַּר נַחְמָנִי אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹנָתָן: מַאי דִּכְתִיב ״אָמַרְתִּי אֶעֱלֶה בְתָמָר אֹחֲזָה בְּסַנְסִנָּיו״? ״אָמַרְתִּי אֶעֱלֶה בְתָמָר״ – אֵלּוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְעַכְשָׁיו לֹא עָלָה בְּיָדִי אֶלָּא סַנְסַן אֶחָד שֶׁל חֲנַנְיָה מִישָׁאֵל וַעֲזַרְיָה.	**Rabbi Shmuel bar Naḥmani says** that **Rabbi Yonatan says** on a similar note: **What** is the meaning of that **which is written: “I said: I will climb into the palm tree; I will grasp its boughs”** (Song of Songs 7:9)? **“I said: I will climb into the palm tree”; this is** a reference to **the Jewish people. And now** that I have tested them by means of the decrees of

[1] All translations are from Sefaria, unless otherwise noted.

	Nebuchadnezzar, **I have succeeded** in grasping **in My hand only** the **one bough of Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah,** as only they were willing to give their lives.

Bavli Sukkah 45b	
רַבִּי לֵוִי אוֹמֵר, כְּתָמָר: מָה תָּמָר זֶה אֵין לוֹ אֶלָּא לֵב אֶחָד, אַף יִשְׂרָאֵל אֵין לָהֶם אֶלָּא לֵב אֶחָד לַאֲבִיהֶם שֶׁבַּשָּׁמַיִם.	**Rabbi Levi says:** [the Jewish People are] **like** them to **a date palm**. **Just as the date palm has only one heart, so too, the Jewish people have only one heart** directed **toward their Father in Heaven.**

2. Haroset

Midrash Bemidbar Rabbah 3:1	
מָה הַתָּמָר הַזֹּאת עוֹשָׂה תְּמָרִים רְטוּבִים, נִיקוֹלַיְוּוסִין, נוֹבְלוֹת, וְעוֹשָׂה סוֹלִין. כָּךְ הֵם יִשְׂרָאֵל יֵשׁ בָּהֶם בְּנֵי תוֹרָה וְיֵשׁ בָּהֶם עַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ, וְיֵשׁ בָּהֶם בּוּרִים.	Just as this palm tree produces juicy, *nikolaos*, and unripe dates, and produces thorns, so are Israel: there are Torah personalities among them, there are plain citizens among them, and there are ignoramuses.

Kitzur Shulkhan Arukh 118:4	
הַחֲרֹסֶת צָרִיךְ שֶׁתִּהְיֶה עָבָה זֶכֶר לַטִּיט. וּבְשָׁעָה שֶׁהוּא צָרִיךְ לְטַבֵּל אֶת הַמָּרוֹר, יִשְׁפֹּךְ לְתוֹכָהּ יַיִן אוֹ חֹמֶץ, שֶׁתִּהְיֶה רַכָּה, זֵכֶר לַדָּם, וְגַם שֶׁתְּהֵא רְאוּיָה לְטַבֵּל בָּהּ. יֵשׁ לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת הַחֲרֹסֶת מִפֵּרוֹת שֶׁנִּמְשְׁלָה בָּהֶם כְּנֶסֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל, כְּגוֹן תְּאֵנִים, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר, הַתְּאֵנָה חָנְטָה פַּגֶּיהָ. וֶאֱגוֹזִים, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר, אֶל גִּנַּת אֱגוֹז. וּתְמָרִים, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר, אֶעֱלֶה בְתָמָר. וְרִמּוֹנִים, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר, כְּפֶלַח הָרִמּוֹן. וְתַפּוּחִים, זֵכֶר לְמַה שֶׁכָּתוּב, תַּחַת הַתַּפּוּחַ עוֹרַרְתִּיךָ, שֶׁהָיוּ הַנָּשִׁים יוֹלְדוֹת שָׁם בְּנֵיהֶן בְּלֹא עֶצֶב. וּשְׁקֵדִים עַל שֵׁם שֶׁשָּׁקַד הַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא עַל הַקֵּץ לַעֲשׂוֹת. וְצָרִיךְ לִתֵּן בְּתוֹכָהּ תְּבָלִין הַדּוֹמִין לְתֶבֶן, כְּגוֹן קִנָּמוֹן וְזַנְגְּבִיל, שֶׁאֵינָן נִדָּכִין הֲדַק הֵיטֵב. וְיֵשׁ בָּהֶן חוּטִין כְּמוֹ תֶבֶן, זֵכֶר לַתֶּבֶן שֶׁהָיוּ מְמַבְּלִין בְּתוֹךְ הַטִּיט.	The *charoses* must have a thick consistency to recall the mortar from which our forefathers had to make bricks. When you are ready to dip the *maror* into it, you should add a little wine or vinegar to make it soft to represent the blood, and for the additional reason that it should become fit to dip something into it. The *charoses* should be made from fruits that symbolize the Jewish people; for example: figs, for it is said, "The fig tree has produced its green figs," (Song of Songs 2:13); nuts, because it is said, "I went down to the garden of nuts" (ibid. 6:11); dates, because it is said, "I will ascend the palm tree" (ibid. 7:9); pomegranates, because it is said, "Like a slice of pomegranate" (ibid. 6:7); apples, to commemorate what is written, "Beneath the apple tree I aroused you," (ibid. 8:5) where the women gave birth to their children without pain; and almonds, (*shekeidim*, singular *shakeid*), because the Holy One, blessed is He, watched diligently (*shakad*) to end our bondage. You should put spices in it, that look like straw, such as cinnamon and ginger, that are not finely ground, and have straw-like strands in them, to recall the straw, the Jews used to knead into the mortar.

3. Imagined Community

Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, page 6
I propose the following definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community, and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.... Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined.... Finally, [the nation] is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship.