Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

PESACH SEDER COMPANION

5783 • Volume 9

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Thank you to Rabbi Torczyner and the Beit Midrash Zichron Dov
for all the Torah that you teach throughout the community.
May you continue to enlighten and inspire us all with your Torah lessons.

Dedicated by Kevin and Amanda Wassermuhl
in loving memory of Chana Raisa bat Tzvi z"l

Seder Companion 5783
Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

We are grateful to Daniel Safran for his outstanding graphic design; thank you!

From Egypt to a State With Eternal Values

Rabbi Dovid Lau שליט"א, Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of the State of Israel

A unique night stands before us, the Seder, the birthday of the Jewish nation, a night which the great majority of the Jewish nation celebrates, everywhere in the world.

On this night we will again tell the story of the birth of our nation, the Exodus from Egypt. Again we will recall the night of that first Seder in Egypt, when Bnei Yisrael prepared to leave. The matzot were baked, the korban pesach was brought and would shortly be eaten with matzah and marror, Bnei Yisrael reclined around tables with their belongings packed by their sides, and the child asked, *Mah nishtanah*? What is different about this night, that after a year of plagues with which Hashem struck Egypt, we are sitting in the style of freedom, without fear of the Egyptian oppressor? What happened? And the father replied, "Tonight we leave Egypt, we leave our exile and embark on the road to the land of our ancestors."

But on this road we will pause, to see the meaning in our Exodus. For our future state to be more than a state in which we are free of Pharaoh and Egypt, for there to be meaning in our lives (as freedom without a book of values leads to anarchy), to be a Jewish state with all of its implications, we must accept the book which is the essence of our lives: the Torah.

The father has imbibed four cups with his children, emphasizing to them: every cup we drink is parallel to an expression of redemption which Hashem stated to Moshe Rabbeinu, and we drink all of these cups in ease, as free people. But while we can pause and drink between the first cup and the second, and between the second and the third, we may not drink between the third and the fourth. Why not?

Because the first three cups are tied to three expressions of redemption: "I will take you out from beneath the suffering of Egypt, and I will rescue you from their labour, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm." But the fourth is tied to an additional promise, "And I will take you to Me as a nation." (Shemot 6:6-7)

The first three express redemption: "I will take you out" "I will rescue you" "I will redeem you". The fourth is the essence: "I will take you to Me as a nation, and I will be your G-d." Do you know why I took you out, rescued you, redeemed you? Because of "I will take you to Me as a nation." One may not separate between the third and the fourth. You will merit the actualization of the goal of the Exodus. You will serve Hashem on that mountain.

A year passes. In the desert they mark this special day, living around the Mishkan which manifests Hashem's Shechinah among the Jews. They bring the Korban Pesach. The child asks the questions, and the father answers in a litany of the experiences they collected in Egypt – the experiences of slavery, and of redemption.

Years pass. A young Solomon asks his father, King David, in the holy city of Jerusalem, the same questions. The children of Rabbi Yehudah haNasi ask their father these questions. Children have asked their parents the same questions throughout our history. Also in exile, also in pain, also when the children have returned to their land. All of them have merited to hear the same answers. It was painful, there was great suffering, our ancestors merited to see the mighty hand, we left Egypt in order to receive the Torah and become the nation of Hashem.

Our generation merited to see the Jewish nation, survivors of the pain that beset us, shake off the dust and return to its land and establish a state that expresses its values – values the nation preserved for 2,000 years of exile across the globe, even as they pursued us, waged war upon us, and sought to destroy us. This is an open miracle, extraordinary by any measure. It is hard not to see the Hand of Hashem in it – a Hand which guides the nation and brings the nation to its ancestral lot.

But we must remember: Our ambition was never Uganda. Individuals followed Baron Hirsch to Argentina. Few were those who established *kolkhozy* in Birobidzhan. The Jewish nation yearned to return to its own land, not an alien place. And what ties it to its land is the Divine message carried in the four expressions of redemption, sealed with the fifth expression of redemption, "And I will bring you to the land for which I raised My Hand to give it to Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, and I will give it you as an inheritance, I am Hashem. (ibid. 6:8)" It is impossible to separate these five expressions. The Exodus from Egypt, the birth of the nation and receipt of the Torah are a single unit, expressed specifically in the land of its ancestors, there it will be actualized.

Recent years have not been simple; there is an incessant battle for the identity of the state. Will it be a Jewish state, like the dream of generations, the Divine command, the ambition of its founders as expressed in the Scroll of Independents? Or a state of Jews, with nothing more than external trappings? Or just a state of all of its citizens? This is the question at the centre of (too) many clashes between communities in Israel. Into the bonfire of conflict are cast lofty values like justice, equality, the dignity of a person, and liberty, as though there was a conflict between the Torah's values and these values.

Various demands are made upon the Chief Rabbinate of Israel, with the refrain, "If only you were like Rav Kook." To these I respond wholeheartedly that the Chief Rabbinate is faithful to the path of Rav Kook – more than those who take his name in vain. The banner of Torah is before our eyes. The nation of Israel is beloved to us, and the land of Israel is the place designated for us by the Creator of the world. The rabbinate joins these three vertices into a single triangle, with faith in the Rock of Israel and its Redeemer that the triple cord will not swiftly snap.

Let us celebrate the coming Pesach together. Let us remember the great values embodied by the entity called the "Nation of Israel", and let us march forward by their light.

Did you know?
We have Israeli families in our Beit Midrash, serving as *shlichim*!

קדש: KADESH
Positive Psychology

Rabbi Elihu Abbe, elihutuvia@gmail.com
Sgan Rosh Beit Midrash, 5779
Author, *Psychology in the Talmud* and *Torah Leadership*

Martin Seligman, the father of Positive Psychology, describes the five components that contribute to building a life of happiness and fulfillment. They are Positive emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Achievement (together they form the acronym "PERMA").

- **P**ositive emotions refer to any emotion that is beneficial. It includes hope, love, gratitude, and much more. The more frequently you experience positive emotions, the happier you will be, and the more you choose to think positive thoughts, the more you will experience positive emotions.
- **E**ngagement refers to being totally engrossed in the activity that you are involved in, sometimes to the point that you may even lose track of time. When you choose activities that fit your interests and skills, you will find that more of your time is spent in things that engage you.
- The connection between positive **R**elationships and happiness is self-evident. Chazal have already taught us that when we don't have meaningful relationships and others do not regard us positively we may feel like life is empty. (Taanit 23a: "I desire either friends or death!" and Bava Batra 16b: "I desire a friend like the friends of Job [who came from afar when they knew he was in trouble], or death!")
- **M**eaning refers to having a sense of purpose in life. It is the way in which we see our significance in contributing in some way to bettering the world.
- Finally, **A**chievement is a sense of satisfaction over our accomplishments.

Much has been written about each of these five building blocks of happiness and many resources are available that enumerate various things that we can do to improve each of these aspects in our life.

When we look closely at the Yom Tov Kiddush we can see how the Ribbono Shel Olam has infused our life and our Judaism with these building blocks of happiness. He has given us festivals which are times of happiness and joy (Positive emotions). He has given us our freedom (*zman cheiruteinu*) and the ability to choose how we will use our time. We are free to find activities that engage us (Engagement). He has chosen us from amongst the nations to build a unique and holy relationship with us. He has sanctified us with His mitzvot, of which many of them speak to how we are to interact with others. Rabbi Akiva has taught us (Sifra Kedoshim 4:12) that the mitzvah to love our fellow as we love ourselves is the primary mitzvah of the Torah (Relationships). Hashem has sanctified and elevated us by giving us a mission to bring about the perfection of mankind and usher in the utopia of a perfect world connected to G-d (Meaning).

The one aspect of happiness that is omitted from the Kiddush is Achievement. The Kiddush speaks of what G-d has given to us. Achievement, by definition, is what we have attained. Where can we find Achievement in the Kiddush?

Perhaps the answer is that the very fact that we are reciting the Kiddush and sitting down to the Seder is an amazing achievement. First, we can reflect on all the hard work that we invested in preparing for Pesach. That itself is something that should provide us with a sense of satisfaction. But perhaps even more than that is contemplating the achievement of our devotion to HaKadosh Baruch Hu. We live in a time where there are many values competing for our attention and devotion. When we put aside everything and we come together to celebrate Pesach and devote ourselves entirely to appreciating Hashem's gift of freedom, His care, and His relationship with us, we are truly achieving something very significant.

Yom Tov is a time of Joy. Right now, at the commencement of Yom Tov, let's think about how much we have to appreciate. And let us take it a step further. Joy is an emotion, and being consistently joyful is a character trait. As with all character traits, growth in the trait of joy requires consistent work. Let us look at these five essential components of a happy and fulfilling life and let us set meaningful goals for how we will grow in each one of them.

May Hashem speedily fulfill our *tefillot* for restoring *simcha l'artzecha, v'sasson li'irecha* (happiness to His land - Israel, and joy to His city - Jerusalem)!

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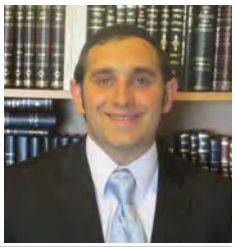
כרפס: KARPAS
A Taste of Marror



Rabbi Jonathan Ziring, jziring@torontotorah.com
Sgan Rosh Beit Midrash, 5775-5778
Currently: Ram and Educational Coordinator, Yeshivat Migdal haTorah, Israel

Twice during the Seder, we eat halachically significant vegetables. The more important of the two is *marror,* which is part of the biblical commandment of eating the Pesach offering and is currently a rabbinic obligation. The lesser of the two is *karpas,* the vegetable we eat towards the beginning of the meal.

Understanding *Karpas*

Karpas is merely a means to get the children to ask questions. (Pesachim 114b) Oddly though, a mishnah (Pesachim 10:3) states that one uses *chazeret* for *karpas,* the same lettuce that one may use for *marror.* The Talmud explains that really any vegetable can be used for *karpas*. The mishnah needed to teach that even when one has only lettuce, he should still have the two stages of vegetable eating. (See Pesachim 114a-b.)

The Talmud then offers a case in which these two acts synthesize into one obligation: when one only has lettuce to fulfill both of these obligations. Two opinions are offered as to when one makes the blessing on the *marror,* considering that the food used for *karpas* is the same as that which will be used for *marror.*

> [**What] is** the *halakha* **where there is only lettuce** available? When should one recite each blessing? **Rav Huna said: One initially recites the blessing: Who creates fruit of the ground, over the bitter herbs,** i.e., the lettuce, **and eats** them. **And ultimately,** after the *matza*, **one recites the blessing:** Commanded us over **eating bitter herbs, over** the lettuce **and eats** it. **Rav Ḥisda strongly objects to this** opinion: Do you think that **after one fills his belly with** lettuce, **he then recites** another **blessing over it? Rather, Rav Ḥisda said: Initially one recites** two **blessings over** the lettuce: **Who creates fruit of the ground, and:** Commanded us over **eating bitter herbs, and he eats** it; **and later** in the seder **he eats lettuce without a blessing.** (Pesachim 114b-115a, William Davidson [Koren] Talmud)

Rav Huna rules that though one is physically eating the *marror* at the beginning of the Seder, one need not make the blessing on *marror* then. According to many commentaries (see, for example, Rabbeinu David and Meiri), this is because he believes *mitzvot tzerichot kavanah* - one does not fulfill obligations without intent. Thus, when one intends to eat the lettuce as *karpas* and not *marror,* he delays his fulfillment of *marror*, which enables recitation of the blessing later. Rav Chisda rules that one does not need intent. Thus, by eating the lettuce, one automatically fulfills both obligations. Therefore, he makes the blessing at the earlier point.

Tosafot, however, understands that according to both positions one needs intent to fulfill the obligation to eat *marror.* As such, one does not fulfill that obligation by eating the lettuce as *karpas.* Nevertheless, one is permitted to make the blessing at the earlier stage. This is puzzling, however. Blessings, under most circumstances, must be recited immediately prior to the performance of the mitzvah. (Pesachim 7b) In this case, the blessing will be recited at *karpas* while the mitzvah of *marror* will not be performed until after *Maggid*!

Tosafot explains that the blessing may nevertheless be recited because "he ate a little from it during the first dipping." He suggests a parallel case. Tosafot (unlike Ramban) believes that the primary mitzvah of *shofar* is fulfilled with the second round of blasts, during the *Amidah.* Nevertheless, one makes the blessing before the first round of blasts, and the fact that one is performing the **act of the mitzvah**, **though not truly fulfilling it,** is sufficient to permit the early recitation of the blessing. The standard view follows Rav Chisda (Shulchan Aruch OC 475:2) and thus Tosafot's explanation. This position can shed important light on *Karpas*, especially if we expand on Tosafot's position.

How *Karpas* Enhances *Marror*

According to the Talmud, the *karpas* (either the eating of the vegetable before the meal [Rashi, Rashbam] or the dipping [Ran, Meiri]) is meant to generate curiosity. But Maharal (Gevurot Hashem 50) adds that the purpose is to highlight the uniqueness of the *marror,* as *karpas* creates a situation in which dipping the *marror* is extra. As such, *karpas* begins the process of making the night special. If so, eating the *marror* as *karpas* starts the act of making *marror* unique. Therefore, even when one is not using lettuce for *karpas,* **one should be cognizant that the very act of eating this first vegetable sets in motion a night of surprises that enable true education.**

Others contend that one need not recline for *karpas*, because the act of dipping the vegetable, especially in salt water, indicates this custom reminds us of the bitterness of the slavery in Egypt (see Pninei Halakha for a succinct statement of this). If so, ***karpas* is the conceptual start of experiencing the bitterness fully captured by the *marror.***

Rav Uziel Eliyahu offers a fascinating formulation. He adds that one must eat something that captures bitterness because we "cannot speak about the salvation without **tasting a bit of the taste of the exile**." (Emphasis added) As such, ***karpas,* like *marror,* is about tasting the bitterness so that our mouths are primed to discuss the miraculous Exodus.**

According to these views, *karpas* is our chance to warm up for a night in which tasting *marror* and its opposite orient our worldview. Even when we do not use lettuce for *karpas*, we should embrace this opportunity.

Did you know?
We are proud partners in the Mizrachi Beit Midrash, held Monday nights at BAYT!

יחץ: YACHATZ
Keeping Both Halves

Rabbi Yehuda Mann, ymann@torontotorah.com
Sgan Rosh Beit Midrash; Assistant Rabbi, Clanton Park Synagogue, 5782-5783

After eating the Karpas, it is time to break the matzah in two. On our Seder Table we have three matzot. From those matzot we take the middle matzah and divide it - one half to be used for the mitzvah of eating matzah and one to be hidden and used for Afikoman later. (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 473:6) The reason we break this matzah is to fulfill the mitzvah of eating the matzah as a piece (*perusah*). This is because matzah is the bread of the poor (*lechem oni*) who generally eat their bread in pieces, saving the other portions for another time.

The Mishneh Berurah (476:58) notes that since most chances are that the two halves won't be equal, we should use the bigger half for Afikoman. However, the Mishneh Berurah doesn't tell us why. A simple answer is as mentioned above. Since matzah is called "the bread of the poor," we should have the smaller portion for the matzah we eat for the mitzvah, just as a poor person eats little and saves more for the future. However, Rav YY Jacobson offers a different answer in the name of the Lubavitcher Rebbe:

Seder Night is a night of the family being together, passing on our tradition and heritage. Tragically, throughout the years we have lost many of our children who are not interested in being at our Seder table. They had various temptations or ideals that caused them to leave the Seder and not be part of the transmission of our heritage from one generation to the other. Unfortunately, those who are no longer with us seem to be the majority of the Jewish people, the bigger half of the Jewish people, whereas the minority, the smaller half, are still with us.

According to the Lubavitcher Rebbe, this is symbolized by the splitting of the matzah; the smaller half stays at the table, telling the story of the miraculous Exodus from Egypt. But, the bigger half of matzah, symbolizing the majority who are no longer with us, is away from the Seder table, not part of the storytelling at all.

This idea, that we are losing the majority, is also expressed in a question about the Four Children: What is the difference between the Wise Child and the Wicked Child? In their depiction in the Torah, they both seem to exclude themselves from the rest of the community in their questions. Regarding the Wicked Child it says, "It will be when your children ask you, 'What is this act of worship that **you** are doing?'" (Shemot 12:26). The Wise Child too seems to take himself out of the community, "When your son asks you tomorrow, saying, "What do the testimonies, the statutes, and the ordinances, which G-d has commanded **you** mean?'" (Devarim 6:20).

I would like to suggest that the distinction is in the number of people asking the question. The questions of three of the children are formed in the singular (such as in the case of the Wise Child cited above, "When your **son** asks you tomorrow, saying..."). But, the question of the Wicked Child it is written in the plural ("It will be when your **children** ask you…").

The reason is that in many cases when our children leave our tradition, they do so in order to follow the path of the majority. They come claiming that this is the common approach nowadays, this is the way of he majority, this is what is socially acceptable and normal.

This claim could be very challenging. Human beings naturally want to be part of the majority and not feel outside of modern society. Nevertheless, we shouldn't be threatened and lose our confidence in our faith, knowing that following the Torah and its values transcends time and is always relevant. We should be proud of being part of this amazing chain of generations and participating in this wonderful Seder Night when we transmit our beliefs and values and tradition to the next generation. Even if it is the smaller portion.

There is yet another distinction between the Wicked Child and the Wise Child, and that is regarding the timing of their question. The Wise Child asks the question- "tomorrow," in the future. But in the case of the Wicked Child, the question seems to be asked immediately. Why is that so?

This can be explained in the second part of the explanation of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. He explained that the bigger half of matzah, which will be used as the Afikoman, is searched for tirelessly. Just like we look everywhere to find the Afikoman, refusing to call off the search, so too we shall never give up on those who have left the Seder table to follow other ideas and values. To the contrary, we lovingly strive to bring them back to their Jewish roots. And *b'ezrat* Hashem we will succeed in bringing them back to the Seder table.

This will explain why in the case of the Wicked Child there is no "tomorrow." G-d willing tomorrow there won't be a Wicked Child anymore. We will indeed bring everyone back to our Seder table and will be able to celebrate and sing together, "*Leshanah haba'ah b'Yerushalayim habenuyah!*" "Next year in Jerusalem!"

Did you know?
Rabbi Mann offers the popular Semichas Chaver Program in tandem with Clanton Park Synagogue!

Ha Lachma Anya: הא לחמא עניא
Timeless Messages

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Hospitality & Tourism Management student, TMU; Women's Beit Midrash 5781-5783

The central section of the Pesach Seder, Maggid, begins with the declaration of *Ha Lachma Anya* – "This is the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate in Egypt. All who are hungry, come and eat, etc." *Ha Lachma Anya* is an invitation, welcoming anyone who may need a meal to come and join us at our Seder, as well as a hopeful prayer to be living in the land of Israel as a free people in the year to come.

The first question we encounter when discussing *Ha Lachma Anya* is about the language of the text. The paragraph begins in Aramaic while the parts immediately before and after it are in Hebrew. What is curious about this is that we are used to a prayer or piece of liturgy committing to the use of one language throughout, in addition to the fact that the majority of Jewish liturgy is written in Hebrew. Why would this text specifically be written in Aramaic?

Simply answered, the introduction to our Pesach Seder is in Aramaic because it was the language of communication at the time of the writing of the passage. When *Ha Lachma Anya* was written, invitations meant to be heard by the masses, and specifically by those in need, had to be in Aramaic, as the layman would not have understood the message had it been in Hebrew. In his Haggadah, Rav Yisrael Meir Lau discusses this idea at length and points out that some of the most common passages we say during our prayers are also in Aramaic, including *Kaddish*, *Yekum Purkan*, and Yom Kippur's *Kol Nidrei*. The same is true for important Jewish documents such as the wedding ketubah because of, as it says in *Fiddler On The Roof*, tradition.

Today, we continue to use the language of our past in order to keep us connected to the millions who came before us. This paragraph reminds us of our history and *mesorah*, where we come from, and of the fact that so many previous generations have practiced the same *sedarim* and traditions that we continue to do to this day.

A more mystical answer to our question comes from the Avudraham, in his *Seder HaHaggadah uPeirushah*. The Talmud (Shabbat 12b) teaches that *malachim* (angels) do not understand Aramaic. We use Aramaic for this paragraph so that the *malachim* will not argue that we are unworthy of redemption. But what about the Hebrew part? Some suggest that it is safe to continue in Hebrew, because when we switch to praising Hashem, the Heavenly forces all stop and listen, and some even say they join in, leaving no room for naysayers or prosecution.

After discussing the language of *Ha Lachma Anya*, we can discuss the content. In his Haggadah, Rabbi Jonathan Sacks asks the question: why use this as the invitation? Is that not a bit strange, to invite someone in to share in bread of affliction?

Rabbi Sacks explains that the answer comes from the matzah itself. Throughout the Seder, the matzah transitions from being a symbol of our suffering to a symbol of our freedom, and it is important for us to remember both. Sharing is one of the first signs of freedom for a slave. As Rabbi Sacks says, "Bread shared is no longer bread of oppression." This is why we invite everyone in, so we can celebrate our freedom with others and our faith in Hashem as well.

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik (*An Exalted Evening*) points out that the theme of *hachanasat orchim,* welcoming guests, as it appears here, is not related to the rest of the Seder. Even though we know it is an important mitzvah, it is strange to see it appear here as we begin the retelling of the Exodus story. But the Talmud (Pesachim 88b) states that a slave does not have their own real estate or assets. As such, it would be inappropriate to invite guests over, because it would be like inviting them over to someone else's house. Therefore, we specifically invite people in as a sign of wealth and freedom.

I would like to conclude with an idea from my father, Rabbi Avraham Witty. *Hachnasat orchim* is the mitzvah that Avraham Avinu was best known for. During the Covenant Between the Parts (Bereishit 15), Avraham was told by G-d that, in Bnei Yisrael's future, there would be an enslavement, and he was also promised that it would be followed by redemption. As a free people we make sure to exhibit the Abrahamic tradition; just as our history started with *chesed*, we are now continuing with *chesed,* taking care of others in their time of need.

May we all merit the strength to continue honouring those who have come before us by sharing our *Sedarim* with others and continuing to participate in acts of *chesed.* And as is written in *Ha Lachma Anya*: next year in Jerusalem.

Did you know?
We have held four Sunday morning *Midreshet Yom Rishon* programs for women this year!

מה נשתנה: Mah Nishtanah
Not Just For Kids

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The recitation of *Mah Nishtanah,* or the "Four Questions," sets up the *Maggid* portion of the Pesach Seder. The passage outlines a series of questions that we generally have the children at the Seder ask, so that we can answer them throughout the rest of *Maggid.* For many families, the *Mah Nishtanah* is heavily associated with children or youth, as they are the primary askers. However, as we look forward to celebrating the Pesach Seder, it is important for adults to also dive into the *Mah Nishtanah*, as the text asks us to contemplate complex, nuanced, and seemingly contradictory concepts.

The "Four Questions" are so integral to our Seder that although there is a heavy emphasis on children being the askers, the "Four Questions" get asked regardless of if there are any children present at the table. In the Talmud (Pesachim 116a, Steinsaltz tr.), the Rabbis state: "If his son is wise and knows how to inquire, his son asks him. And if he is not wise, his wife asks him. And if even his wife is not capable of asking or if he has no wife, he asks himself…even if two Torah scholars who know the halakhot of Passover are sitting together and there is no one else present to pose the questions, they ask each other." This implies that the posing of the "Four Questions" is not simply an exercise in guided learning, but that the questions themselves hold an intrinsic value to us, regardless of age or educational background. So, the question becomes, what else can the Questions teach us?

In his *Ephod Bad* commentary on the Haggadah, Rabbi Benjamin David Rabinowitz of Warsaw dives into some of the larger themes touched upon in *Mah Nishtanah*:

> The four statements of the *Mah Nishtanah* are all interconnected. We have seen that *Matzah* symbolizes important principles and ideas that should not leave our minds for even a second – so why should we set aside one night from all others to contemplate these great principles?..., We should refrain from eating *Hametz* and instead eat *Matzah* all year long.... If one says that the reason this night was set apart from all other nights is because it was on Passover that the pure faith in G-d was born, then why do we also eat bitter herbs; this symbol appears to have nothing to do with our faith in G-d…[It] reminds us of the bitterness we experienced in Egypt.
>
> The Seder should focus on celebration and not sorrow…we should focus on our liberation and freedom and not on slavery. On the other hand, if we are supposed to express sorrow for the grief and suffering, we have experienced, then why include the other practices in the *Mah Nishtanah*: leaning when we eat and dipping twice…these practices are celebratory rather than remembrances of our suffering. We will find answers to these questions in time… (Greenspan tr. c/o sefaria.org)

Rabbi Rabinowitz points out that while the *Mah Nishtanah* on the face of it seems to be asking questions regarding what differentiates this night from all others, what it also asks is: how do we hold seemingly contradictory emotions and ideas within the same night of remembrance? Often when we think of Jewish holidays at face value, they fall into the category of either happy or sad. Purim, the holiday before Pesach, is a notably happy occasion, as is the holiday right after Pesach, Shavuot. On the other hand, holidays such as Tishah B'Av and Yom Kippur ask us to keep a sad and somber affect, respectively. How, during one holiday, are we asked to experience the lows of slavery and highs of freedom in one night, as we are asked to do on Pesach?

One of my teachers expressed the idea that Pesach acts as a touchstone or microcosm for how we are to integrate the remembrance of the Exodus from Egypt into our lives every day during the rest of the year. Pesach is a time for us to recharge, reinvigorating and reconnecting to our commemoration of the Exodus that we are commanded to remember each day in Shema.

I would like to propose a connection between this idea of using Pesach as a microcosm or touchstone for how we approach every other time of the year, and the question that *Mah Nishtanah*, through the lens of Rabbi Rabinowitz, poses. Perhaps the task of opening yourself up to both grief and celebration is not one that is limited to the night of Passover. The idea of holding seemingly contradictory concepts and emotions together in one night can be a daunting, intellectually and emotionally draining prospect, all the more so if this is a task that is asked of us year-round. However, the nature of being a Jew requires that we balance these two seemingly incongruous mental states. Shavuot is preceded by a partial period of mourning during *Sefirat HaOmer*, and Purim is preceded by the worried fasting of Taanit Esther. To me, the *Mah Nishtanah* is asking us how we can learn to hold both this melancholy and joy in one night, so that we may do so for the rest of the year.

As many of us look forward to watching the children around us ask the "Four Questions" it is important that we too ask ourselves to introspect on the dual nature of being a Jew, so that we may better understand how to strike this balance the rest of the year. *Chag Sameach*!

Did you know?
Our Women's Beit Midrash holds three weekly programs for female university students!

עבדים היינו: We Were Slaves
But Why?

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The slavery of Bnei Yisrael in Egypt is a defining moment in the history of the Jewish people and a seminal event in the history of humanity. This period of enslavement lasted for four hundred years and had profound implications on the Jewish people historically, spiritually, and nationally. In this article, we will examine two perspectives on how we became slaves in Egypt, and discuss the significance of the slavery and liberation according to the Torah, and lessons to be learned from it in the context of Pesach.

Historically, the enslavement of Bnei Yisrael in Egypt can be traced to a series of political and economic factors. Bnei Yisrael migrated to Egypt in search of food during a severe famine and, over time, became a powerful and numerous group within the Egyptian kingdom: "Thus Israel settled in the country of Egypt, in the region of Goshen; they acquired holdings in it, and were fertile and increased greatly." (Bereishit 47:27, JPS trans.)

However, their success made them a target for political oppression, and Pharaoh saw them as a threat to his rule. According to the Torah's account, the Egyptians "set taskmasters over them to oppress them with forced labor; and they built garrison cities for Pharaoh: Pithom and Raamses." (Shemot 1:11). The Jews were forced to work in harsh conditions, building cities and infrastructure, under brutal and bitter treatment.

On the other hand, a midrash (Shemot Rabbah 1:8) explains that the harsh labour and the enslavement of Bnei Yisrael in Egypt was a Divinely ordained punishment for their sins. From reports later in Tanach (see Yehoshua 24:14 and Yechezkel 20:7-9) we know that there were Jews who worshipped idols in Egypt. This midrash adds that when Yosef died Bnei Yisrael stopped performing circumcision; they said, "Let us be like the Egyptians." This explanation highlights the spiritual significance of the slavery of Bnei Yisrael in Egypt, as it serves as a reminder of the importance of faithfulness and obedience to Hashem's commandments. In other words, Bnei Yisrael had to go through all of the sorrow as a punishment for their actions.

From a national perspective, the slavery of Bnei Yisrael in Egypt was a critical moment in the formation of the Jewish people as a distinct and cohesive nation. The experience of slavery and oppression helped to create a strong national identity, as Bnei Yisrael were forced to unite under the government of Hashem. This sense of solidarity and belonging would serve the Jewish people well in their future struggles over the land of Israel, both the ancient one and the modern one. As Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook wrote (*Olat Ra'ayah: Haggadah shel Pesach* pg. 21), serving as slaves taught us to replace the idea of individualism with unity under the awe of G-d, as slaves to G-d. According to Rav Kook, we could learn this lesson only by working as slaves to human beings.

Slavery and liberation also improved us spiritually. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik explains in *The Festival of Freedom* (see pages 47-64) that Pesach is not only a celebration of the liberation of the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt, but also a celebration of the liberation of the human spirit from the constraints of superstition and oppression. Through the Pesach celebration, Jews are encouraged to continue to uphold the values of perseverance, faith, and obedience to Hashem in their daily lives, and to strive for freedom and liberation in all aspects of their lives. This is of immense importance, and each year during Pesach we reflect on this lesson of true liberty. **True liberty is not the freedom from any obligation, but rather the ability to choose to what we will be obligated.**

This profound message reminds us that even in the midst of adversity, there is an opportunity for growth, transformation and purification. It reminds us to look for the deeper meaning and purpose in our struggles and to never lose hope or faith in a better future. What does this message mean for us today, in a world still plagued by oppression and suffering? How can we take this powerful lesson from Bnei Yisrael's experience in Egypt and apply it to our own lives? That's for us to answer this Pesach.

Did you know?
Our Chaverim Program for male university students includes three weekly *chaburot*.

רבי אלעזר בן עזריה: Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah
Listen to the Younger Generation!

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, torczyner@torontotorah.com
Rosh Beit Midrash, 5770-5783

Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah thought that we should mention our Exodus from Egypt every night of the year, but the Sages would not listen. As recorded in our Haggadah, Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah declared, "Behold, I am like seventy years old! And I could not convince the Sages, until [Shimon] Ben Zoma provided exegetical support for this ruling." Why was Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah's age relevant? And why did he say he was "like" seventy years old? We may suggest three approaches.

Approach 1: Hashem showed that I deserve respect

The Babylonian Talmud (Pesachim 27b-28a) records the most familiar explanation. At one point, Rabban Gamliel was demoted from his position at the head of the study hall, and the Sages sought to appoint an adolescent Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah in his place. Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah's wife protested to him that he lacked the white hair which would mark him as an established scholar, worthy of respect. A miracle occurred and he grew eighteen rows of white hair, which made him appear "like seventy", and deserving of respect.

Years later, Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah recalled how Hashem had intervened to cause people to respect him. He asked, "How is it that Hashem engineered a miracle to give me the respect of a seventy-year-old, and yet they won't listen to me?"

Approach 2: Hashem helped me reach old age

The Jerusalem Talmud (Berachot 1:6) also contends that Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah received a Hashem-given blessing, but not of premature aging. Rather, the miracle was that he survived to *genuine* old age, nearly seventy years old, even though people in leadership positions often die prematurely from the stress of their roles. Within this version of events, Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah remarked that his decades of experience, coupled with the Divine support that had enabled him to live that long, should have given him greater credibility with the Sages.

Approach 3: Why didn't I think of that?

Rambam (commentary to Mishnah Berachot 1) presents an entirely different picture of our story. Whereas both Talmuds claim that Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah expressed frustration with the recalcitrant Sages, Rambam explains that Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah expressed frustration with *himself*.

Rambam writes of Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah, "When he was young, he would study, learn and read prodigiously, day and night, to the point that his strength was drained, and he aged prematurely and he appeared like a man of seventy years. He aged willingly, as recorded in the Talmud." Along these lines, the Talmud records that Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah contended that approaching Torah with weak commitment would be a sign of disrespect for Torah. He declared that a student who pretends to amass great learning, but who actually fails to devote serious time and develops only a superficial understanding, will not live long. (Avodah Zarah 19a)

Like Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah, Shimon ben Zoma excelled in Torah study in his youth. (Sanhedrin 17b, Horiyot 2b, and see Rabbi Ovadia of Bartenura to Avot 4:1) The Talmud presents Ben Zoma as a paradigm of scholarship (Berachot 27b, Kiddushin 49b) and exegetic skill (Sotah 49a), and he journeyed into the mystical studies of *Pardes* with Rabbi Akiva. (Chagigah 14b)

Rambam explains that at the time of the discussion regarding speaking of the Exodus every night, Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah was already a senior authority, while Ben Zoma was a young man. This was why Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah's was shocked: he was amazed not by popular rejection of his point of view, but by the way Ben Zoma exceeded him in arguing for that point of view. He declared, "I worked and joined myself with scholars [to the extent that I aged prematurely and appeared like I was seventy years old], and yet I never merited to know the scriptural hint to the obligation to read this portion at night – until [this young student] Ben Zoma taught it!"

Our Seder

This passage belongs in our Haggadah for its technical exploration of the year-round mitzvah of re-telling our departure from Egypt, but Rambam's view adds a dimension to our own Seder experience. As Rambam tells it, Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah and Shimon ben Zoma present two different models of participant, the former a lifelong denizen of the study hall who exhausted himself in study from the earliest age, the latter a youthful prodigy who developed an idea which had long eluded his elder. We need both types of participants at our Seder, the experienced and the fresh-eyed, the better to learn from each other and to develop a stronger appreciation of the greatness of our Exodus.

An expanded version of this article appeared in the BAYT Hakhmei Lev publication for Pesach 5782.

כנגד ארבעה בנים: The Four Children
The Mysterious Fourth Child

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The Haggadah teaches us about the four children hinted at in the Torah: the wise, the wicked, the simple, and the one who doesn't know to ask questions. The four answers suggested in the Haggadah differ from each other in content as well as in style. The first three are easy enough to analyze: the Wise Child receives a scholarly answer, detailing the laws of the Korban Pesach up to the end (see Ritva and Abarbanel); The Wicked Child is taunted, but maybe also taught that while he can refuse to be redeemed, he would still find himself enslaved in Egypt, as one can try to escape Jewish destiny but not Jewish fate; and the Simple Child receives an informative answer expanding on the story of the Exodus. Each of these answers fits the question asked.

The answer to the fourth child, however, remains as mysterious as his unasked question. "*At p'tach lo*," "You should open for him," we are told by the Haggadah, and tell him: "For the sake of this, Hashem acted for me when I left Egypt." Why was this verse chosen as an answer? What are we trying to teach to this fourth child?

We might gain a better understanding if we first analyze who this child is, and what is hiding behind his silence. Commentators offer different approaches for how to understand the fourth child:

- **The foolish** – Many see the fourth child as a downgraded version of the third, the simple child. While the third is at least keen enough to observe that something is different, the fourth child is not aware even of that. This approach is put forth bluntly by Rabbi Yaakov Anatoly of 13th century Provence, in his *Malmad HaTalmidim* (Vayera): "'He who begets a fool does it to his sorrow' (Mishlei 17:21) – this fool is the one whom the Haggadah calls 'one who does not know how to ask'."
  According to this approach, it stands to reason that our primary goal should be not only to teach him about the Exodus, but also to teach him how to observe, think, and ask the right questions. The emphasis in our answer to him should be on "for the sake of these" while pointing out the matzah, marror and Korban Pesach. "These" should serve as a stimulation to wake up the sleepy and numb mind of the fourth child. (Rokeaich)
- **The indifferent** – A second way is to view the fourth child as an ultra-version of the second child, the wicked one. His quiet affect is not borne out of stupidity, but out of uncaring resignation. While the second child still relates to the Seder, albeit negatively, this child finds it completely irrelevant. (Rav Soloveitchik) His answer, then, is exactly the same as to the wicked child, but here the exclusion is not a threat but a fait accompli. It is neither explained nor expounded, just declared.
- **The angelic** – The sixth Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yitzchak Schneersohn ("the Rebbe Rayatz") explained that the child who does not ask has a lofty sort of soul, one that is perfectly in tune with Divine truth. He has no questions, and experiences none of the dissonance and tension between matter and spirit that is the usual lot of mortals. (Sefer HaSichot 5696-5700, p. 262)
  What can a parent do with such a child? The Haggadah instructs us to "open for him." He should be given the opportunity to celebrate Pesach in his own way, not by questions he doesn't have or answers he doesn't need, but rather by a simple and straight happiness in G-d's revelation upon us all.

Of course, it could also be that the fourth child is not a mere iteration of one of the earlier listed children, but he is rather the potential child – the one who is yet to be. The question as yet unasked could be wise or evil, or just foolish. The fourth child reminds us that a parent should not only react to the questions asked by his child now, but must also guide the child to develop into what he or she should become in the future.

The Hebrew word *p'tach* can be used not only to mean "to open," but also "to engrave" (see Shemot 28:11). It is our duty, then, to engrave the wonderful story of the birth of the Jewish nation into the hearts of our children. May they all become wise, understanding, elders, and knowledgeable about the Torah.

Did you know?
We engage in our own learning until 12:30 PM daily; we are studying Masechet Ketuvot.

ברוך שומר: The One who Guards His Promise
The Value and Recipients of Empathy

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In "*Baruch Shomeir Havtachato*", our Haggadah contextualizes the Exodus from Egypt as the fulfillment of a promise G-d made to Avraham, for which we should be grateful. However, a careful reader of the Haggadah should also notice that within G-d's promise for redemption is a promise of prior enslavement! G-d made it clear to Avraham that our suffering in Egypt would *also* be a part of His plan, which should leave us wondering what exactly we're supposed to be so grateful for – if G-d is the one who orchestrated our enslavement, why are we to thank Him for ending it? Wouldn't we have been better off without any Divine plan at all?

Answers to this crucial question vary, but for the most part they involve a reframing of our slavery as an inherently valuable experience. To be sure, we wanted that painful experience to come to an end – and because it eventually did, G-d deserves our thanks – but we also need to understand that we are better off as a nation for having gone through it as well, because avoiding this experience altogether would have prevented us from actualizing our potential.

What though, did our slavery in Egypt actualize? How was our experience there, to use Moshe's words, an "iron crucible" (Deuteronomy 4:20), something which refined us?

The most straightforward answer is that our slavery in Egypt was the ultimate lesson in developing empathy, an empathy that we are told time and time again to use in our treatment of strangers. A few examples: "You shall not wrong or oppress a stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt." (Exodus 22:20) "You shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the feelings of the stranger, having yourselves been strangers in the land of Egypt." (23:9) "When strangers reside with you in your land, you shall not wrong them. The strangers who reside with you shall be to you as your citizens; you shall love each one as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. I Hashem am your G-d." (Leviticus 19:33-34) G-d constantly emphasizes that we have a well-developed sensitivity to the challenges faced by the stranger, and that sensitivity should guide our actions. Because of our experience in Egypt, these commands uniquely call out to our national character, and this dynamic seems to be one of the larger purposes of the events we commemorate on Seder Night.

Who, though, is to receive our empathy? Who is included in the term *ger*, or stranger?

- Our Sages explain that indeed, in a few instances, the word indicates a *ger toshav*, a non-Jewish resident alien, the more generic stranger – see, for example, a *ger's* obligation to rest on Shabbat, mentioned in Exodus 23:12, as explained in Yevamot 48b.
- On the other hand, Bava Metzia 59b records the following in the name of Rabbi Eliezer the Great without any dissenting view: "Why did the Torah issue warnings in thirty-six places (and some say in forty-six places) about how to treat the *ger*? Because of his bad roots." It would seem the *ger* of Rabbi Eliezer's statement (and, consequently, the many instances in which the Chumash text commands us to treat the *ger* kindly) are in reference to a full convert to Judaism, with Rabbi Eliezer explaining that mistreatment of the convert could cause him to turn back to his past life.

Our mandate to treat the *ger* with respect and sensitivity notwithstanding, is our deeply ingrained sense of empathy supposed to stop with the *ger*, and not extend further, towards the nations of the world?

While it may be obvious to some, on the night of the Seder it is important to stress that the answer to this question is a resounding No. Our tradition has, for hundreds of years, emphasized that the kindness we extend to the *ger* should be understood broadly, even if that same tradition understands the technical command in a more restrictive fashion. See, for example, the *Sefer HaChinuch* (mitzvah 431) who emphasizes that our obligations to the *ger* is to be extended towards strangers more broadly, whether they be strangers to our land, family, or available social network.

It is on the night of the Seder when this should be emphasized most. Rabbi Chaim ibn Attar, in his comments to Exodus 22:20, notes that our nation's chosen status, which we celebrate tonight, risks being distorted into a holier-than-thou attitude. This dynamic is the very reason why we are told, in the context of the Exodus, to absorb the opposite message and treat the nations of the world with dignity. That we are to stop what might otherwise be a cycle of oppression, and instead embrace a foundational ethos of our people, to access the empathy that comes from our experience.

Apparently, absorbing this message was worth the long period of slavery in Egypt. Let's make sure that on Seder Night we don't miss the opportunity to highlight it.

Did you know?
We held 3 CE-eligible Business Ethics sessions in November, with 3 more planned for May.

עשר מכות: The Ten Plagues
Where Is Moshe?

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Currently: Israel

The discerning reader of the Haggadah will note that Moshe's name is hardly mentioned in it. In fact, Moshe's name appears only *once* in the whole Haggadah! After the Haggadah discusses the ten plagues, different sages expound on the number of plagues which the Egyptians suffered at the sea: Rabbi Yosi HaGlili says 50 plagues, Rabbi Eliezer says 200 plagues, and Rabbi Akiva says 250 plagues. In explaining his opinion, Rabbi Yosi HaGlili quotes from the Torah (Shemot 14:31): "Israel saw the great hand that G-d had directed against Egypt. The people feared G-d and believed in G-d and in His servant Moses." (translation by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks zt"l) This is the only reference to Moshe in the whole Haggadah. Since Moshe performed such a crucial role in the Exodus, why is he not mentioned at all in the Haggadah, except for a passing reference?

Moreover, the Haggadah seems to go out of its way to avoid mentioning Moshe's name. In discussing the ten plagues, the Haggadah does not quote from a single biblical verse to describe the plagues. Instead, the Haggadah provides a list of the plagues. Had the Haggadah quoted verses for the plagues, there is no doubt that Moshe's name would have appeared, due to Moshe's centrality in bringing about the plagues. Thus, by not quoting verses to describe the plagues, there appears to be a deliberate choice to avoid depicting Moshe's name in the Haggadah. Why does the Haggadah avoid mentioning the name Moshe?

Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik (*Harerei Kedem* II, pg. 211) quotes the Vilna Gaon's explanation for the omission of Moshe's name from the Haggadah: The Torah states "I am G-d" numerous times when describing the Exodus from Egypt. The sages expound that this means, "I and not an agent, I and no one else." Continuing with this idea, the Vilna Gaon explains that we only identify G-d as saving us from slavery in Egypt, because salvation *only* comes from G-d. Rabbi Soloveitchik elaborates, "When talking about redemption we mention only G-d, without whom we would have no King who redeems and saves." Moshe's name does not appear because it is G-d, and G-d alone, who redeemed us. To discuss Moshe's role as leader of the Jews would undermine the singular emphasis that we place on G-d as the Redeemer.

Rabbi Sacks provides a second answer. In his commentary to the Haggadah, Rabbi Sacks explains that Moshe is absent from the Haggadah because, "The Exodus was the prelude to a political-religious order in which we are equal citizens under the sovereignty of G-d and in which no one needs an intermediary – a god, priest, or holy person – to approach G-d." (pg. 39) To elevate Moshe by naming him in the Haggadah would serve to undermine the thesis that "we are equal citizens under the sovereignty of G-d." That is why Moshe's name does not appear in the Haggadah.

Whereas Rabbi Soloveitchik focuses on the absence of Moshe's name to show the greatness of G-d, Rabbi Sacks focuses on the absence of Moshe's name to show the greatness of the Jewish people, who have the potential to achieve unmediated access to G-d. Both rabbis agree, however, that Moshe's name is not included in the Haggadah because the Haggadah does not want to highlight Moshe's role as the leader of the Jewish people. For Rabbi Soloveitchik, to include a human leader when discussing G-d's redemption would be inappropriate. For Rabbi Sacks, to include a human leader when "In Judaism no human being is a god or godlike, but everyone is in the image of G-d" (pg. 39) would be inappropriate. Thus, Moshe's name is almost entirely excluded from the Haggadah.

In the only place where Moshe's name is mentioned, the Haggadah describes Moshe as an *eved*, a servant of G-d. It is not by accident that the Haggadah chose to describe Moshe by quoting a verse in which Moshe is described as a servant of G-d, an idea which fits with both rabbis' explanations about the absence of Moshe's name. Still, why does the Haggadah need to mention Moshe at all, in light of the ideas presented by Rabbis Soloveitchik and Sacks?

Rambam (Hilchot Teshuvah 5:2) writes that every single person has the potential to be a righteous person like Moshe. To talk about Moshe as a leader may lead to the problems noted by Rabbis Soloveitchik and Sacks. Therefore, Moshe's name is mostly absent from the Haggadah. But to discuss Moshe as a person who became the ultimate *eved Hashem* (servant of G-d) is a fitting idea for the Seder. Rabbi Soloveitchik writes, "the purpose of the Exodus is that when we left Egypt we would 'serve G-d on this mountain' [see Shemot 3:12]." (pg. 212) At the Seder, we highlight Moshe as the servant of G-d, in order to inspire us to fulfill our potential to be a righteous person like Moshe, and so that we too will "serve G-d on this mountain."

Did you know?
We offer Motzaei Shabbat Parent-Child Learning with Shaarei Shomayim in the winter!

רבן גמליאל: Rabban Gamliel
Why Say These Three Things?

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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, adapted from translations available on sefaria.org)

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 words, but also to explain why we eat these 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 without these words?** There are a number of mitzvot and obligations that we fulfill on Seder Night, but which one is being discussed here?

Rabbi Yaakov Ettlinger (Aruch LaNer to Succah 28a) cites Tosafot (Pesachim 116b), explaining the verse "**You shall say**: It is the Passover sacrifice to G-d…" (Shemot 12:27; adapted from JPS translation) to mean that **one only fulfills the obligation of eating the Pesach sacrifice if they declare it as such and explain its reason**. Further, 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 Tosafot, 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) 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 rule that all mitzvot require one to have correct focus and intention prior to performing them. 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. If it is connected to the mitzvah of eating, wouldn't it be better to place it alongside the eating? Furthermore, we don't eat the Pesach currently, yet still recite this passage; if it is indeed part of the mitzvah of Korban Pesach, why should we bother?!

Without voicing any specific objections, Rabbi Ettlinger feels that the view above is forced, and offers an alternative. **The mitzvah being discussed, he writes, is that of *Sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim*, the obligation to retell the story of the Exodus on Seder Night.** This fits in much better with the context of this passage, being part of Maggid, in which we fulfill this obligation. The Pesach passage, despite our not actually eating the korban, is all about the miracle of Hashem sparing us from the plague of the firstborn. 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, to our actions at the Seder. If the Seder remains only 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, they show us just how much of a part of our current lives this miracle is.**

If so, one might ask: why then 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: In Every Generation
Recreating the Power of Emunah

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One of the key themes of *Bnei Yisrael*'s Exodus from Egypt is their *emunah* – belief and trust in the Almighty. In G-d's communication to Moshe at the Burning Bush, Moshe is castigated for suggesting that Bnei Yisrael will not believe in his mission: "Behold they will not believe (*lo ya'aminu*) me, and they will not heed my voice, but they will say, 'The Lord has not appeared to you.'" (Exodus 4:1). G-d responds to this by turning Moshe's staff into a snake and by afflicting his hand with *tzara'at*. Both of these were signs of serious misspeaking and meant to signify to Moshe that he had verbally maligned Bnei Yisrael. In fact when Moshe did speak with them, the narrative makes it clear that they did believe him: "And the people believed (*vaya'amen*), and they heard that the Lord had remembered the children of Israel and that He saw their affliction, and they kneeled and prostrated themselves." (Exodus 4:31)

Rashi makes this clear in his comments (taken from Exodus Rabbah 3:12):

> "And it became a serpent" He hinted to [Moses] that he had spoken ill of Israel (by saying, "They will not believe me") and he had adopted the art of the serpent.
> "His hand was leprous like snow" With this sign, too, He hinted to him that he spoke slanderously…

Similarly, at the time of the actual Exodus, the Bible makes it clear that Bnei Yisrael trusted in Moshe and G-d by leaving Egypt with no food for the journey but the dough on their backs. Once again Rashi (12:39, quoting from Mechilta) underscores this:

> "And also, they had not made provisions for themselves" for the trip. [This verse] tells [of] Israel's praise, that they did not say, "How will we go out into the desert without provisions?" Instead they believed and left…

Rabbi Sholom Noach Berezovsky, (*Netivot Shalom* on Shemot pg. 63-65) quotes *Yalkut Shimoni* (Nach 519) that it was due to the merit (*zechut*) of the Israelites' emunah that they were saved from Egypt, and it will be from the merit of our emunah that we will be redeemed at the End of Days. He connects the term *zechut* with the Hebrew word "*zach*" - clarity. Quoting from the book *Toldot Yaakov Yitzchak*, the Slonimer posits that if we had the clarity of emunah today that the Israelites had in Egypt, then the Almighty would also send us manna from heaven and water from the rock.

While that last statement alone may demand a tremendous degree of emunah, what is clear is that our formation as a people was based on our trust and emunah in Hashem. Various midrashic sources refer to Bnei Yisrael as slipping down to the 49th level of *tumah*. So what caused us to be redeemed? According to the Slonimer (quoting the *Be'er Avraham*) it was specifically the emunah we had. Despite any spiritual negativity, it is this continuing power of ultimate emunah that keeps Bnei Yisrael driving to survive in all subsequent generations. We are truly deserving of the title *Ma'aminim Bnei Ma'aminim*, loosely translated as "multi-generational keepers of emunah." Regardless of where we stand in our commitment to mitzvot and the practice of Judaism, maintaining the strength of our emunah is crucial to our existence and our connection to Hashem.

In the Talmud (Shabbat 31), we are told that an individual's judgment in Heaven will commence with the question "Did you deal in good faith (*Nasata v'natata ba'emunah*)?" Rabbi Mordechai Lechovitz, in a Chassidic twist on this phrase, takes it to refer not to faithfulness and honesty in our business dealings, but rather whether we lived our lives with faith and trust in Hashem. Did you maintain proper levels of emunah during your life in this world? This, according to the Slonimer, is the key to Jewish survival on Earth and our *deveikut* to Hashem.

That, writes the *Netivot Shalom*, is why the first of the Ten Commandments contains a multi-level mitzvah about faith. First we are required to profess our true emunah that there is a G-d Who created the world and Who runs the world. Second, he is our G-d and we trust in Him completely, as children trust in their parents. And then we identify Him as He "who took us out of Egypt," but not as He who created the world, because it was through our total emunah in Him that we were redeemed and freed from Egypt. This special gift to the Jewish people is ours forever, and through it we maintain closeness to Hashem and our uniqueness as the Chosen People.

Each Jew has his own *golus* to work through; everyone has their own "*pekeleh*" of issues and "*tzuros*". There are times we may feel lost and adrift. But according to the Slonimer, if we maintain our emunah we will find our way. Emunah in Hashem is the soul that gives vitality to all the mitzvot.

This could be the reason why every year it is imperative that we not only revisit the Exodus story on Pesach night, but that we recreate in ourselves the feelings of the Israelites leaving Egypt. We renew our emunah in Hashem every year by reciting and reliving the Haggadah – the event that highlights the emunah in Hashem at the Exodus that came to define the life of the Jew.

Did you know?
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הלל ראשון: HALLEL (BEFORE THE MEAL)
The Malachim's Song, and Ours

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One of the most stirring moments of the Pesach Seder is when we transition from the narrative portion of the Maggid section into the singing of Hallel. Rav Hai Gaon explained that the Hallel we recite at the Seder is different from the Hallel we recite on other holidays. The Hallel we recite at the Seder is not a formal reading (*keriah*); rather, it is a song of praise (*shirah*) that flows from our feelings of personal redemption on this night. Rav Hai Gaon noted that this is a reason why we do not recite a blessing upon our recitation of Hallel at the Seder. (Rabbeinu Nisim, Pesachim 26b *b'dapei haRif*)

Despite our feelings of elation as we recite Hallel at the Seder – and the mitzvah to do so upon every national redemption (Pesachim 117a) – we may question its propriety, based on a passage in the Talmud. The Talmud tells us that upon seeing the Egyptians drowning in the Yam Suf, the *malachim* (angels) wanted to sing songs [of praise] to G-d. However, G-d rebuked them, saying: "The work of my hands is drowning in the sea, and you wish to sing songs!" (Megillah 10b) Similarly, King Solomon taught: "Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles." (Mishlei 24:17)

The same Talmudic passage proceeds to defend the Jewish people's rejoicing after the drowning of the Egyptians, explaining that although G-d Himself does not rejoice upon the downfall of the wicked, He causes others to rejoice. In other words, while it is inappropriate for the malachim to sing praises to Hashem for the annihilation of evildoers, it *is* proper for *us* to do so.

This "double standard" is difficult to understand. If it is insensitive to rejoice at the downfall of the wicked, because they, too, are G-d's creations, shouldn't we also be expected to refrain from doing so? Shouldn't we be held to a *higher* standard of sensitivity than the malachim, due to our mandate to model G-d's characteristics of compassion and mercy (Shabbat 133b)?

Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin answered that we were not only permitted - we were indeed commanded - to sing songs of praise to G-d under those circumstances, because the downfall of our enemies provided benefit to us; we were finally free from oppression. Unlike the song of the malachim, our song was a song of praise, not a song of vengeance. (Peh Kadosh to Shemot 15:1-2)

Despite our explicit praises of G-d for His drowning of the Egyptians during the Seder (e.g., *Dayeinu,* etc.), and our recitation of Hallel on Seder Night and on the first day of the Yom Tov of Pesach, we must exercise restraint. Rabbi Yosef Karo noted that we do not recite the complete Hallel after the first day of Pesach, for the reason that G-d rebuked the malachim. (Beit Yosef, Orach Chaim 490:4) [Outside of Israel, this applies to the first two days.] While we must praise G-d for drowning the Egyptians because it secured our freedom, we must not be callous to the fact that they were, nonetheless, G-d's creations. [See Talmud, Arachin 10a-b for a different reason why we do not recite the complete Hallel after the first day of Pesach.]

On Pesach we express overwhelming gratitude to G-d for the miracles He performed for us as we left Egypt. This gratitude includes recognizing and appreciating how G-d enabled our freedom by punishing and eliminating our foes. However, we must also recognize that the downfall of the Egyptians was merely a means to the end of allowing us to achieve freedom to serve G-d and accept His Torah. As Beruriah taught her husband Rabbi Meir, we should not seek the downfall of our enemies; rather, we should hope and pray that G-d gives them the opportunity to change their ways. (Berachot 10a)

May we soon have the opportunity to praise G-d for inspiring all of His creations towards morality, and recognition of His sovereignty!

Did you know?
Past members of our Beit Midrash are now synagogue rabbis, teachers, JLIC Rabbis and more!

רחצה: RACHTZAH
Pick Up or Wash Up?

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Opening the *Haggadah Shel Pesach*, we find the list of *simanim* outlining the stages of the Seder. One of the earliest examples of this list can be found in *Machzor Vitry* (Seder Pesach 1), dating from 11th century France. In modern times, we view this list as an integral part of the Haggadah, no doubt due to its usefulness in serving as a Table of Contents for the Seder. This very companion that you are now reading is organized according to those same *simanim*!

During the course of the Seder we perform the mitzvah of *Netilat Yadayim* twice; once before Karpas and again before reciting *HaMotzi* over matzah. One would not be mistaken in expecting the *simanim* to list *Netilat Yadayim,* perhaps in an appropriately poetic form, for both moments. This *is* in fact the language used in *Machzor Vitry* and other early *Haggadot*. Modern ones, however, do not follow this naming convention. Instead, the root *r.ch.tz* is used: *U'Rchatz* and *Rachtzah.* While the shift in conjugation seems to be for poetic balance, the utilization of *r.ch.tz* instead of *n.t.l.* is unexpected. Simply put, *r.ch.tz* means to wash, whereas *n.t.l.* literally translates as to lift or carry. As such, the language used in the *simanim* seems to be a much better fit to the mitzvah performed than the actual language chosen for the blessing. The Talmud (Berachot 60b) states unequivocally that the blessing instituted upon washing one's hands is "*asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav al **n**e**til**at yadayim*, yet it is unclear why the Sages favoured the root *n.t.l.* over a more intuitive alternative such as *r.ch.tz.*

Picking Up the Cup

Rabbi Eliezer Ben Natan (*Ra'avan,* died c. 1170, Germany) provides one approach to this peculiarity, writing, "An explanation as to why we bless [with the specific wording of] '*al netilat yadayim,*' [is that] there was a utensil in [the Beit] HaMikdash, ***n**a**tl**a* was its name and they would take water from the *kiyor* with it for washing [the priests'] hands." (Sefer Ra'avan 271) While the Ra'avan doesn't make clear what he felt would be a more suitable wording, others question why terminology used in Tanach wasn't adopted. [See Shemot 30:21 and Vayikra 15:11 for possibilities.]

The Ra'avan's response links the mitzvah of *netilat yadayim* to the Kohanim purifying their hands in the Beit HaMikdash. While this may seem purely symbolic, it has a clear connection to the mitzvah of washing hands before eating bread or dipped foods. The Talmud (Chullin 106a) teaches that the Sages instituted this mitzvah which, binds even non-Kohanim, as a way of strengthening the standard of purity required for the consumption of *terumah.* As such, the Ra'avan's explanation shows how the instituted blessing for the mitzvah of washing hands also serves the purpose of drawing our attention to the standards of purity once guarded in the Beit HaMikdash.

Raising Our Hands

A very different response is provided by Rabbi Shlomo ben Aderet (*Rashba,* died 1310, Spain), who writes, "[T]he language *netilat yadayim* is due to the requirement to lift one's hands upward after washing them. It is from the language of [the verse], 'And he raised them (*vayi**n**a**t'l**eim*) and exalted them' (Yeshayah 63:9)." (Shu"t Rashba 7:534) The approach of the Rashba is quite distinct from that of the Ra'avan. No longer does *al netilat yadayim* contain within it a narrow reference to the rituals of the Beit HaMikdash upon which the mitzvah was built, rather it carries a broader practical directive to lift one's hands after they've been washed. This serves the purpose of isolating the water from other parts of one's arms which may be impure. Beyond this technical rationale, physically lifting one's hands after washing them can be a demonstration to ourselves that we have now elevated them and our mindset to a loftier goal - purity of intention.

According to both the Ra'avan and the Rashba, the Sages chose to utilize a particular root word to emphasize a separate concern. These concerns, whether the requirement to use a utensil or to lift one's hand upward, redirect our attention away from mere cleanliness and draw us upward to the loftier ideal of purity and holiness. While a folk proverb tells us that "cleanliness is next to godliness," the blessing of *al netilat yadayim* teaches us to reach further, to purity. In doing so, we can live by the words, "[You shall] be holy, for I am holy." (Vayikra 11:44)

כורך: KOREICH
A Sandwich of Chassidut and Pesach

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One of the great hallmarks of the Chassidut of Rabbi Yisrael ben Eliezer, the "Baal Shem Tov", is the mystical idea of "the entire universe is His glory (Yeshayahu 6:3)." Hashem's presence fills every dimension. So, for example, Rabbi Klonymus Kalman Schapira explained (*Mevo haShe'arim*, pg. 214), "The foundation of the Torah of the Baal Shem Tov is summed up in the explanation which he revealed in his holiness on the verse, 'the entire universe is His glory.' He declared in his holiness: not only is there a living Divine force in all that exists in this universe, and around this living force does all that is material revolve, hiding it, but also, the material and the mundanity only appear to us as material. In truth, all is Divinity." The concept of Divinity filling all levels of the universe gives life to the spiritual meaning of a person's every action – whether in a spiritual activity like prayer or Torah study, or an activity perceived as mundane, like eating. Martin Buber expressed this well, "The world is not only the location but also the substance of the true meeting of Man with G-d. G-d speaks to Man in existence and entities which He puts before him during his lifetime. (*B'Pardes haChassidut* pg. 11)"

As an extension of this approach, I wish to present a Chassidic view of the action of Koreich, which we perform today to remember the Beit HaMikdash within the view of Hillel who wrapped the Korban Pesach, matzah and marror and ate them together. This view is faithful to the approach of *tikkun ha'achilah*, the Chassidic idea that eating can be a means of achieving the goal of drawing close to Hashem. We elevate the sparks of Divinity in the mundane, and by using the mundane properly a person (or the *tzaddik*) manifests the spiritual potential hidden within it. As Rav Dov Ber, the Maggid of Mezritch, described it, "For from everything we do, even the mundane acts like eating, we elevate holy sparks of that food. And so from everything, we make from something, nothing." (*Maggid Devarav l'Yaakov* pg. 9)

How can we find the sparks in wrapping marror and matzah together? How would a *Chassidic* outlook on that commemoration appear?

The importance of memory in the world of *Chassidut* is dealt with across the *Chassidic* spectrum. The Baal Shem Tov understands memory not as a romantic reminiscence about a past that will not return, but rather life in the present. This is how he understands our recall of the Exodus from Egypt. Pharaoh and Egypt are not figures from the Jewish past whose crimes and punishment we are commanded to remember. Rather, they represent negative aspects of our daily lives. (Toldot Yaakov Yosef, Vayakhel, pg. 251a) Memory, the Baal Shem Tov explains, is the ability to clothe the present in new décor, like a musical in a new production. The act of memory of this sandwich on the night of the Seder is more than an act of recall. By remembering the Beit HaMikdash and Hillel, we bring the Beit HaMikdash and Hillel into our home, converting the past into an act of the present, even if the production is new…

So too regarding the sandwich, each of its elements is meaningful not only in the halachic sense, but in the spiritual/metaphysical sense. Matzah is made of wheat; the Talmud (Berachot 40a) says, "The tree from which Adam ate… was wheat, for a child does not know how to call Father and Mother until it tastes grain." Matzah is the most basic bread, the artificial production which is closest to the natural grain which educates. Thus Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz explains, "Leavened bread is a product of culture, requiring time for step-by-step production: kneading, rising, baking. It needs a fixed setting and a certain level of development. Matzah on the other hand, is basic bread – raw wheat which underwent a change that is not substantive, for it has not risen or fermented like regular bread. There is no unnecessary addition in this bread. It lacks taste, it lacks salt, it is not concerned for pampered and developed tastes. In practice, matzah is the most primitive thing that can be called 'bread'." (*Mabat el haNistar*: Why do we eat matzah?)

Marror, on the other hand, represents the most basic spirituality, the spiritual birth pangs which every servant of Hashem must experience in order to merit to taste holiness. As Rebbe Nachman of Breslov formulates it, "This is the essential bitterness one must suffer before he can merit to serve Hashem truly, for there is no greater bitterness, when one does not know how to counsel himself on how to act." (Likutei Hilchot Pesach 6:9)

Wrapping matzah (representing basic education) with marror (representing spiritual birth pangs) presents two sides of the same coin: the primitive person and the primitive spirituality. And with this is expressed the early *Chassidic* idea with which we began: bridging the gap between the spiritual and the material. A person is instructed to hold his spiritual world (marror) together with his material world (matzah), to wrap them together as one. So the living memory will be fulfilled, remembering the Beit HaMikdash, like Hillel. The Hillel who saw a mitzvah in bathing (Vayikra Rabbah 34:3), and who wrapped together not only the physical marror and matzah, but their spiritual aspects as well. May we merit to do the same.

Did you know?
Prielle and Idan Rakovsky lead a weekly "Song of the Week" ZOOM session on Israeli music!

ברך: BAREICH
Incidental or Integral?

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Of all the parts of Seder Night, one could argue that *Bareich* is the least unique. After all, the text of *Bareich* is said all the time, whenever we complete a meal with bread. Even the special additions of "*Shir HaMa'alot*," "*Yaaleh veYavo*," and "*HaRachaman hu yanchileinu yom shekulo tov*," are not unique to the Seder, but are recited throughout the holiday (and on other holidays as well). And lest you think that the third cup of the night, which is imbibed at the conclusion of the *Birkat HaMazon*, is somehow special, it is really only an actualization of a rule already mentioned in the Talmud (Pesachim 105b) and codified in the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 182:1) that year-round *Birkat HaMazon* ought to conclude with a blessing on a cup of wine. [Though see the Rama on 182:2, who notes that year-round this is not a widespread custom.] Indeed, the Mishneh Berurah (479:2) suggests that appending the third cup of wine to *Birkat HaMazon* at the Seder has more to do with it being one of the four cups and less to do with anything significant about *Birkat HaMazon* itself.

Accordingly, one could ask – is the *Bareich* portion of the Seder merely incidental to Seder Night? Meaning, since we have an obligation to eat matzah, which contains themes and ideas very much relevant to the night, we consequently have an obligation to recite *Birkat HaMazon.* The *Birkat HaMazon* is secondary to the more important matzah. Or, perhaps, *Bareich* is actually an integral part of Seder Night, somehow advancing the most important ideas that we invoke at the Seder.

I offer that the answer to this can be found when we understand the deeper meaning of *Birkat HaMazon* in general. The Talmud (Berachot 48b) identifies reciting *Birkat HaMazon* after a satiating meal as biblically ordained, stemming from a verse in Devarim (10:8) which states, "You shall eat and be full, and bless Hashem your G-d for the good land which He gave you." The Rabbis understand from this that any time one is satiated from a meal, one is obligated to bless G-d.

The continuation of the verses in Devarim, however, provide further context that helps us understand our need to bless G-d. The Torah continues in verses 9-17,

> Beware lest you forget Hashem your G-d… Lest, when you have eaten and are full, and have built nice houses, and dwell there… that your heart becomes proud, and you forget Hashem your G-d, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery … Lest you say in your heart, "My strength and the power of my hand made me this wealth."

In other words, the Torah worries that once we finally arrive in the Land of Israel, plant, harvest, and feast on our crops, we will be so impressed with what we accomplished that we will forget that it is all a gift from Hashem.

It appears that the Torah requires *Birkat HaMazon* as the antidote for this mistaken view of our accomplishments. By being forced to recognize G-d's blessings in our lives, we become less likely to take credit for His work. Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch writes as much in his commentary to the Torah (Devarim 8:11), "*Birkat HaMazon* is to make us aware of Whom we have to thank for the land and its blessings…"

Birkat HaMazon doesn't exist in a vacuum; we do it to counterbalance our natural inclination to take credit for the good in our lives. Nothing is more fitting at this stage of Seder Night than this acknowledgement. Now that we have told the story of the Exodus, eaten the matzah and the festive meal, we feel truly happy, and appropriately so. But from this emotion it is very easy to slip into pride. And so, we respond with *Bareich*, thanking Hashem for His limitless care and support. This could also explain why *Bareich* is followed by Hallel, continuing this theme of recognizing and praising Hashem for what He has done for us.

Though *Birkat HaMazon* has this meaning every time we recite it, it takes on extra significance on Seder Night. On Seder Night, we aim not only to celebrate our deliverance from slavery, but to express our gratitude to the One who brought it about. This year, as we recite *Birkat HaMazon,* may we recognize its integral role in deepening our relationship with Hashem.

Did you know?
Rabbi Jared and Sarit Anstandig also serve as JLIC staff for local university students!

הלל שני: Hallel (After the meal)
Past, Present and Future

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In Rabbi Jonathan Sacks' Haggadah, (*commentary on Lefichach – 'Therefore it is Our Duty to Thank')* he writes:

> Song plays a vital part in Judaism. At the end of his life, Moshe gave the Israelites the 613th mitzvah – that in every generation we should write a new Sefer Torah. On that occasion he used an unusual word. He called the Torah a "song" (Devarim 31:19). Words are the language of the mind. Music is the language of the soul. Whenever speech is invested with deep emotion, it aspires to the condition of song. This is why we do not merely say our prayers; we sing them. We do not read the Torah; we chant it. We do not study Talmud; we intone it. Each kind of text, and each period of the Jewish year, has its own melody. We learned this from Moshe, who called the Torah a song, to teach us this important message: if we want to transmit Torah across the generations as a living faith, it must be not just a code of law, but also the song of the Jewish people.

Hallel is an essential component of our Seder experience. It helps us to internalize the magnitude of the evening by using song to attach ourselves emotionally to the Exodus experience. We are commanded on Seder Night to see ourselves as if we are actually leaving Egypt. This isn't simply a command on an intellectual level, but on an emotional one too. Singing – particularly Hallel – helps us fulfill this obligation.

During the times of the Beit HaMikdash, the Jews would say Hallel when they sacrificed the Korban Pesach, and again when they ate it at night. (Pesachim 95a) The main reason for saying Hallel on Pesach evening is to sing and thank Hashem for taking us out of Egypt. That is the uniqueness of this Hallel, that on all other holidays, we recite Hallel to praise and thank, while on Pesach evening we recite it primarily as song (Ibid. 95b) to help us internalize our own Exodus experience.

In that respect, there is a major distinction between the first half and second half of Hallel. In the first half of Hallel, before the meal, we say "*B'tzeit Yisrael MiMitzrayim,*" "When Israel left Egypt" (Tehillim 114), which is a direct continuation of the Haggadah story. The second half of Hallel, after the meal, is a more general song about all redemptions, past **and future**.

The first half of Hallel focuses on the crossing of the sea and the giving of the Torah, to thereby remember and commemorate the actual miracles and redemptions that made up our Exodus experience. The 'Second Hallel' instead focuses on future miracles. We recite it towards the end of the Seder, when we have just greeted Eliyahu HaNavi, who will herald the coming of Mashiach, and we focus on our own anticipation of and belief in the *geulah sheleimah*, the Final Redemption.

The first half of Hallel is about the past with the second half directing us towards the future. The second half helps us remember that just as Hashem has kept His promise in past redemptions, so too will He keep His promise in our future redemption. Therefore, we thank Hashem, both for His previous redemptions and salvations as well as for His future ones.

Perhaps we could even suggest that the highest level of fulfillment of recognizing Hashem's redemptions is to use Hallel and its songs to personalize this feeling. In other words, we thank Hashem not only for redemptions on the national scale both past and future, but even those redemptions in our personal lives, too. As we sit at the Seder table with our families and finest silverware, we are enjoined to recognize Hashem's guiding hand in our lives in so many ways. Hallel leverages song as a way to intentionally help us to become emotional, grateful and burst into even greater joy.

This, of course, is the entire purpose of the Seder – to bring us closer to Hashem on a personal level, to see His loving hand in our lives and be constantly aware of His presence, guidance and goodness.

This very much echoes the Ramban, who often projects the transcendent significance of the Exodus from Egypt to current daily life as the ultimate source for belief in Divine providence and intensive involvement in our own human and daily affairs. [See his comment about the role of Tefillin on Shemot 13:16, for example.]

In the first half of the Haggadah, we see all the open miracles Hashem performed for us, how He changed nature to send the plagues and redeem us from Egypt. The G-d Who can change nature is also the same G-d Who controls every aspect of nature. The functioning of the world, of our very existence, is really a miraculous manifestation of Hashem's sovereignty hidden in the normal functioning of nature. Therefore, in the Second Hallel, we sing to Hashem as an expression of our gratitude for everything we have in life, including life itself.

Our job is to sing with as much feeling as possible and allow Hallel to awaken us emotionally and spiritually to truly appreciate everything that Hashem does for us each and every day.

חד גדיא: Chad Gadya
The Choices We Make

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Those who make it to the end of the Passover Seder are greeted with several festive songs to close out the night. Perhaps the best-known, *Chad Gadya*, presents the tale of a father purchasing a little goat for two zuzim which is eaten by a cat which is bit by a dog which is hit with a stick which is burned by a fire… ultimately part of a chain of events which ends with HaKadosh Baruch Hu erasing the Angel of Death. The popular song not only appears in Aramaic, but also in Ladino as *Un Cavritico* as well as in Judeo-Italian and Judeo-Arabic. But what, exactly, is it supposed to mean to us outside of an opportunity to see who in the family can sing the fastest?

Rabbi Kenneth Brander, in an article written for *The Journal of Jewish Music and Liturgy,* summarizes several explanations of the song that have appeared throughout the centuries:

- Rabbi Yaakov Emden interpreted the words of *Chad Gadya* as symbolizing the pitfalls and perils facing one's soul during their life.
- Rabbi Yonatan Eybeschutz interpreted the song as an abbreviated history of Judaism. The two zuzim represent the two tablets, the cat represents slavery in Egypt, the stick represents Moshe Rabbeinu's staff, and the Angel of Death represents Titus, the Roman conqueror.
- The Chatam Sofer interpreted the song as about the Korban Pesach as performed in the Beit HaMikdash. The goat is purchased for the korban, the Talmud (Berachot 56b) records that dreaming of a cat is a premonition of singing as we do at the Seder, dogs bark after midnight which is the time limit for the Seder, the Kohen who swept the altar on Passover morning would wash his hands with water, many people at the Temple that day would bring korbanot of oxen, and the Angel of Death is the Roman Empire that destroyed the Second Temple.

After sharing these fascinating approaches, Rabbi Brander concludes that *Chad Gadya,*

> [O]n many levels reflects the idea of redemption. It closes the Pesach Seder because it is unique, not only because it highlights the rigors and commitments we must actualize in both our private and communal lives to achieve redemption, but because it is written in Aramaic. This language is not understood by the angels, only by G-d. Our future, which we have prayed for throughout Hallel and Nirtzah, is not to be secured by angels but rather by G-d. Therefore, even *Had Gadya*'s language stresses that G-d alone can hear our pleas and deliver us into redemption.

Thematically, *Chad Gadya* representing the redemption makes it a fitting way to end Seder Night. This is especially so with an approach offered by Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm in *The Royal Table.* For Rabbi Lamm, *Chad Gadya* serves as a bookmark for the Seder, bringing participants back to the beginning by returning to the discussion of parents and children. Rabbi Lamm writes that in *Chad Gadya,* "we read of the long chain of events initiated by one father who bought a kid" and that, "fathers, unless they choose to renounce their powers, can be quite influential and deserve our attention." Indeed, "the entire drama of father-son relations about which the Seder and Haggadah revolve leads up to the great vision" presented by *Chad Gadya*, the events of which would not have happened if not for the decision of a father to purchase a goat for his family.

Rabbi Lamm then goes on to outline four types of fathers, which can easily be expanded to types of parenting in general and correspond to the four types of children outlined earlier in the Haggadah:

1) The Domineering Parent, "who lays down the law, who can carry out no intelligent and mutually respectful conversation" with their child. These parents do not encourage curiosity by asking questions, and, in fact, do not even know how to ask rather than tell. They raise children who do not even know how to ask.
2) The Wise Parent who serves as a teacher rather than a tyrant, leading by setting a positive example rather than coercing. Wise parents often raise wise children,
3) Assimilationist Parents, who believe that identification with religion is important as long as it does not make too many demands that hinder fitting into broader society. They are "willing to identify as a Jew, willing to give charity to the Federation or UJA, and even join a Temple and participate in a service, provided it is not 'too Jewish.'" These parents raise simple children, whose connection to Judaism is often superficial at best.
4) Parents who are democratic to a fault, who will not inform their children of anything, letting them come to their own conclusions and develop their own ideas no matter how absurd. No parental image is presented at all, leading to the child ultimately completely outgrowing their parents and developing wicked behaviours.

The choices that we make in how we relate to our children, especially during their formative years, have a tremendous impact on who they become. The ultimate lesson of *Chad Gadya* is that every minor act has major consequences and that the right acts, no matter how seemingly small, can ultimately lead to our redemption. Every choice matters.

Did you know?
We learn one-on-one with approximately 35 *chavrutot* each week.

SPECIAL FEATURE
Questions Submitted by Teens

QUESTION 1: ALWAYS BE PREPARED

Question: How should I prepare for the Seder? Is there anything I need to do?

Rabbi Steven Gotlib: Great question! Assuming that *mechirat* and *bedikat chametz* have been successfully completed and that all of the practical preparations are finished, there isn't much left to do that's absolutely mandatory. However, it would be a very good idea to enter the Seder ready to benefit from the experience. There are multiple ways to do this, including:

- The Talmud (Pesachim 6a) records that the month of Nissan is an ideal time to familiarize oneself with the laws of Pesach and the Mishneh Berurah (429:1) writes that this applies even on Pesach itself.
- The Rama records a tradition that many have to learn Maggid from *Avadim hayinu* until *L'chaper al kol avonoteinu* on Shabbat HaGadol (Orach Chaim 430:1). The Mishnah Berurah there explains that this is because on Shabbat HaGadol the redemption from Egypt and various miracles associated with it began, making it the perfect time to study this material.
- Rav Shneur Zalman of Liady says that on Pesach itself one should specifically learn the stories of the miracles and experiences of our people associated with those days. (Shulchan Aruch HaRav 429:4) So familiarizing yourself with story-related passages from the Torah, midrashim and discussions in the gemara could also be quite useful.

All of this can help you to better offer interesting, thought-provoking comments during the Seder itself, since questions or ideas that come up will be fresh in your mind.

Last but not least, ask your parents or family members how you can help! See if they need any assistance cleaning or cooking - an extra hand on deck for even a little bit of Pesach prep can have a tremendous impact. *Chag Sameach*!

QUESTION 2: HOW ARE YOU FEELING?

Question: At the Seder, are we supposed to feel like free people, or like slaves?

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner: I hear the question; the Seder really sends us in both directions, and I think that's because our goal is to feel a little of both.

If we just felt like people who had always been free, we might not appreciate the value and precious nature of our freedom. If we just felt like slaves, we wouldn't recognize the freedom we received on the original Pesach.

So we lean and drink wine, but we also eat marror. We eat matzah as "bread of affliction", but we also eat it as the bread that didn't have time to rise on our way out of Egypt. We carry both identities in our hearts: we are free people who know the pain and suffering of our past, and we are grateful for our present and future.

Did you know?
Hundreds of people attended "Tishrei in a Day" and "Jews & Non-Jews in Tanach"!

SPECIAL FEATURE
Questions Submitted by Teens

QUESTION 3: WOMEN, MEN AND THE SEDER

Question: Are there parts of the Seder that women may lead?

Rabbi Jared Anstandig: Hey! What an excellent question. I think the first thing that we need to do is to establish what it means to "lead" the Seder. If we run through the entire Seder, we quickly see that according to most sources, everyone performs most of the Seder together.

Regarding Maggid, Rav Moshe Feinstein writes (Igrot Moshe, Orach Chaim 5:20:33) that women have the same obligation as men in the recitation of Maggid, and can therefore recite it on behalf of men. (However, it is worth noting that the Dirshu Mishneh Berurah 473:74 quotes Rav Elyashiv who encourages all participants to read Maggid for themselves and not have anyone read on their behalf.)

Regarding reciting berachot for others, may a woman recite the berachah on everyone's (including men) behalf? For example, may a woman recite the berachah on marror on behalf of the (male) participants sitting at the table?

In principle, one may recite berachot for other people if everyone involved are obligated in the mitzvah at the same level. For example, one who is biblically required to recite Kiddush may recite Kiddush for others who have a biblical obligation. But one who is only rabbinically obligated to recite Kiddush may not recite Kiddush for someone who has a biblical obligation.

The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 472:14) rules that women are obligated in all the mitzvot of the night. The Mishneh Berurah (472:44-45) points out that this extends to the four cups, matzah, and marror. The Aruch HaShulchan (472:12) writes that these obligations are the same as those of men. Also, the Mishneh Berurah (479:9) explains that since Hallel is derived from the four cups, a woman's obligation for Hallel is the same as that of a man. Accordingly, she would be allowed to recite all the associated berachot of these on behalf of all the people at the Seder, including male participants.

We see from here that at nearly every stage of the Haggadah, a woman may recite a passage or berachah on behalf of the others at the table.

QUESTION 4: QUESTIONS, QUESTIONS, QUESTIONS

Question: Why do we work so hard to get questions out of people on Pesach, and not when learning the parshah or at other times?

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner: You are quite right! We work harder to produce questions for the Seder than for any other part of our calendar of celebrations. The Seder itself is designed to inspire questions. The Talmud instructs parents to distribute toys to keep children involved and curious at the Seder (Pesachim 108b-109a), and it describes the practices of dipping twice (ibid. 114b) and of "grabbing" the afikoman (ibid. 109a) as customs implemented in order to inspire children's questions. The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 473:6-7) adds the practices of removing and returning the Seder Plate, and drinking a second cup of wine before our meal, as further catalysts for curiosity. According to Rabbi Yechiel Michel Epstein (Aruch haShulchan Orach Chaim 473:18), we wash for *karpas* in order to trigger questions.

This emphasis on questions is actually a legal requirement of the Seder. The Talmud instructs, "If one's child is wise, the child asks him. If the child is not wise then one's spouse asks him. If not, he asks himself. Even two Torah scholars who know the laws of Passover ask each other." (Pesachim 116a)

Continued on the next page

SPECIAL FEATURE
Questions Submitted by Teens

Continued from the previous page

So what's it all about?

It might be because people learn best when their own questions are answered. As the Maggid of Dubno wrote (Sefer haMiddot, Chapter 6), "Just as food will not be sweet without prior hunger, so an answer will not be sweet unless it follows a great question."

Alternatively, these inquiries are meant to re-enact and correct the questions which marked our time in Egypt. When G-d told Avraham that he would receive the Land of Israel, Avraham responded by asking how he could know that this would come to pass. According to one talmudic view, this skeptical question is the reason we were sent to Egypt. (Nedarim 32a) The questions continued with Moshe's repeated challenges to the Divine decision to send him to rescue the Jews, and then with the questions asked by the Jews with every obstacle they encountered in the wilderness. So our Seder puts a positive spin on our questions, by using them to build our faith.

In a third approach, Rabbi Yitzchak Mirsky (Haggadat Hegyonei Halachah pg. 22) contends that the very act of questioning demonstrates freedom. As he wrote, "Where you find edicts and slavery, there are no questions, for questions are only where there is freedom. A slave who is bound to his master – his mouth is sealed from asking questions." Like leaning and drinking wine, we ask in order to show that we are free.

Finally, asking questions is a way to connect with people; a child who asks a question of the previous generation makes a connection with the history of our nation, recognizing herself as part of the chain of Jewish history. We use this night of communication to create a link, inspiring children to see themselves as part of our people, and so extending a bridge to the future.

QUESTION 5: HOPE FOR THE WICKED?

Question: Would the Wicked Child really not have been redeemed from Egypt?

Rabbi Steven Gotlib: Wow, what a great question! After all, the Haggadah's unequivocal statement that "had [the Wicked Child] been there, he would not have been redeemed" seems quite harsh! To get to the bottom of this, we need to take a close look at what is said about his position.

As the Haggadah says, the Wicked Child's crime was in asking, "What is this to YOU?" In emphasizing "to you" and not "to us", he has separated himself from the collective group and thus "rejected a principle of our faith." Indeed, the Rambam writes that "person who separates himself from the Jewish nation and does not fulfill mitzvot together with them, does not take part in their hardships, or join in their [communal] fasts, but rather goes on his own individual path as if he is from another nation and not [Israel], does not have a portion in the world to come." (Mishneh Torah Hilchot Teshuvah 3:8, Touger translation). Similarly, Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik wrote in *Kol Dodi Dofek* that "the isolated Jew finds his solace in his active adhesion to the whole and by tearing down barriers of egotistical-separatist existence, and by joining his neighbors." (Gordon translation) Therefore, in actively breaking away from the shared experience and heritage of the Jewish people, the Wicked Child has chosen separatism over solidarity and thus voided his own right to redemption.

It's important to note, however, that this is not necessarily the end of the Wicked Child's story! After all, the Rambam emphasizes that all such *kofrim b'Ikkar* have only given up on their redemption if they never repent, but "if such a person repents from his wicked deeds and dies as a *Baal Teshuvah,* he will merit the world to come, for nothing can stand in the way of *Teshuvah*." (Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Teshuvah 3:14, Touger translation). Therefore, we should all do our part to help the Wicked Child reconnect to the community around him, thereby no longer being wicked at all.

Did you know?
We have held 3 community Shabbatonim this year, and at least 3 more are scheduled!

SPECIAL FEATURE
Questions Submitted by Teens

QUESTION 6: PHARAOH DIDN'T HAVE A CHOICE!

Question: What happened to Pharaoh's Free Will, if Hashem "hardened his heart" as reported in Shemot 7:3?

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner: This is a very good question, because Judaism makes clear that our free will is the reason why we can be punished and rewarded for our actions. As Rambam writes (Hilchot Teshuvah 5:4), without free will, "what room would there be for the entire Torah?" So commentaries have tried to explain what happened to Pharaoh in different ways, including:

- Hashem didn't take away his free will; Hashem just didn't help him to repent (Raavad, Ha'Emunah haRamah 2)
- Hashem didn't take away his free will; Hashem just kept him alive through the plagues (Rav Saadia Gaon, Ha'Emunot v'haDeiot 4)
- "Hardening his heart" meant that Hashem sent Pharaoh pain (Rabbi Yaakov Zvi Mecklenburg, HaKtav v'haKabbalah, Shemot 7:3)
- Hashem enabled Pharaoh to use his free will despite his fear of the plagues (Rabbi Yosef Albo, Sefer ha'Ikkarim 4:25; Ramban to Shemot 7:3)
- Pharaoh really lost his free will, as an appropriate punishment for his refusal to repent (Shemot Rabbah 13:3; Rambam, Hilchot Teshuvah 6:3)

The fact that we have so many answers – and there are more! – shows that this is a real challenge. Are you satisfied with any of these approaches? Do you have other ideas? Let me know at torczyner@torontotorah.com!

QUESTION 7: THE PANOPLY OF PLAGUES

Question: Why did Hashem send ten plagues, instead of just one? And why those plagues, specifically?

Rabbi Yehuda Mann: What a wonderful question, Hashem indeed could have saved valuable time and just taken Bnei Yisrael out, so why do we need so many plagues?

I think a simple answer is that Hashem wanted to punish the Egyptians for being so terrible to us, for so long. One plague wasn't enough; they had to experience numerous punishments.

On another level, Midrashim and medieval commentators gave explanations to show that each plague responded to a different aspect of what Egypt did to us, punishing them "*middah keneged middah*" – measure for measure:

1) The water turned into blood because they didn't allow us to bathe. (Tanchuma)
2) The frogs made a terrible noise that prevented the Egyptians from sleeping because they didn't allow us to sleep and worked us tirelessly.
3) They got lice since Bnei Yisrael got lice due to the exceptional amount of work and the lack of opportunity to bathe. (Lekach Tov)
4) Wild animals attacked the Egyptian families since they killed Jewish babies. (Yalkut Me'am Loez)
5) Their cattle died because they worked the Jews rather than their animals. (Yalkut Me'am Loez)
6) They were struck with boils since they didn't allow the Jews to bathe. (Yalkut Me'am Loez)
7) They were struck by hail because they beat the Jews. (Abarbanel)
8) They lost their fields to locusts since they asked the Jews to plant those fields. (Midrash Rabbah)
9) They suffered darkness since they enslaved the Jews to work in the dark of night. (Me'am Loez)
10) They lost their children in Makkat Bechorot because they killed the Jewish babies.

We learn from all of these plagues and their associated reasons that indeed the enslavement by Egypt was horrible. Baruch Hashem, Hashem freed us from the suffering that our ancestors endured.

QUESTION 8: WHO INVITED ELIYAHU?

Question: Why is Eliyahu HaNavi part of our Seder?

Idan Rakovsky: This is a wonderful question that can be answered from different perspectives. From a Halachic perspective, *Taamei HaMinhagim* (551) brings an idea from the Vilna Gaon, that since there is an unresolved dispute as to whether we should drink a fifth cup, one pours a fifth cup but does not drink it. This cup is called the cup of Eliyahu, meaning that when Eliyahu comes he will solve all of our halachic doubts. Some suggest that this is also the message of the Aramaic word *Teiku*, which is used in the Talmud to mark unresolved disputes. It may mean *Tishbi Yetaretz Kushyot v'Abayot* – Eliyahu the Tishbite will resolve questions. [See, for example, Tosafot Yom Tov Eduyot 8:7.]

I want to offer another answer based on the role of Eliyahu in the Tanach. By tracing Eliyahu's character as described at the end of Melachim I and the begining of Melachim II, we see that Eliyahu persistently pours his wrath over the people of Israel. Time after time he is directed by Hashem in other ways, but he continues in this vein against Bnai Yisrael and their wrong deeds. This eventually leads Hashem to remove him from his role and carry him in a storm up to heaven, alive. This type of approach fits very well with the point when Eliyahu joins the Seder- while we ask from Hashem to pour His wrath upon the nations that did not know Him. Maybe Eliyahu is part of our Seder at this exact moment, since it is an opportunity for him to correct himself. Instead of asking G-d to pour His wrath upon Israel, he can redirect the anger against the nations that hate us, who are the real enemy of our people and faith.

For more about the special character of Eliyahu, listen to my classes about him **here**.

What Questions Came Up at Your Seder?

Please send them to us at info@torontotorah.com, and we might feature them next year in Seder Companion Volume 10: The Jerusalem Edition!

בס"ד

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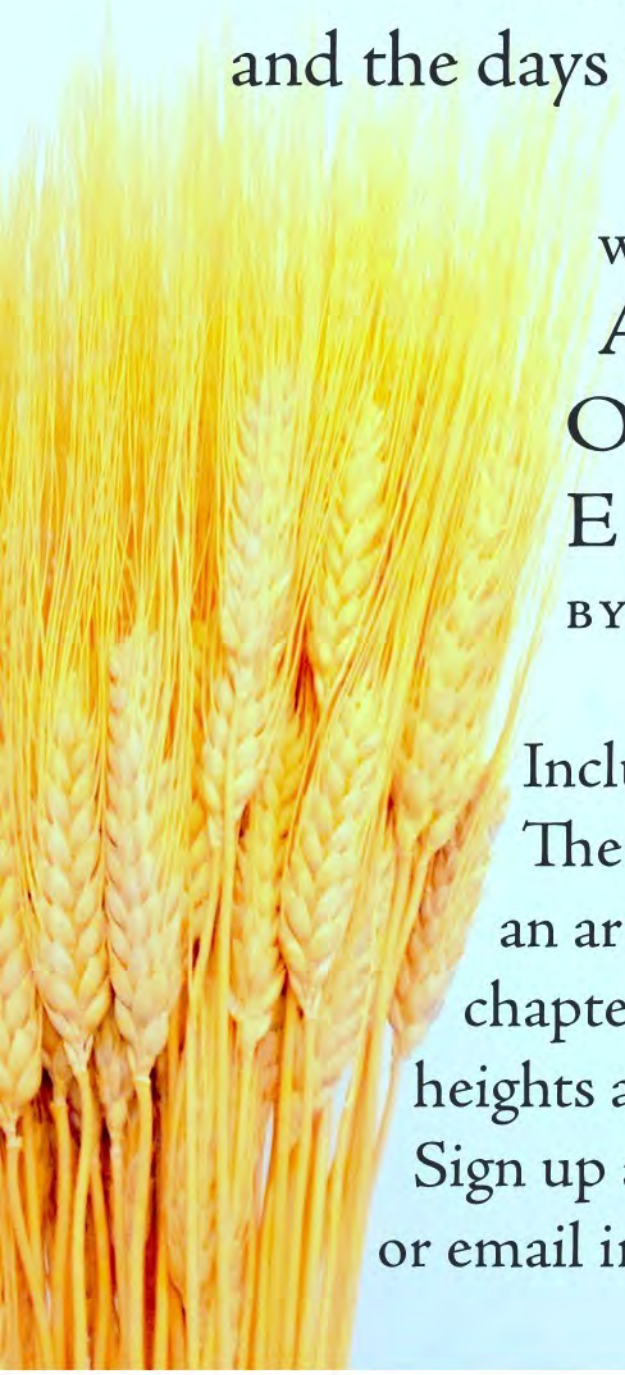

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