

The Yeshivat Or Chaim

HAGGADAH

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Dedication

This YOC Haggadah Companion 5786 is dedicated to all the brave soldiers and their families who are fighting for Am Yisrael

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Introduction

Rabbi Dr Seth Grauer, Rosh Yeshiva/Head of School Bnei Akiva Schools

We are living in wild times. As I'm writing this, life in Israel seems to be filled with incredible mixed emotions. Israelis (as best as I can tell) are trying to lead normal lives as Iranian and Hezbollah missiles target the Jewish state on a daily basis.

Trying to maintain some semblance of order. Going to work, holding weddings, shopping for Pesach.

Seder, of course, means order, and the usual explanation is that Seder Night is so called because we follow a defined order during the evening – Kadesh, Urchatz, Karpas, etc. There are strict measurements, amounts, and time restrictions.

However, if we think about it, it's pretty disordered!

We wash our hands as though we're about to eat bread, and then we dip a vegetable into salt water. Why? To disrupt the order of things, so someone might ask, "Isn't this out of order?"

We introduce the matzah by singing, "This is the bread of suffering that our fathers ate in the Land of Egypt." Then we cover the matzah. Why? To disrupt expectations. So the child within us will ask, "Why is this night different?"

We have to make it obviously different, 'out of order,' so our children will ask.

Nevertheless, despite the balagan, the wine spillings, the flying frogs, and whatever unusual behaviours you adopt in your Seder, we are indeed celebrating order.

Hashem's order.

This is not a usual order or a normal routine, yet on the other hand, it is perfectly normal for us! Throughout Jewish history, the Jewish people have not been an ordered "nation like

all nations." After all the suffering, pogroms, persecutions, Holocaust, and antisemitism, there is no logical reason to explain why we are still here and to explain why we are so successful and influential despite our significant numerical inferiority.

Indeed, it was on that first Pesach, Yetziyat Mitzrayim, that Bnei Yisrael clearly witnessed Hashem's intervention in human affairs.

To celebrate Pesach is to acknowledge the idea of Seder – the concept of history that embraces G-d as the ultimate Director of events that transpire according to a divinely ordained order. It's to understand that because Hashem is the ultimate constant in a seemingly chaotic world, there is order.

We will never understand what that order is, but we take solace in the knowledge that Hashem has a purpose, a system and an order and we are able to therefore say, Dayeinu.

It is true that we are surrounded by disorder and chaos, but we still have an obligation to seek ways to find order, joy, and empathy.

This Haggadah is a beautiful example of that.

I am so proud of our students at Or Chaim, under the guidance and direction of their rabbaim and administrators of course for all the Torah they learn and sharing its light and clarity on a world often shadowed by darkness and

confusion.

The divrei Torah you will find within this work give us further hope and promise for the future. A hope and promise that our future will be bright being led by the exceptional students that we are blessed to have at our Yeshiva.

Chag Kasher VeSameach to all.

קדש

Four Cups and Two Redemptions

Noam Wolfe, Grade 12

There is a common term used in the Gemara as a reason why woman are obligated in certain DeRabanan Mitzvot: “אף” - “הן היו באותו הנס”. Most well known for its use in reference to Chanukah or Purim, “אף הן” is a tool used to connect the historical significance of a holiday to its mitzvot, as if to say, anyone with a connection to this holiday and its stories should be obligated in its mitzvot as well.

The third time this term is used is for the ארבע כוסות - which are, at first glance, very different from the other 2 uses of “אף הן”. While both Chanukah and Purim have amazing stories filled with miracles (whether revealed or hidden), and both of these narratives clearly have a connection to the mitzvot which are subject to “אף הן” (Megillah and Menorah), the four cups don’t seem to have any clear link to the miracle of Pesach - יציאת מצרים. Why, do we connect the ארבע כוסות, which were probably not at all part of that first seder 3000+ years ago, to the great miracle of יציאת מצרים?

The Gemara Yerushalmi famously comments on a Mishna in Pesachim (10:1): “מניין לארבעה” - כוסות. רבי יוחנן בשם רבי בוןיה. כנגד ארבע גאולות...”, explaining that the four cups represent the four languages of redemption, each one a step closer to the climax of גאולה, that being “ולקחת” - becoming HaShem’s nation.

However, there is another gemara, this time in the Bavli, that specifically refers to the four cups, and as an extension, the whole concept of redemption, as a type of חירות - freedom. The gemara (Pesachim 108a) discusses if the four cups require reclining: “איתמר משמיה” - רב נחמן: צריך הסבה. ואיתמר משמיה דרב נחמן: אין צריך הסבה”. Since Rav Nachman couldn’t make up his mind, the gemara decided that he was talking about the first 2 cups in his first statement (need the הסבה), and the last two cups in the second statement (don’t need the הסבה). Then

the gemara says that some versions say the opposite: for the first two cups don’t recline, while for the last two, one should recline. If one should recline for only the first two, it’s because the גאולה experience, the recounting our freedom, is concluded by the end of Maggid, with the bracha “אשר גאולנו”, and thus the two final cups are not representative of the חירות we experienced in יציאת מצרים. On the other hand, if we recline only for the last two cups, it is because during the first half of the seder/during the first two cups, we talk about how “עבדים היינו”, while in the latter part of the seder, we are no longer talking about slavery. In the end, the gemara also can’t make up its mind, and decides that all four cups require the הסבה! With a closer look at the Gemara, there is an apparent contradiction: we use Maggid as a proof that we should do the הסבה for the first two cups, while at the same time, we use it as the reason why we should only recline for the last two cups! Which one is it?

We know that while Maggid/the first half of the seder is all about יציאת מצרים, the conclusion of the seder, specifically Nirtzah, is focused on Mashiach. Perhaps Rav Nachman was using this distinction as well: we should recline for the first two cups in remembrance of the חירות which we experienced in Egypt. Conversely, we should also recline for the last two cups, which represent the final גאולה. Therefore it follows that women should be included in the obligation to drink the first two cups which represent our freedom from מצרים, while they should also be included in the last two cups as well - we will all be part of the final redemption. And what better mitzvah to use for “אף הן”, if not the four cups, which are directly representative of our redemption, both past and future.

As we drink four cups of wine this year, may we be reminded of the miracle of redemption, not only as a story to retell, but, במהרה בימינו, as a reality to relive, בעזרת ה’!

הא לחמא עניא

More Than Unbaked Bread: The Deeper Meaning of Matzah

Coby Kellerstein, Grade 12

Pesach is my favorite holiday for one main reason: matzah with cream cheese. However, the Haggadah seems to disagree with my enthusiasm and instead describes matzah as לחם עני - the bread of the poor. During Maggid we declare: הא לחמא עניא די אכלו אבהתא בארעא - דמצרים, כל דכפין יתי ויכול (This is the bread of poverty that our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. Whoever is hungry, let him come and eat.)

But this raises an interesting question. If matzah is the “bread of the poor,” why is it the food we offer to guests who are hungry? Imagine inviting people - Jews or non-Jews - who are in need, and serving them what we ourselves call the bread of poverty.

In Shemot, after Bnei Yisrael left Egypt, Hashem commands: מצות יאכל שבעת ימים - “Matzot shall be eaten for seven days.” On a simple peshat level, the verse is telling us that we should eat matzah for the seven days of Pesach. However, the wording of the verse is somewhat unusual. The verb יאכל appears in a passive form and in the singular. If the Torah simply meant “you shall eat matzot for seven days,” we might have expected the verse to say מצות תאכלו שבעת ימים. Why, then, does the Torah phrase it as יאכל?

One possible explanation emerges when we remember that the Torah was originally written without nekudot - vowel markings. The word מצות (mem, tzadi, vav, tav) can be read not only as matzot, but also as mitzvot. If we read the verse this way, it suggests a deeper idea: for the seven days of Pesach, the mitzvot themselves are expressed through what is eaten.

Every holiday has its central mitzvah. On Sukkot, it is dwelling in the sukkah and taking the lulav and etrog. On Rosh Hashanah, it

is hearing the shofar. On Shavuot, it is often associated with Torah learning. But on Pesach, the central mitzvot are tied directly to food - the matzah, the maror, and the symbolic foods that help us relive the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim. מצות יאכל שבעת ימים can therefore be understood to mean that, for these seven days, the mitzvot themselves are “eaten.” The experience of the holiday is literally brought into our mouths.

With this in mind, we can return to our original question. Perhaps matzah is called the “bread of the poor” not only because of its historical association with slavery, but also because mitzvot themselves nourish those who may be spiritually lacking. When we invite guests to our table on Pesach, we are not offering them only physical food. We are also offering them mitzvot - sustenance for both the body and the soul.

This idea may also shed light on a verse in the section ויהי כי יביאך, which speaks about passing the story of Pesach to the next generation. The Torah says: למען תוהיה תורת ה' בפיך - “so that the Torah of Hashem will be in your mouth.” The Torah is not meant to remain distant or abstract; it is meant to be בפיך - in your mouth, like the food we eat.

Seen in this way, offering the “bread of the poor” to those who are hungry is not an odd form of charity. Rather, it is a powerful symbol. On Pesach we provide nourishment not only for those who lack food, but also for those who seek meaning, memory, and connection. Matzah therefore represents more than a simple cracker - it becomes a reminder that the mitzvot of Pesach sustain both our bodies and our souls.

מה נשתנה

A Night of Questions:
The Power of Inquiry
in Torah and Life

Rabbi Eddie Shostak
Menahel Yeshivat Or Chaim

Jewish life is defined by questions. From our earliest traditions, asking questions has been the gateway to learning, growth, and connection. Nowhere is this more evident than on the night of the Seder. As we settle around the table, a child is placed in the spotlight to ask, Mah Nishtana?—"Why is this night different from all other nights?" And as the evening draws to a close, we join together in unison to ask, Echad Mi Yodea?—"Who knows one?" This ritual highlights a fundamental truth: Judaism thrives on inquiry.

Yet not all questions are equal. Some foster connection, understanding, and spiritual growth, while others can create distance, doubt, or even disintegration. In Torah study, the questions we ask shape how we relate to the text, to each other, and to Hashem. Consider questions like, "Why does the Torah emphasize loving your neighbor as yourself?" or "What can we learn from Yosef's resilience in Egypt?" These inquiries invite reflection, moral insight, and practical application, allowing the Torah to resonate deeply in our daily lives. By contrast, questions asked with cynicism or resentment—"Why should we follow these outdated laws?" or "Is Torah really relevant today?"—can foster alienation and spiritual disengagement. The challenge lies in cultivating the art of asking questions that illuminate, inspire, and connect us to the eternal wisdom of Torah.

Rav Hutner teaches that just as the Wicked Son uses the word lachem—"to you"—in his question for which he is criticized, the Wise Son uses similar language Etchem—"you". The distinction lies not in the words themselves but

in the tone, intention, and openness behind the question. Only a question genuinely asked as a question contributes to the fulfillment of the commandment to discuss the Exodus on seder night.

A genuine question presupposes a relationship; it implies a desire to understand and engage. The Wicked Son weaponizes his question, seeking confrontation rather than connection. In contrast, the Wise Son's inquiry builds bridges, deepens understanding, and fulfills the mitzvah of the night. Modern research confirms the value of questioning in human development. In *A More Beautiful Question*, Warren Berger notes that children naturally ask thousands of questions, but social pressures often suppress this curiosity in adolescence. Those who retain the ability to ask thoughtful, probing questions become innovators, problem-solvers, and learners for life. At the Seder, questions serve a similar purpose: to cultivate curiosity, to invite learning, and to awaken the freedom to explore, probe, and grow.

Chazal teach, "Who is wise? He who learns from all people" (Avot 4:1). The Talmud praises the student willing to humble himself, to ask "stupid" questions, knowing that such humility leads to elevated understanding (Brachot 63b). Rav Yehuda HaLevi likens the Jewish people to a symphony: every instrument, every voice, every perspective is essential. The Kabbalists teach that each Jew represents a single letter of Torah; missing a letter invalidates the whole. Each question, each voice, is critical and contributes to the richness of the collective wisdom of Israel.

In Jewish life and at the Seder table, we are all hungry for answers. But the first step toward understanding is the courage to ask good questions—questions that open our hearts, connect us to each other, and bring us closer to Hashem. True freedom and nation building, as the Seder demonstrates, is not only the capacity to answer but the capacity to inquire, reflect, and grow.

עבדים היינו

The Song of Slavery

**Rabbi Yehuda Mann, Rosh Beit Midrash
Zichron Dov, Judaics Or Chaim**

A few years ago, I had the privilege of taking my children to Orlando to visit Disney's Magic Kingdom. As a child, Disney was the highlight of my childhood, so you can imagine how excited I was to share this experience with my own children. However, I couldn't take them to my absolute favorite ride, Splash Mountain. It was closed for renovations. Later on I heard that I'll never be able to take them on it because Disney is completely redoing it. They're changing the story and replacing that catchy song, Zip-a-Dee-Doo-Dah. Why? Because they've decided that Splash Mountain is... racist.

The obvious question is: how can a ride be racist? Apparently, the ride is based on a movie from 1946 called Song of the South. The film has gotten a lot of criticism because it shows a young boy on a plantation, surrounded by African American slaves who seem happy – singing and smiling as if everything's wonderful, giving the impression that slavery wasn't so bad, chas v'shalom.

However, this phenomenon of people seeming content in slavery didn't start with Song of the South. The Chiddushei HaRim, the first Rebbe of Ger, pointed out that something similar happened with our own ancestors in Mitzrayim. In Tehillim (106:44), it says: "He saw their distress [in Egypt] when He heard their song." The Rebbe asks a sharp question: If they were in distress, how could they be singing? The Rebbe explains that this was the deepest cruelty of Mitzrayim. The Jews had become so used to the suffering that they didn't even realize they were suffering anymore! They got used to the backbreaking work, to the humiliation, and thought, "Nu, this is life." They started to believe that this is normal. The Rebbe further elucidates this idea through the verse in Shemot [6:7]: "I am the Lord, who brought you out from under the 'Sivlot' of Egypt." Sivlot doesn't only mean

burden. But rather "Savalnut"-patience, acceptance of their oppression.

We see this same idea in the Midrash Tanchuma. The Midrash explains how it all started. Pharaoh didn't just announce, "You're slaves now." That would've been too obvious. Instead, he approached the Jews and said, "Let's work together on this big project! Do me a favor, help out just for today." Pharaoh himself picked up a basket and shovel, so everyone thought, "Wow, if Pharaoh is working, we should too!" It started off almost like a fun community project. But slowly, without anyone noticing, it turned into slavery. By the time they realized what had happened, it was too late. The Rambam, in his Iggeret HaMusar (Letter of Ethical Guidance), teaches us that Pharaoh represents the yetzer hara (evil inclination). Just like Pharaoh, the yetzer hara doesn't show up with chains and a whip. No, no – it starts off with a sweet voice, a peh rach (gentle speech).

The yetzer hara might say, "You should really get a smartphone – it's so convenient! You'll love it. It'll make your life easier." And at first, it feels great! But before you know it, you're a slave to your phone. The emails, the notifications, the constant pressure—it's always with you, even and especially during family time. Or take work for an example. Getting a promotion sounds wonderful – extra money, extra kavod. But if you spend all your time working, what's left of you for your family? The yetzer hara today doesn't need to oppress us with chains. Instead, it tempts us with things that seem good – so good, we don't even realize we're becoming enslaved. Like the Jews in Mitzrayim, we sing along, not recognizing the distress beneath the surface: "He saw their distress when He heard their song... As we celebrate Pesach and learn the stories of Yetziat Mitzrayim, let's think about our own personal exodus. May we have the clarity and strength to take charge of the blessings in our lives, so they serve us – not the other way around.

עבדים היינו

Why we still tell our stories

Yosef Dov Otis, Grade 9

Avadim Hayinu is one of the most quintessential parts of the Seder, if there can be one. Most Divrei Torah, maamarim, and questions surrounding it focus on the first half. Why would we still be in Egypt? Why is this the first part of the seder? Why does it say a strong hand and an outstretched arm? But there's something that is rarely focused on. The end of Avadim Hayinu says, "And even were we all wise, all intelligent, all aged and all knowledgeable in the Torah, still the command would be upon us to tell of the coming out of Egypt." Why? Why do we still need to talk about Yetziat Mitzrayim? Most people will have dozens, if not hundreds, of Seders in their lives. We all know the story. And clearly, the Haggadah knows this, including the wisest and oldest of us in the mitzva. I think that the real answer is simple. Jews have always been a storytelling people. We're called the People of the Book because we have thousands of them – The Golem of Prague, Chelm, and the many stories about Shlomo HaMelech are just a few. We don't tell these stories because we might forget them. We tell them because they are part of us, and if we were missing even a tiny scrap, we would lose who we are. And that is the real reason we retell the Pesach story.

ברוך המקום

The "Place" We Can Call Home

Rabbi Moshe Rose, Judaics Or Chaim

As we read through the Pesach Haggadah and we start Maggid, telling the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim, we quickly arrive at the much anticipated section where we introduce the ever famous Four Sons. If your family seder at all resembles some of mine from previous years, this is also the point where people try

to maneuver ahead of time to make sure they are sitting in the seat that will read the section of the Chacham over any of the other three sons. Nevertheless, there is the glaring question about what makes this part of Maggid such a special part to read.

If we look at the meaning of the words it is understood as we are thanking and sanctifying Hashem who gave us the Torah, and we can learn Torah from the perspective of one of the four sons. Interestingly, this portion begins with the words Baruch HaMakom. In modern Hebrew the word Makom can be translated as "place", however in our case here, and in other parts of Torah and Tefillah, it is used as one of the names of Hashem. In greeting someone in mourning, we say המקום הנחם or the Gemara in Brachot states המקום ימלא חסרון (Hashem will fill what you are lacking or missing), and in Masechet Shabbat it reads מחרי טוקמה (Hashem will be merciful). Rav Shimon Schwab zt"l, points out that it would appear that the cases where we refer to Hashem by the name HaMakom, it is when we are distressed or in difficult times. By using this name for Hashem, we are recognizing that we are turning to Him, that we believe in him and that we recognize that this is His world and anything that is distressing to us is from our perspective, not His, because the entire world is His place, and He doesn't make mistakes.

We say this phrase as part of our introduction of the mitzvah of retelling the story of מצרים to our children. However not everyone has been blessed with children or are at a stage of life to be expected to have children. Perhaps we can see this not as a mitzvah that is only applicable to some people, but perhaps we are not understanding all of the aspects of the mitzvah. If we look at the words we read, we are blessing Hashem, who gave the Torah to his nation, Israel. If we focus on the Makom being the name we use

for Hashem for giving us the Torah, and we connect it to the mitzvah of **סִפּוּר יציאת מצרים**, we can explain that the reason that Hashem took us from Mitzrayim was to give us the Torah, and the Torah is for all of us, whether we are the **חכם, רשע, תם, או שאינו יודע לשאול**.

To further cement this idea, we know that we celebrate Shavuot seven weeks after Pesach. We celebrate Shavuot as **זמן מתן תורתנו**. However it is also the time that we bring the **ביכורים**. Interestingly, the pasuk in Parashat Ki Tavo that discusses bringing this korban reads that we should take the first of our fruits from the land that Hashem gave to us, **וְהִלַּכְתָּ אֵל, הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר יִבְחַר ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשָׁכֹן שְׁמוֹ שָׁם**. While the simple translation is understood as us going to the place (ie the Beit Hamikdash), perhaps it could be understood as us growing closer to Hashem, growing closer to **הַמָּקוֹם**, through learning and living His Torah, regardless of which of the four sons we get to read at the Pesach Seder.

ארבע בנים

The Lesson of the One Who Doesn't Know How To Ask

Michael Vishnever, Grade 9

We all know the Arbah Banim: Wise, Wicked, Simple, and One who does not know how to ask. However, these seem random with only a small connection to Pesach. Without these four, our Seders would be a bit shorter, and there would be no lasting change. So the question is, why?

Everything comes to teach us something, no matter how inconsequential it seems, and so too does the Arbah Banim. Each one of the sons represents a part of ourselves: knowledge, arrogance, humility, and ingenuosness.

The Chacham is knowledge; he represents the part of each of us who strives to learn new things. The Rasha represents arrogance; he is the part of us that is narcissistic and egotistical, viewing ourselves as above everyone else. The Tam represents humility. He is the one who is

**בָּרוּךְ הַמָּקוֹם, בָּרוּךְ הוּא,
בָּרוּךְ שֶׁנָּתַן תּוֹרָה לְעַמּוֹ
יִשְׂרָאֵל, בָּרוּךְ הוּא. כְּנֶגֶד
אֲרַבְּעָה בָּנִים דִּבְרָה תּוֹרָה:
אֶחָד חָכֵם, וְאֶחָד רָשָׁע,
וְאֶחָד תָּם, וְאֶחָד שְׂאִינוֹ
יּוֹדֵעַ לְשֹׁאֹל**

modest, doesn't brag about smarts, and doesn't succumb to his egotistical nature. These all seem pretty clear when you think about it, but the one who doesn't know how to ask, what about him? Well, he is a bit different; he represents our ingenuous nature. He is the one who is just a child; he doesn't even know how to ask a question. Unlike the arrogance, knowledge, and humility shown by the other sons, he represents humanity's strive to be unbiased, someone with a pure view of the world. Rather than him being dumb, which is what one wants to avoid, he is the one we all strive to be like: pure at heart and unable to question how the world works because he trusts in G-d.

In Sefer Shemos, we have one person quite like the one who does not know how to ask. Her name is Yocheved, and she sends her son into a river on his own without knowing what will happen. She had such emunah in Hashem that she didn't ask someone to watch him; she didn't hold on to him. She entrusted Hashem to protect her family no matter what. This is the kind of mindset each of us should try to achieve. Now, when you read the Arbah Banim at your seder, remember the lesson we learn from the one who doesn't know how to ask and strive to find that same pure faith.

ברוך שומר הבטחתו

The Freedom to Notice

Rabbi Avishai Kharilkar, Shaliach, Director of Student Life

We are a people of miracles. There's a well-known joke about Jewish holidays: "They tried to kill us, Hashem saved us, now let's eat." Behind the humor lies something very real. Every holiday carries layers of gratitude. We have survived, been protected, and been carried through history in ways that defy explanation. There is always so much to thank Hashem for. But on Pesach, חז"ל chose a unique way to express that gratitude. Instead of one overarching song of praise, they gave us a long list of stages. After each one we say: That alone would have been enough - Dayenu.

Why structure our thanks this way? Perhaps because Dayenu can only be said from a place of freedom. When a person is enslaved, they are focused only on survival. When you are controlled by something, whether it be fear, pressure, pain, you can't see beyond it. You see only the immediate struggle. Everything becomes about getting through the next moment, but the moment we stepped out of slavery and into freedom, something shifted. We could lift our heads. We could look around. We could finally see. And after that moment, suddenly, every detail mattered. Through the lens of redemption, each stage of Dayenu stands as a complete miracle on its own: Leaving Egypt. Walking through the Sea. Being sustained in the desert for forty years.

Ultimately, we needed the entire journey. But each step alone was a complete miracle. We have seen this perspective even in our own generation. Those who have returned from captivity and survived unimaginable darkness often speak about how, once free, they feel gratitude for the smallest things - sunlight, fresh air, a simple meal, the presence of family.

Freedom sharpens appreciation.

In the rush of daily life, we rarely pause to notice how much we're thankful for. But when we step back and see the full picture, we are often overwhelmed by how much goodness quietly surrounds us. It is not obvious that we can see, hear, taste, speak, move, think, learn, walk, and run. That we have a roof over our heads, a warm meal, a bed to sleep in, people who love us.

That is the message of Dayenu. Only when we pause at each stage, reflect on it, and give it space, And only then can we say, honestly and fully: how much more so we are appreciative of all of the goodness we've received from Hashem, multiplied again, and again.

Rav Kook deepens this idea. In Ein Ayah (Shabbat 5:12), he writes that the greatness of the Holy One, blessed be He, is revealed not only in grand and dramatic events, but just as much in the small, individual details. Just as we say, "How great are Your works, Hashem," we must also learn to say, "How small — and precise — are Your works, Hashem," about each and every detail that ultimately joins together to form one greater good. True freedom, then, is not just leaving Egypt. It is not focusing only on the black dot on a white page, but noticing how much white surrounds that dot. In a world where so many are enslaved to chasing what they do not have, real freedom is the ability to live with, and appreciate, what we already do have. Every single detail. Dayenu.

והיא שעמדה

The Strength of the **ברית** the Torah, and Unity

Rabbi Chaim Singer, Shaliach

On the night of the Seder we arrive at one of the most moving passages in the Haggadah:

והיא שעמדה לאבותינו ולנו שלא אחד בלבד עמד עלינו לבלותנו, אלא שבכל דור ודור עומדים עלינו לבלותנו, והקדוש ברוך הוא מצילנו מקדם

In its simple meaning, the word “והיא” refers to the promise that the HaShem, made to Avraham in the **ברית בין הבתרים**—that even if the people of Israel would undergo exile and suffering, in the end God would redeem them and preserve their existence. This is the promise that has stood by us throughout history. However, our Sages and the Kabbalists deepened the meaning of this small word—“והיא.” According to the Zohar, “והיא” alludes to the Torah. The Torah itself is also symbolized by a **ברית** - **למות הברית**. Cleaving to Torah with constant engagement can awaken that **ברית** between us and HaShem, and ensures our existence throughout the generations.

The Ari adds another profound interpretation: “והיא” refers to the Divine Presence—the Shechinah. God’s Presence dwelling within the Jewish People is what guarantees that they will not be abandoned nor destroyed. As it is written in Parashat Bechukotai (ויקרא כ:חמד):
וְאִי־נִסְיָאָת בְּהוֹתֶם בְּאֶרֶץ אֲנִיָּהֶם לֹא־מֵאֲסִתִּים וְלֹא־
“נִעְלָתִים לְכַלְתֶּם לְהַפֵּר בְּרִיתִי אִתְּם כִּי אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם

Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu added a new idea, emphasizing the second half of this passage: “אֲלֵא שֶׁבְּכָל דּוֹר וָדוֹר עוֹמְדִים עָלֵינוּ לְכַלּוֹתֵנוּ”. Throughout history, many enemies have arisen who sought to harm Bnei Yisrael. At times, these were spiritual decrees—aimed at undermining Torah and faith; at other times, physical decrees—aimed at harming us and our national existence. In every generation, hatred takes on new forms and appears in new ways.

Chazal teach that even Amalek knew how

to disguise himself. On the verse “וַיִּשְׁמַע הַכְּנַעֲנִי” **מִלֶּךְ־עֶרֶד**, the commentators explain that this refers to Amalek, who disguised himself as a Canaanite and altered his language. So too in our own times—those who hate Israel sometimes conceal their true intentions and present themselves as people of peace and culture, while in their hearts they plan harm against us.

But that’s not all. **והיא שעמדה** emphasizes yet another fundamental principle: “שֶׁלֹא אֶחָד בְּלִבְדּוּ” **עָמַד עָלֵינוּ לְכַלּוֹתֵנוּ** Gedolei Yisrael explained: if we are not one—if the people of Israel are scattered and divided—this itself may arouse forces that seek to harm us. On the flip side, when there is unity, there is special Divine protection. This was precisely the advice of Esther to Mordechai: “Go, gather together all the Jews.”

Haman claimed that the Jewish people were “מִפְּזוּר וּמִפְּרֵד בֵּין הָעַמִּים” - scattered and divided. The response to this accusation was the strengthening of unity. Therefore, the great message of “והיא שעמדה” is not merely a historical account, but a call for all generations. The Torah, the Divine Presence, and the covenant with the Holy One, blessed be He, accompany the people of Israel at all times—but for this power to be fully revealed, we must strengthen our connection to Torah and our unity with one another.

With God’s help, on the night of the Seder, when entire families sit around one table and recount the story of Yetziat Mitzrayim, we are in fact continuing that same “והיא שעמדה.” Every act of Torah study, every good deed, and every strengthening of unity among Jews is part of the force that preserves the people of Israel throughout all generations.

Thus we can understand the depth of the words of the Haggadah: Not only did the HaShem save us in the past—but in every generation there exist spiritual forces that continue to stand by us: the Torah, the Shechina, and unity. This is “והיא שעמדה לאבותינו ולנו”: What stood for our ancestors will stand for us as well. **פסח כשר ושמו ומאוד!**

צא ולמד

Pharoah and Lavan, A Lesson in Hakarat HaTov

Mr. Jonathan Parker, Principal Bnei Akiva Schools

The section of the Haggadah that begins with “צא ולמד” is, to be honest, a little bit confusing. We learn that “שְׁפָרְעָה לֹא נָזַר אֶלָּא עַד” (הַזְכִּירִים, וְלָכֵן בִּקֵּשׁ לַעֲקֹר אֶת־הַכֹּל אֲרָמִי אֲבֹד אֲבִי, וְיָרַד מִצְרָיִם וְיָגֵר” “שָׁם בְּמִתֵּי קַעֲס, וְיַהֲרִישׁ לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל עָצוּם וְרַב לָכֵן” did was worse than what שְׁפָרְעָה did if it turned our wandering Aramean forebears into a great nation?

Rashi explains this in his commentary from לָכֵן בִּקֵּשׁ לַעֲקֹר אֶת־ הַכֹּל כְּשֶׁרָדָף אַחֵר יַעֲקֹב, וּבְשִׁבְלִי שֶׁחֲשַׁב לַעֲשׂוֹת חֲשֹׁב לוֹ “הַמָּקוֹם גָּאֻלֹּם עָשָׂה” Because לָכֵן planned to kill the only Jew (i.e. the entire nation) at the time it is treated as though he did it, even though שְׁפָרְעָה actually went through with killing Jewish male babies. In this understanding, yes, לָכֵן was worse.

The מדרש תנחומא makes this even more pointed. Through a comparison of phrases in the two narratives, the מדרש arrives at the conclusion that “בְּלִעָם זֶה לָכֵן, שֶׁנֶּאֱמָר: אֲרָמִי אֲבֹד אֲבִי” (דברים כו, ה), וְעַל שֶׁבִקֵּשׁ לְכַלּוֹת אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל נִקְרָא אֲרָמִי”; it believes that לָכֵן and בְּלִעָם are one and the same because both sought to destroy the Jewish nation. This, too, ties back to the earlier inclusion of שְׁפָרְעָה.

While we can certainly understand why these narratives would appear in the Haggadah - after all, it is home to the phrase “בְּכִלְדוֹר” - it isn’t clear why these are the foundational text of the בכורים. Perhaps because the nature of the בכורים is to show gratitude. The Haggadah, if not the entire Torah and Jewish liturgy, is about extending הַתְּהִלָּה הַטּוֹב to God for all that has been done for the Jewish people. Most modern societies like to proclaim that they’ve overcome obstacles by force of will, by military might, or by outstanding reason and resourcefulness, but the Haggadah, through the inclusion of the primary text of the בכורים,

ground the Jewish nation’s own triumph in God’s design. As such, as much as we celebrate our Aramean roots, and Moshe, and all of the other Jewish heroes both ancient and modern, even more so we need to understand that with God none of it would be possible.

פסח מצה ומרור

The Obligation of Pesach, Matzah and Marror

Rabbi Ezer Diena

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Rabban Gamliel was accustomed to say, Anyone who has not said these three things on Pesach has not fulfilled his obligation, and these are them: the Pesach sacrifice, matzah and Marror. (Mishnah Pesachim 10:5, Sefaria Haggadah translation)

In this very strong statement, Rabban Gamliel declares that saying “Pesach,” “Matzah” and “Marror” are an integral part of the Seder night experience. As the Mishnah continues, and as Rashbam (Pesachim 116b) explains, one is required not only to say these actual words, but also to explain why we eat these three foods on Pesach.

One issue that is left unresolved by Rashbam and others is a very technical, but obvious, question. What is the obligation which Rabban Gamliel says one does not fulfill? There are a number of mitzvot and obligations that we try to fulfill on Seder Night, but which one is being discussed here?

Rabbi Yaakov Ettlinger (Aruch Laner to Sukkah 28a) cites Tosfot (Pesachim 116b), who understands the verse “you shall say, ‘It is the passover sacrifice to the LORD...” (Shemot 12:27; JPS translation) to mean that one only

fulfills the obligation of eating the Korban Pesach (Pesach sacrifice) if they declare it as such and explain its reason. Tosfot further explain that since the laws of eating the Pesach sacrifice and the laws of consuming Matzah and Marror are compared to one another, the same law of declaring the purpose prior to eating would apply to them. Thus, according to Tosfot, we have not fulfilled the mitzvah of eating the Pesach, Matzah and Marror unless we first explain why we do so.

Although he lived after Rabbi Ettlinger, Rabbi Baruch Epstein (Baruch She'amar commentary on the Haggadah) offers an alternate suggestion as to why we might be obligated to recite this passage. He argues that this may be a modified version of the general rule that all mitzvot require one to have to correct focus and intention prior to being performed. Nevertheless, he still understands Rabban Gamliel to be discussing the actual mitzvot of Pesach, Matzah and Marror.

There are a number of issues with this approach. Firstly, we incorporate this passage in the Maggid section, rather than directly prior to the consumption of the Matzah and Marror. Wouldn't it be better to place it alongside the eating? Furthermore, we don't eat the Pesach nowadays, yet still recite this passage; if it is indeed part of the mitzvah of Korban Pesach, why should we bother?!

Despite not voicing any specific objections, Rabbi Ettlinger himself feels that the view above is forced, and therefore offers an alternative. The mitzvah being discussed, he writes, is that of Sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim, the obligation to retell the story of the exodus from Egypt on Seder Night. This fits in much better with the context of this passage, being part of Maggid, in which we fulfill this obligation, and Pesach, despite our not actually eating it, is all about the miracle of Hashem sparing us from Makkat Bechorot. But why should mentioning Matzah and Marror be a critical part of this mitzvah? They don't seem to be central to the Exodus story at all, and even if they would be

omitted, we would still have all of the amazing miracles to thank G-d for! Perhaps this speaks to the nature of our Sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim on Seder Night. The Matzah and Marror are still being eaten now, at our Seder. Thus, the retelling of the Exodus cannot just be about the past; Rabban Gamliel is telling us that we need to connect our past to our present, our actions at the Seder. If the Seder remains about what happened thousands of years ago, one has completely missed the point, and therefore, does not fulfill their obligation. We see this theme across the Haggadah (including in the passage which immediately follows) – we have to view ourselves, now, as if we left Egypt! If we wouldn't have been taken out by Hashem, we would still be enslaved there today! This is also what is emphasized by the Haggadah's statement that one must recite the Haggadah "at the time that the Matzah and Marror are placed in front of us." It's not because they remind us of what was, but rather, show us just how much of a part of our current lives this miracle is. If so, one might ask, why the obligation to discuss the Korban Pesach? That doesn't connect to the present! The answer to this question might be that unlike the Matzah and Marror, the Korban Pesach is, indeed, a critical part of the story that must be told. Alternatively, perhaps we may expand this idea. As we express at the end of Maggid, and again at the end of the Nirtzah, we look forward to next year, when we hope and pray that we will partake in the Pesach sacrifice, offered in the rebuilt Beit Hamikdash. The Pesach that we discuss at our Seder represents that connection to the future; not only is the Exodus relevant to us here and now, but it will continue to remain relevant even in the future. May we soon celebrate a Pesach on which we can point to all three of the Pesach, Matzah and Marror in front of us, and celebrate not just the exodus from Egypt, but our ultimate redemption as well.

בכל דור ודור Covenant and Conversation

Sammy Simon, Grade 12

One of the most well-known reasons the Torah gives for a mitzvah, specifically, the prohibition against wronging a convert, is: “כי גרים הייתם בארץ מצרים.” Traditionally, we understand this to mean: treat the convert well, because you too were strangers in a foreign land. However, Chazal point to something much more fundamental. In *בריתות ט*, the Gemara models the process of conversion that a non-Jew must undergo on the process the Jewish nation underwent when entering a covenant with God, as the nation essentially experienced a kind of mass conversion.

The Rambam (משנה תורה, הלכות איסורי ביאה) explains that the first of these steps, circumcision, took place in Egypt, and that the circumcision was actually a part of *יצאת מצרים*, as being circumcised was required to partake in the Korban Pesach. He further explains that the entire nation, except for Shevet Levi, was uncircumcised. Not only had circumcision become a condition for inclusion in the redemption and, by extension, the covenant, but the vast majority of the nation actually had to take that step and start the process of converting.

יצאת מצרים thus marked the moment in which the Jewish nation actively chose to take upon themselves Torah and mitzvot, and started to convert to Judaism, so to speak.

When the Torah says “כי גרים הייתם בארץ מצרים,” it may not only be telling the nation to sympathize because they experienced what the convert experienced, but something deeper: that they share a common identity. In a sense, they, too, are converts, and they, too, chose to be part of this covenantal relationship.

It is with this in mind that the passage in the Haggadah, “בכל דור ודור חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאילו הוא יצא ממצרים,” takes on a whole new meaning. Not only must we see ourselves as if we personally left Egypt, but we must also see ourselves as actively choosing, again and again, to convert, to be part of the Jewish nation and its covenant, just as *יצאת מצרים* marked the moment our ancestors chose to convert and take the first step in accepting the Torah and mitzvot.

(Based on a shiur given by Rabbi Aaron Katchen)

בכל דור ודור Yetziat Mitzrayim Every Day

Ami Goldberg, Grade 10

In the Haggadah we say, “בכל דור ודור חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאילו הוא יצא ממצרים” - “in every generation a person is obligated to see themselves as if they personally left Egypt. The Alter Rebbe explains in Tanya (chapter 47) that this idea applies not only in every generation, but every single day. Each day a person must leave their own personal “Mitzrayim.” Just as Mitzrayim was a place of limitation and slavery, we also have things that limit us. Our physical desires and our yetzer hara can sometimes hold us back from doing what Hashem wants us to do.

When we connect to Hashem through Torah and mitzvot, and especially when we accept Hashem’s Ol Malchut Shamayim during Kriat Shema, we are able to “rise above” the yetzer hara and do what Hashem truly wants of us. But if this happens, or is meant to happen every day, what makes Pesach special? In Judaism, there are certain times in the year that give extra ‘strength’ to simple mitzvot that make us focus on them more throughout the year. For example, we accept Hashem’s kingship every day, but Rosh Hashanah strengthens our Kabbalat Ol Malchut Shamayim, and even though we learn Torah every day, Shavuot is an extra special time for receiving it.

Similarly, while we remember Yetziyat Mitzrayim every day, the night of Pesach gives us the strength and inspiration to continue leaving our personal “Mitzrayim” throughout the entire year.

The lesson is that tonight, sitting at the seder, we're not just remembering Yetziat Mitzrayim - we're getting the strength to leave our own Mitzrayim and defeating our yetzer hara every single day for the rest of the year.

מוציא מצה

The Status of Stolen Matzah on Yom Tov Sheini

Binyamin Zahavi, Grade 11

There are two primary mitzvos of Pesach: first, the prohibition against eating or owning chametz, and second, the obligation to eat matzah on the first night. We will focus on the latter.

It is clear that one cannot fulfill this mitzvah with stolen matzah, since such an act constitutes *מצוה הבאה בעבירה*, that is, a mitzvah achieved through an aveirah. Because the mitzvah was only possible through theft, one's performance of the mitzvah of matzah is invalid and one has not fulfilled the obligation.

In Siman 95, the Shaagas Aryeh, authored by Rabbi Aryeh Leib ben Asher Ginzburg, addresses whether stolen matzah may be used on the second night of Pesach. The institution of a second night of Yom Tov stems from uncertainty about the correct calendar date of the holiday, and therefore its purpose is to ensure proper fulfillment of the original Torah obligation. Accordingly, the same disqualification that applies on the first night would seemingly apply on the second.

However, the Shaagas Aryeh notes a parallel from the Rambam regarding lulav. Although a stolen lulav is invalid on the first day of Sukkos, it may be used on subsequent days, including the second day. This raises the question: should stolen matzah likewise be adequate on the second night of Pesach?

He explains that the cases differ. On Sukkos, there exists a Rabbinic mitzvah to take the lulav for the rest of Sukkos, beginning on the second day. For that obligation a stolen lulav is

sufficient. On Pesach, by contrast, there is no Rabbinic obligation to eat matzah throughout the festival. The sole mitzvah to actively eat matzah is the Torah requirement of the first night. Since stolen matzah is invalid then due to *מצוה הבאה בעבירה*, it remains invalid on the second night as well, whose role is only to safeguard proper fulfillment of the original mitzvah.

May our honest and careful observance of the halachos of this holiday help us experience the Seder in its fullest depth, and merit a Pesach of freedom and growth.

לֹא-תֹאכַל עָלָיו
חֶמֶץ שִׁבַּעַת יָמִים
תֹּאכַל-עָלָיו מִצּוֹת
לֶחֶם עֲנִי כִּי בְּחַפְזוֹן
יֵצְאָתָּ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם
לְמַעַן תִּזְכֹּר אֶת-יְיָ
צִאתְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם
כָּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ
(דברים טז:ג)

מרור

Why is Maror mentioned last?

Justin Beldeb, Grade 11

We read in the Hagadah each year that Rabban Gamliel used to say that one who does not mention the following three things by their seder has not fulfilled their obligation, they are: Pesach, Matza, and Maror. We see a problem with this order however. Afterall, the first thing that actually took place was Maror, as Maror represents the bitterness of the Egyptians enslaving Bnei Yisrael. Only after did the other two happen, of Hashem passing over the Jewish homes, symbolized by the Korban Pesach, and escaping from Egypt, symbolized by the Matza as the bread did not rise in time. So how come Maror is not mentioned first?

To answer this we must branch off into Parshat Tzav, the parsha right before Pesach begins. Parashat Tzav speaks about all of the Korban Offerings. One of the Korban offerings was the Korban Tamid. This sacrifice was given whenever a person overcame a potentially life threatening occurrence to give thanks to Hashem for saving him. It says in Vayikra Rabbah that all personal sacrifices will be gone when Mashiach comes because there will be no more sinning. However the Korban Tamid

is excluded from this statement. The obvious question we can ask is why, though? It says in Yeshayahu (10,6): "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb and the leopard shall lie with the kid..." referring to how in the Messianic era there will be no more life-threatening occurrences. If this is so that there will be no more life-threatening occurrences, why would a Korban Tamid be needed? A potential answer can be given as follows. When Mashiach comes we will be able to look back on all the suffering we went through and be able to appreciate all Hashem has done for us and thank him for it through giving the Korban Tamid.

Therefore it makes sense why we mention Maror last because sometimes only after we are redeemed from difficult situations and good befalls us that we can think back to the suffering and thank Hashem for all that he does for us constantly. We will be able to appreciate that even the bad things that happened to us were really for the good and for what was needed. Therefore we can thank Hashem not just for the Pesach and Matza, but so too for the Maror that represents all the suffering that Hashem helped us get through. May we be Zocheh to Mashiach coming soon in our days in order that we can truly understand the light and be thankful for all of the suffering Hashem has helped us overcome.

כורֶךְ

The Modern Sandwich

Aron Simon, Grade 9

During the Pesach Seder at the 10th step, we use the matzah, maror, and charoset to create a sandwich. The real question is why? The reason is because before the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash, Rabbi Hillel would make a sandwich himself using the matzah, bitter herbs, and maror. We commemorate the Passover sandwich that would be made during the times of the first Beit HaMikdash

by making one of our own, just like Rabbi Hillel. Before we bite into the sandwich we say, "Thus did Hillel do at the time of the Holy Temple: He would combine Passover (lamb), matzah and maror and eat them together, as it said: 'They shall eat it with matzah and bitter herbs.'"

So, what can we take away from this sandwich? In the last two and half years, we have, as a Jewish people, witnessed literal miracles being performed right before our eyes as Israel has taken down nation after nation who wanted to destroy us. While not all of us

have been on the front lines, we have all helped in our own way; whether it be by saying Tehillim, making donations to those in need in Israel, fundraising for Israel, or by davening in shul with extra kavanah, we have all helped in one way or another.

All of the pieces of the sandwich represent something different; the matzah represents the Jewish people's journey to freedom, the maror represents the harsh slavery the Jews went through, and the charoset represents the mortar and clay the Jewish people used to build storehouses for Pharaoh. When we put all of these ingredients and their meanings together we get something new and special, the Pesach sandwich, the Korech.

When you take all of the pieces of the Jewish people nowadays, the IDF, the Rebbeim all over the world, the bachurs in Yeshiva learning and saying Tehillim every day, the mothers making the blessing on the Shabbos candles,

and even the young children all over the world just learning how to sing Adon Olam or Ashrei, you make something special.

If you take all of the meaning behind the ingredients on the Seder plate and put them together, the freedom, the conditions of the slavery we fought through, and the actual materials we used during the slavery, we get something new and exciting to remember that Hashem is always with us through the toughest of times. We can make another sandwich this year, one where every ingredient is positive in its own way, the army fighting for us, the Rebbeim inspiring us, and all the Jews praying for us all over the world can all come together to create a new sandwich of victory and joy when all of our enemies are defeated for good. Mashiach will be here soon. Chag Pesach Sameach!

הלל

The Split in Hallel and The Redemption That Never Stopped

Coby Berger, Grade 12

Em HaBanim Semecha, Haleluya..... B'Tzeit Yisroel MiMitzraim Beit Yaakov MeAm Loiez..... Wait! Why did you just start saying the second paragraph of Hallel? We only say the first and then continue with the rest after Bentching! Now if you are confused, I don't blame you; after all, the practice today is to say the first two paragraphs of Hallel and continue with the last 4 after Barech. But if you were sitting at the table of someone from Beit Shammai, this conversation would have happened if you started the second paragraph.

The Mishna (Pesachim 10:6) brings down this very Machloket between Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai. Concerning the splitting of Hallel, Beit Hillel claims that we should recite the first two paragraphs of Hallel and continue with the rest after the meal, whereas Beit Shammai argues that we should only recite the first paragraph before doing the last 5 after

the meal. Although we follow Beit Hillel, the question that arises is: What is the true Neku-dat HaMachloket between them? And perhaps this can reflect part of the meaning behind why we split up Hallel in the first place.

We must first note that Hallel has different parts. It begins off with a general paragraph of praise to Hashem for his divineness and compassion on us. Both Beit Hillel and Sham-mai agree that this paragraph needs to be recited immediately after Maggid, to express our praise to Hashem for all that he did for us in taking us out of Egypt. But after that, there are two more parts:

B'Tzeit Yisroel: This deals with the redemption from Egypt

The Final Four Paragraphs: These all slowly build up (and if you look deeper match Jew-

ish history) until the 6th paragraph which is all about the final Geula and redemption.

From this perspective, the answer becomes clearer. According to Beit Hillel, there will be two main redemptions in Jewish history. First, we had Geulat Mitzraim and in the future we will have Geulat HaMashiach. But seemingly Beit Shammai does not subscribe to this view. But to us that seems impossible. How is it possible to not have these two redemptions?

Rav Kook ZT"l teaches (Yisrael U'Techiyato 28) that in fact there are not two separate redemptions. Rather,

הגאולה נמשכת היא והולכת. גאולת מצרים וגאולת העתיד השלמה היא פעולה אחת שאינה פוסקת... משה ואליהו גואלים הם לגאולה אחת, המתחיל והגומה הפותח "החוחם הם יחד ממלאים את החסיבה"
"The redemption continues on and on. The redemption from Egypt and the complete redemption of the future are one act without stop... Moshe and Eliyahu are redeemers to one redemption, the starter and the one who completes, they are the opener and the signer together filling one great unit."

אדיר הוא

Singing at נרצה, and all the time?

Ezra Goldberg, Grade 12

At the end of the (Ashkenazi) Haggadah, **נרצה**, we have the piyut **הוא אדיר**. This piyut seems to have absolutely nothing to do with **פסח**. Yes, we talk about the traits of Hashem, but nothing uniquely connected. The obvious question is why is this here? Why are we singing it at the **סדר**?

Interestingly enough, some historical digging reveals that the **אדיר הוא** we have today seems to be a translation of a piyut written in Old German/Yiddish: **אלמעכטיגער גאט**. The two are almost identical, but the chorus in **אלמעכטיגער גאט** has one, very important, extra detail. The Hebrew just says "יבנה ביתו בקרוב" "נון בורא דיין טעמפל שירה." The Yiddish says "נון בורא דיין טעמפל שירה." The Hebrew seems to be posing a question to the Yiddish: why are we zeroing in on the song in the **בית המקדש**? **משינה מסכת**. I think the answer can be found in **משינה מסכת**. If we look at the entire **מסכת**, it's told as a story of the daily **עבודה**. This **כחן** would wake up, this lottery would happen, they would walk from place X to Y and do this on the way. The penultimate **משינה** ends with the line, **זה הוא סדר**, **התמיד לעבודת בית אלקינו**, **יהי רצון שנקנה במקרה ב'מינו**, **אמן**. It feels very conclusive. We talk about our topic, we finish, this is what we just talked about, may it once again be a reality, Amen.

Yet there is one more **משינה** in the **פרק**, seemingly disconnected from everything else. It is the **משינה** discussing the different songs sung by the **לויים** every day.

This **משינה** being here teaches us something very important. Although the daily **עבודה** centres fully around **קרבתנו**, that is not the only way to connect to Hashem. There are other procedures, other actions that one can take, that are also necessary.

When it comes to **אלמעכטיגער גאט**, the emphasis on the **שירה** teaches us that **גלות** isn't just solved by building the **בית המקדש**. It is solved through connecting to Hashem, whether through **תורה**, **שירה**, או מעשים טובים.

אדיר הוא יבנה ביתו בקרוב.
במהרה, במהרה, בימינו בקרוב. קל
בנה, קל בנה, בנה ביתך בקרוב

Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook writes in **אורות מאופל: ישראל ותחייתנו: כח/כט** that there is only one **גאולה**. It starts with Moshe, it ends with Eliyahu. Moshe was a leader who embodied **תורה**, Eliyahu embodied action. The **גאולה** is a time of merging, **הושב לב אבות**.

”על בנים ולב בנים על אבותם will combine with פועלת הַבּן in every person.

Going back to our original question, how **אדיר הוא** connects to **פסח**, the answer is now clear. The piyut is calling for the completion of the **פסח** story, which started with the **פסח** story, a **פסח** which will only come when as a people we can understand that there isn't one right way to connect to Hashem. We have the **שירה**, we have the **עבודה**. What we need to do is combine them, in the way that will connect us to Hashem the most.

זה הוא דרך גאולתנו, יהי רצון שיבוא במהרה בימינו אמן

אחד מי יודע

Why here?

Shalom-lev Lederman, Grade 11

Echad Mi Yodea is one of the last songs sung on Seder night. At first glance, its inclusion is weird, stuck between **Adir Hu**, a song praising Hashem and asking Him to rebuild the Beit Hamikdash, and **Chad Gadya**, a song going through the struggles of Bnei Yisrael in Galut, ending with Hashem slaughtering the Angel of Death. It is neither a song of praise nor redemption; its thematic connection of redemption to the rest of Nirtzah and also the fifth cup is just not there, and it reads like a children's song without any depth. The inclusion of Echad Mi Yodea is even more odd when looking at its origin. While the original author is unknown, many attribute it to Rabbi Elazar of Vurmiza, author of *Sefer HaRokeach*; others attribute it to simply a person belonging to the same movement as Rabbi Elazar of Vurmiza. A German Pietist, unlike the popular Tosafists, tended to pasken halacha based on kabbalah rather than the purely talmudic logic of the Tosafists. Interestingly, the song's earliest known source found is not in a haggadah but in a siddur at the shul of Rabbi Elazar of Vurmiza (ר' ידידה טייאה וייל, הגדה המורבה לספר קרלסרווא תקנ"א).

While Echad Mi Yodea's origin seems to make no connection to redemption, the song's inspiration might. The song seems to be taken partially from Midrash Shemuel. Commenting on a story of Hashem giving David and Yisrael a choice of punishment, the midrash says:

“Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai taught that thirty-six hours of punishment were originally decreed upon Yisrael at that time, but great advocates arose and nullified most of them: the merit of the seven days of Shabbat, the eight days associated with circumcision, the five books of the Torah, and the merit of the three Patriarchs, leaving thirteen hours remaining. Of those, two Amoraim offered explanations: one said they were nullified by the merit of the twelve tribes, while another said by the merit of the Ten Commandments together with the two Tablets.” (Midrash Shmuel 31, translation of ChatGPT)

Echad Mi Yodea seems to be a song about the praises of Am Yisrael. Its connection to redemption and the rest of Nirtzah is "Hashem, redeem us, for here are the qualities we have." **Adir Hu** is a plea for Hashem to redeem us by His merits. Echad Mi Yodea is redemption through our own personal merits, and finally **Chad Gadya** is both because of us (our suffering) and Hashem as the ultimate justice.

Noting that, I would like to point out why it seems to be written for a child. While the above is one of the more famous answers, I personally believe it to be very shveir. There are probably better ways to communicate the worthiness of Yisrael than this very obscure song, whose meaning only becomes apparent when looking up its source. Another answer offered is that because it used to be a minhag to say Shema after the seder, we sing Echad Mi Yodea because of its emphasis on Echad (e.g., the first known one to include Echad Mi Yodea, in 1590 places Echad Mi Yodea right before Shema Yisrael. See *הגדה חכמי ירושלים*.)

Another answer is that yes, it's childish. Echad Mi Yodea is put at Nirtzah merely for the children! (פירוש עיון תפילה), While

this answer may seem simple, it is directly correlated to the motive of the German Pietist author. The Gemara Pesachim (108B) seems to state that a person should entertain their child so that they don't fall asleep by giving them candies and also by "חוטפין," which can be translated as either "grabbing" or "robbing" the matzah. The Gemara does not give a shiur as to when a child may fall asleep. Tosefta (Pesachim Perek 10) records the classical story of Rabbi Yossi Haglili, only adding that he stayed up all night learning halachot of Pesach. Similarly, the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 461) mentions that a person should stay up all night telling over the story of leaving Egypt and also Halachos of Pesach until "שהחטפנו שינה" (sleep grabs him). From the fact that Shulchan Aruch uses this language of "grabbing" to signify as late as possible, and also the Gemara uses the same word, "grab," with a child, it seems there is at least an ideal of a child staying up until the end. Furthermore, it is written in HaRokeach (265), written by Rabbi Elazar of Vurmiza, that a person should say poems after the fifth cup.

The German Pietist movement was a movement that focused primarily on spirituality and character development. Knowing that Echad Mi Yodea was written either by him or someone in his camp; that it takes great inspiration from the ideal character traits of Yisrael; that it was written with children in mind; that Rabbi Elazar of Vurmiza instituted saying poems instead of learning Halachot; that afterwards people had a custom to say Shema; and finally, its placement after the fifth cup representing redemption, the answer as to why it's included in the Seder at Nirtzah becomes very subtle. The purpose of Echad Mi Yodea is to improve the character traits of a child, reminding them that this is what an ideal Jew looks like. By placing poems, specifically this poem, after the fifth cup, which represents redemption, and not continuing with Halachot like the Shulchan Aruch, Rabbi Elazar of Vurmiza tells us that it is through character

development that we will be redeemed, and that we can't push ethics off in order to learn halachot. We can, may, and should learn Halachot and Torah, but we must always end by improving our character traits and teaching our children to act in the right way.

חד גדיא

More Than a Kid's Song

Eitan Yunger, Grade 12

Many hours ago, we started off our Seders with the youngest child asking questions. Now, we cap it off with a nursery rhyme. After fulfilling our halachic obligations of praising Hashem with Hallel, how can our grand finale be a children's song? In fact, Chad Gadya was of such importance that when a prominent Rabbi ridiculed it, his community excommunicated him with the approval of the Chida. So, what is the basis for which such extreme measures were taken against one individual who personally didn't like Chad Gadya? Essentially, what is the point of Chad Gadya? I would like to explore three such answers, one from Rav Nosson Adler, one from the Maaseh Nissim and another from Rabbi Jonathan Sacks. All three answers suggest that Chad Gadya has much more meaning than a childish song about understanding Hashem's greatness; instead it has deep insights into emunah and bitachon.

There was a story told about Rav Nosson Adler of Frankfort sitting in a Beit Midrash, alone, in the corner, learning to himself. Suddenly, he overheard a conversation other people in the room were having, which was mostly Lashon Hara about Rav Nosson. The people in the conversation did not realize that Rav Nosson had overheard them, and when he approached them, Rav Nosson only wanted to ask them a question. He asked, "In Chad Gadya, if the cat was in the wrong when it ate

the goat (which is commonly understood as a reference to Bnei Yisrael), why was the dog punished when it bit the cat?" The men had no answer to Rav Nosson's question, so they asked him what the reason was. He said that the dog was punished because by biting the cat, the dog only created more conflict in the situation. By joining an argument completely irrelevant to itself, it only fanned the flames of fighting even more.

The Maaseh Nissim was also troubled by Chad Gadya at the end of the Haggadah as the components of the song, such as the cat, dog, stick, fire and water all seem insignificant and random. The Maaseh Nissim solves this issue by explaining that the goat represents Yerushalayim and the Beit Hamikdash. He quotes the Talmud Yerushalmi that says that David HaMelech bought the land of the Temple Mount for two gold coins, corresponding to the two zuzim that the goat was bought for in the song. And, as time progresses, many empires rise and fall, such as Nevuchadnezzar whom he likens to the cat, and Cyrus who he compares to the dog. Nevuchadnezzar (the cat) took Yerushalayim from the Jews (the goat) and Cyrus (the dog) took it from him and the cycle continues until the times of Mashiach when it culminates with the eternal reign of HaKadosh Baruch Hu.

Lastly, Rabbi Sacks suggests that the essence of Chad Gadya is how it references the entirety of Jewish history in one song. The first section of Chad Gadya is about the cat attacking the goat. Rabbi Sacks points out that this goat symbolizes the killed goat that Yosef's Ketonet Pasim was dipped in by his brothers. This, he said, caused our first exile to Egypt and was the precursor to all the suffering of the Jews throughout history. Following this incident, although Yaakov accepted his sons' story about Yosef's death, he "refused to be comforted." The entire time, he had a sliver of hope that

Yosef was still alive, somehow, and never fully gave up on his son. Therefore, Rabbi Sacks concludes that "Chad Gadya expresses the Jewish refusal to give up hope."

These three answers to the question of what Chad Gadya is are very different and unique. On the one hand, Rav Nosson says it has to do with maintaining unity within Bnei Yisrael, the Maaseh Nissim suggests that it is about our long, grueling journey to Mashiach and Rabbi Sacks believes that it represents maintaining hope even in the most trying times. I find all three explanations to be especially relevant to Jews in the current reality we are living in. Unity, recognizing the bigger picture and refusing to lose hope are three important messages that our Seder should conclude with and internalizing these messages makes Chad Gadya so much more than a kid's song.

חַד גָּדְיָא, חַד
גָּדְיָא דְזָבִין אֲבָא
בְּתֵרֵי זִוְיָ, חַד
גָּדְיָא, חַד גָּדְיָא