Yeshivat
Migdal HaTorah
Haggadah Supplement
5784

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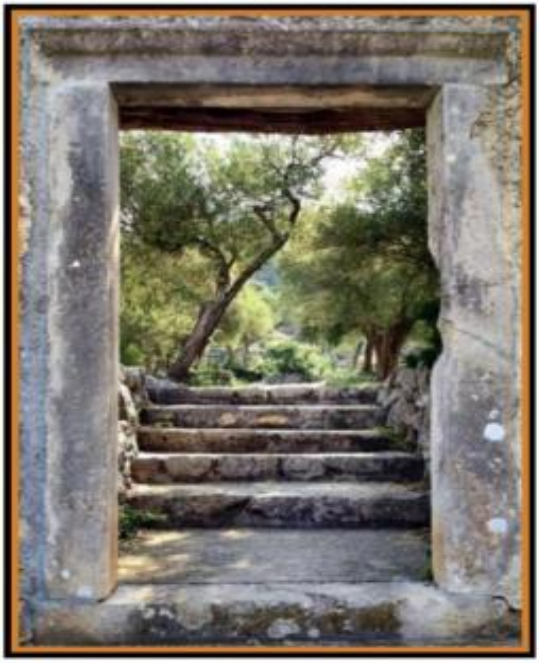

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Dedicated to the memory of siblings Arno Kahn and Ilse Buttenweiser z"l

As Holocaust survivors and family, they helped us keep the traditions of German Jewry during Pesach alive. May their neshamas have the highest Aliya.

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Introduction to the Haggadah

Rabbi Dr. Dvir Ginsberg ~ Senior Rosh HaYeshiva

After pouring the fourth cup of wine, we recite a small *tefillah* prior to the Hallel at the Seder. While in previous years not always having the deepest resonance, it would seem to have a greater sense of urgency after the events of Oct 7th:

> *Pour out Your wrath upon the nations that do not acknowledge You, and upon the kingdoms that do not call upon Your Name. For they have devoured Jacob and laid waste his habitation. Pour out Your indignation upon them, and let the wrath of Your anger overtake them. Pursue them with anger, and destroy them from beneath the heavens of the Lord.*

This language is quite strong, to say the least. Why are we reciting this "aggressive" prayer? What is its relationship to the fourth cup of wine?

Ritva cites an opinion in the Talmud Yerushalmi that the four cups of wine of the Seder are tied to the four cups of perils (*puraniyot)*, where God in the future will "pour" His wrath upon those who do not recognize His existence. In fact, Ritva goes so far as to say that the essence – "*ikar*" - of our redemption (*geulah*) is the destruction of the "*horn of their kingship*". What does this mean?

Obviously, denial of God by the powerful is a state that cannot be tolerated in the state of *geulah*. Yet one can assume that the existence of leaders who deny God is in fact a *chillul Hashem*, a desecration of God. As Jews, we are given the task of always being involved in sanctifying God through our actions. When we live in line with the system God gave to us, we have the opportunity to be *mekadesh Hashem*. At the same time, we do need God's intervention at some point to help rid the world of those who will never be "won over." At the time of the redemption, God will ensure that the desecration of His name will no longer exist. In other words, the *geulah*

cannot come into being alongside *chillul Hashem*, and this theme must be present during the Seder night – thus, the four cups.

The coming together of the Jewish people, families and friends, on the Seder night, where we are intimately involved in the re-telling of the great miracles and wonders afforded by God to our ancestors, is one of the strongest acts of *kiddush Hashem* that exists. It is a public declaration of our recognition of God as Creator and arbiter of Divine reward and punishment, of His unique relationship with the Jewish people, and of how *geulah* is the state we all yearn for. At the pinnacle of this process of *kiddush Hashem*, we now turn to God to ask Him to destroy those who perpetrate *chillul Hashem*.

The horrors of Oct 7th will be on all of our minds this year. And yet, at this time of vulnerability and sadness, we know we are united in our desire to eradicate our enemies and bring back those taken from us. This is not something we can do without God's help, and we must continue the introspection needed after this terrible tragedy. Any opportunity for *kiddush Hashem* is one we should pursue, and the Seder affords us an incredible opening. With that, I hope you include this year's Migdal Haggadah Supplement at your Seder, a treasure trove of Torah written by the *rebbeim* and *talmidim*.

As we immerse ourselves in the themes of redemption, let us all hope our relationship to God is repaired and we truly merit to see the *geulah, bimheira beyameinu*.

Pesach

Appointed Times: The Experience of Jewish Holidays

Rabbi Dr. Jacob B. Aaronson ~ Night Seder Coordinator

The holidays play a significant role in our religious consciousness. Across the year, these appointed times draw our attention to different themes and include diverse mitzvot. In Parshat Emor, the Torah outlines and discusses the major holidays. "Speak to the children of Israel and say to them: The Lord's appointed [holy days] that you shall designate as holy occasions. These are My appointed [holy days]" (Vayikra 23:2).

The Rambam's monumental Mishneh Torah, his restatement of the Oral Torah oriented towards the performance of Mitzvot, is divided into 14 books. The 3rd book focuses on the holidays, as he explains, "I include therein all the precepts to be fulfilled at stated periods, such as Sabbaths and Festivals. I have called this book: The Book of Seasons" (Rambam - Division of Mitzvot).

The Rambam introduces each of his 14 books with a verse from Tanach. The verse he chose to introduce the third book is a selection from psalms, "I inherited Your testimonies forever, for they are the joy of my heart" (Psalms 119:111). This verse is interpreted in varied ways by the commentators, but the Ibn Ezra's interpretation closely aligns with the Rambam: "The meaning of have I taken as a heritage [… forever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart] is, "they are my heritage in which I will rejoice." Thy testimonies refer to the wonders that God performed and that our fathers transmitted to us. [The psalmist says,] "I will rejoice in them as if I witnessed them in those days" (Ibn Ezra, Second Commentary Tehillim 119:111).

Our verse describes an inheritance which we rejoice in. The Ibn Ezra explains that it refers to the awesome experiences performed by the Almighty, formulated and codified by our forefathers into a heritage which we re-experience. The term Moed is related to the

Hebrew word Eid, meaning a witness. We engage with these inheritances as if we had seen them with our own eyes. There is an outstanding example of this in the formulation of the Haggadah based on the Talmud: "In every generation, a person is obligated to regard himself as if he had left Egypt. It was not only our ancestors whom the Holy One, blessed be He, redeemed from Egypt; rather, He redeemed us, as it is stated: "He brought us out from there, so that He might bring us to the land He promised our fathers, and give it to us" (Mishnah, Pesachim 10:5, Bavli Pesachim 116b). The Rambam codifies this explicitly: In each and every generation, a person must present himself as if he, himself, has now left the slavery of Egypt, as [Deuteronomy 6:23] states: "He took us out from there." Regarding this manner, God commanded in the Torah: "Remember that you were a slave [Deuteronomy 5:15]" - i.e., as if you, yourself, were a slave and went out to freedom and were redeemed" (Rambam - Laws of Chametz and Matzah 7:6).

According to the Talmud, the Haggadah, and the Rambam, one is required to re-experience the events of the exodus from Egypt "as if he himself right now left the enslavement of Egypt". The holidays are structured to bring to life the events of the past. This is beautifully expressed by the Rav, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, as follows:

> *We not only know our history, we also live it. The latter experience is, to us, not knowledge of the past, a mere narrative about events that took place once upon a time, but repetition: re-experiencing and reliving those events. Many halakhot are related to our experiential memory, to the unique phenomenon of emotional–not intellectual–recollection. We are close to the Biblical heroic-dramatic events in a manner unknown and incomprehensible to other nations. The Halakhah requires of us that we continue and sustain this intimacy with and closeness to people and mysterious, distant events by engaging in a series of deeds capable of keeping the memory alive. Passover, Tish'ah be-Av, and many other halakhic institutions rest upon this miraculous, uncanny memory, which shifts events from a dead past into a living present. (Counting Time, p.176)*

The Rav's comments are consistent with the theme articulated by the Ibn Ezra and codified by the Talmud and the Rambam. Holidays are distinct periods of time set aside to re-experience aspects of our history. These experiences help us engage with fundamental themes. It is an ancient form of experiential education. Beyond learning about the exodus from Egypt, we re-enact and retell the story as if we were there, eat matzah, and see ourselves as participants. We not only learn about the giving of the Torah, we prepare ourselves to receive it again. We celebrate the holiday of Sukkot, but also leave our homes and live in temporary structures. The holidays help us see our history from an experiential vantage point, shifting our frame of reference, and hopefully bringing us to new ideas and perspectives which can inform our approach to our present and our future.

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Bedikat Chametz

The Search for Why

David Stricker ~ Shana Aleph; Brooklyn, NY

Before Pesach begins, we gather together all the *chametz* items in our house, and either throw them away or sell them. After all that, we are obligated to take the time to search our house for *chametz*. This begs the question: even after all the cleaning and selling, why do I still need to search my house for more *chametz*? The Mishnah (Pesachim 1:1) has an answer to this question… kind of. It states:

> *On the evening [or] of the fourteenth of the month of Nisan, one searches for leavened bread in his home by candlelight. Any place into which one does not typically take leavened bread does not require a search, as it is unlikely that there is any leavened bread there.*

It is clear according to the Mishnah that any place you cleaned is treated the same as a place you never bring bread into. Great! This means if we clean our houses and are confident there is no *chametz*, then there is no reason to search. If only it were this simple. Clearly, every family that cleans their house is still obligated to perform the search. Why? And why recite a beracha on a seemingly purposeless search?

For this reason, there is also a *minhag*, cited by the Rama (Orach Chaim 432:2), where people will take bread (it is common today to cover them in tinfoil), and place it around the house:

> *It is our custom to leave small pieces of chametz in a place where the searcher will find them in order that his blessing not be in vain.*

Yet we are still left with our question: Why can't we just skip it entirely?

This is the topic of the very first Rashi and Tosafot on Masechet Pesachim. Rashi's interpretation is that the search is actually a Torah command to prevent the transgression of the seeing and finding of *chametz*. Tosafot cite the Ri, who objects to this approach. He suggests that Rashi cannot be correct, for *bitul* itself more than accomplishes ridding ourselves of the Torah prohibitions. So why search? The Ri therefore suggests that it is not a Torah command but a rabbinical fence, lest we accidentally come across good *chametz* on Pesach and come to eat it.

From here we see that the purpose of searching for *chametz* is an extra precaution, which brings us to the second half of the Mishna. The Rabbis created *bedikat chametz* so as to not accidentally come across *chametz* in our house.

Another way to understand our Mishnah is that the concept of "not typically" and "unlikely" means when one does not bring *chametz* **throughout** the whole entire year. There is still a slight chance you might bring *chametz* into most if not all the rooms in your house, justifying the commandment.

We can see how important it is to check our *mitzvot* in detail. We could just clean our houses and not think much of it. Our rabbis have implemented many *gezerot* for the purpose of going the extra length to make sure our mitzvot are the best and risk free they can be.

Biur Chametz

The Power of Biur

Mo Wasserman ~ Shana Aleph; Teaneck, New Jersey

What's the most memorable part of Pesach for you? The intricate Seder and its complex steps? Or perhaps it's the bitter taste of horseradish as you reluctantly put it in your mouth? For me, it's the rush of all the different preparations for the holiday itself. Sometimes I'd be cracking walnuts at my grandma's house at the instruction of my relatives or carefully enveloping all surfaces in some weird blue wrap. I vividly remember going out with my uncle to burn the *chametz* in a fire outside. Same thing with my dad and mom. But what even is *chametz* anyways? What did it *do* to us to make us burn it?

That last thing I said isn't much of a joke, as it seems. Although *chametz* itself didn't harm us, the Egyptians did. Back during Egypt's heyday, it ruled with wealth, fame, and power, us under their iron rule. The Nile that they loved so much could grow wheat[1] like nobody's business, and back in the day bread was your, as we say today, bread. Everyone wanted a piece; it was the most common food eaten there and was tantamount to life itself[2]. The Nile also acted as an easy trade route; the Egyptians basically lived on a

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[1] "An unending source of sustenance, it played a crucial role in the development of Egyptian civilization.
Because the river overflowed its banks annually and deposited new layers of silt, the surrounding land was very fertile. The Ancient Egyptians cultivated and traded wheat, flax, papyrus and other crops around the Nile." (Wikipedia)

[2] "Since ancient times, Egyptians have seen bread as "life." Egyptians regard bread to be a need in their daily diet. It may be found on every table, from breakfast to dinner." (Exploreluxor.org)

goldmine in those times[3]. They could enjoy lavish lives with us as their step stool.

Bread practically represented the nation of Egypt, so it makes sense to avoid it during Pesach. In fact, on Pesach our prohibition against eating leavened bread is so extreme that those who go against it are supposed to be "cut off from Israel" (Exodus 12:15). That seems a bit harsh, right? Well I think there is a basis for this statement. If we say that our slavery in Egypt is one of, if not the biggest, representation of our people and our suffering, eating their signature food especially when we are expressly forbidden from doing so sends a bad message in terms of being a part of the Jewish people.

We see *chametz* as a symbol of our captors, so we have a commandment to remove it from our homes and other properties we own, relinquish ownership of it, and burn it. Our nation burns *chametz* as a powerful allusion to resentment for our enemies and our de-identification with them. We also go through the process of selling the *chametz* we own and want to keep to non-Jews. This is done specifically to transfer ownership so we do not possess any during the holiday. There is also a process in which we make it ownerless by reciting the following declaration: "All chametz in my possession that I have seen and that I have not seen, that I have destroyed and that I have not destroyed, shall be nullified like the dust of the earth" (Shulchan Aruch OH 434:4) This is said during the day after the burning of the *chametz*. It's an intense statement that we say a shortened version of during the night as well. This all serves to separate our identity as Jews from Egyptians.

When our nation finally fled after the *makkot,* we knew we were in for a long trip, so we packed the best stuff around (dough), but we couldn't let it rise, so it turned into unleavened bread, also

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[3] "The Egyptians took advantage of the natural cyclical flooding pattern of the Nile. Because this flooding happened fairly predictably, the Egyptians were able to develop their agricultural practices around it."(Wikipedia)

"The Ancient Egyptians cultivated and traded wheat, flax, papyrus and other crops around the Nile. Wheat was a crucial crop in the famine-plagued Middle East. This trading system secured Egypt's diplomatic relationships with other countries and contributed to economic stability. Far-reaching trade has been carried on along the Nile since ancient times." (Wikipedia)

known as matza. What's cool is that matza lacked leavening, which is an Egyptian invention[4]. By not letting our bread rise we show our power by taking something so integral to their identity and making it our own. Nowadays we eat regular bread without a problem, but on Pesach we cast it away, take the concept of bread into our hands, lean back, and show our resolve and triumph as the nation of Israel.

[4] "Depending on the version, leaven was discovered by the Babylonians or by the Hebrews. But the most frequently cited origin is that of Egypt: a person would have been late in baking his cereal dough, and the dough, under the effect of fermentation, would have begun to swell, thus creating the first leavened bread." (maison-kayser.org)

Seder Plate

The Korban Pesach: A Message of Achdut

Eli Kestenbaum ~ Shana Aleph; New Rochelle, NY

The Seder plate is filled with interesting choices and symbols. One of the most popular customs represented on the Seder plate is the roasted bone, a "*zeroa*," which represents the Korban Pesach. This is the first *mitzvah* commanded to the Jewish people as a people, even before they left Egypt, making it an important one to analyze. The Torah tells us several details regarding the Korban Pesach, but I would like to focus on two specific ones.

"On this night, they shall eat meat roasted on fire" (Exodus 12:8).

"Its bones they shall not break" (Numbers 9:12).

According to the Torah, the Korban Pesach must be roasted over fire, and its bones cannot be broken. Why does God command us to offer the Korban Pesach in these specific ways? Is there any underlying symbolism that can relate to our own lives as Jews?

The Maharal provides an answer in *Gevurot Hashem* (ch. 60). He says that all of this is a message of *achdut*, unity. With regard to roasting, he notes that roasting is the only cooking method in which the meat does not fall off the bone, symbolizing unity: "This is all the same idea [of *achdut*], that cooking in water or in other liquids causes the parts to detach through the cooking process, and disconnect. But with roasting, because of the fire's power, it is the opposite. The piece of meat becomes unified, because the fire expels the juices, and the meat becomes hard and one unit, which is not so when it is cooked in water, where it falls apart." Interestingly, the Maharal says that this ties in to why the bones cannot be broken: "This is the same thing, that if a bone of the Pesach is broken, this represents separation and disunity regarding something that is inedible…. Breaking the bones, which is not for eating, that is called a break and a disconnection."

Why is *achdut* such an important message for the Jewish people, particularly right at the moment of their Exodus? The Maharal believes it is a theological idea. According to him, at the birth of the nation, the Jewish people needed to cast away any beliefs in other gods and to only believe in God, who took them out of Egypt. As the Maharal writes: "The Pesach should be a unified sacrifice, because it represents *Hashem Yitbarach* who is one. The essence of Jewish worship is insofar that He is one, and therefore He chose a singular nation as well, since He Himself is singular."

I'd like to take the Maharal's interpretation in another direction. Instead of viewing this sacrifice as relating to *Hashem's* unity, perhaps the Korban Pesach represent *Jewish* unity. (And the Maharal might have even had this in mind as well. If the Jews are really God's representatives, then when we are one, it represents God being one. If the Jews aren't one, it sends the message to the world that God is not one, *chas veshalom*.)

If so, the Pesach lamb symbolically conveys a message of *achdut* in the nation. This is why they are commanded to do this right now, having only just begun the process of becoming a nation. Unity and brotherhood is absolutely crucial at the start of our journey as a people. We are commanded to keep the Korban Pesach unified, just like us. The message is that we must strive to remain united, because a united nation is stronger than a divided one.

Why is it that the bones specifically cannot be broken, yet the meat can? The Maharal we saw above suggested that it's because the meat is meant to be eaten, so it has to be allowed to separate, which is not true for the bones, which are inedible. However, perhaps we can add another symbolic gesture here. Unity among people has two levels. One is a superficial attitude of unity. You keep to yourself and I'll keep to myself, and there will be unity because we won't fight. That is not true unity. True unity is when peace and oneness are internalized, bone deep, and not just superficial. That is when we have a common purpose, a shared meaning of existence, and deep love for each other as Jews. That is why the bones cannot be broken - even deep down, on the inside, there must be unity.

This may connect to another reason why the bones of the Korban Pesach cannot be broken. In *Sefer HaChinuch* (Mitzvah 16), the author states: "For it is not honorable for the sons of kings and the advisers of the land to drag the bones and break them like dogs. Except for the impoverished among the people and the starving, it is

not a proper thing to do this. And therefore, as we began to become chosen of all nations, kingdom of priests and a holy nation - and in each and every year at that time — it is fitting for us to do acts that show within us the great stature which we achieved at that time."

While the Sefer HaChinuch emphasizes our royal status, this same idea could also represent that we must act in a dignified and honorable manner in terms of our feeling of brotherhood toward each other. This includes helping those who need help. If we are all princes, and not uncivilized, we have the means to help each other and share our wealth with each other. This is what princes do. And when we aren't united and don't help each other out, we are like the animals, which aren't united and don't help each other out. This is the deeper level of unity that is in the bones, beyond the surface and internalized.

The concept of unity has never been more relevant. The Korban Pesach reminds us that we are a nation and must remain united in both difficult and prosperous times. This unity was evident after the October 7th massacre when all Jews, regardless of religious affiliation, united during this time of conflict. This demonstration of unity was evident as individuals booked flights to Israel to serve in the IDF, even without being called up. Additionally, at Migdal, we showed unity through actions like donating blood, providing aid by packing sandwiches for soldiers, tying *tzitzit* for soldiers, and generally supporting each other. This exemplifies the essence of Korban Pesach: we are a united nation, inside and out, which is a message of *Achdut* that we should all embrace.

Kadesh

Sanctifying Sensible Combinations

Ariel Wallen ~ Shana Aleph; Fair Lawn, New Jersey

There are many things at the Seder that differ from the rest of the year, and some of these strange differences are covered by the questions in Mah Nishtanah. But one thing that didn't make it into the Mah Nishtana starts at the very first thing we do at the Seder: Kadesh. For most of the year, only the person saying *Kiddush* has a cup of wine, and everyone takes from that. However, on Pesach, everyone has their own cup of wine at *Kiddush*. Why is that? The Rosh (Pesachim 10:18) says explicitly that with regard to (regular) *Kiddush*, only the person saying *Kiddush* needs to drink wine. So why is the *Kiddush* at the Seder different?

To answer this question, we need to understand the fact that the mitzvah to say *Kiddush* at the Pesach Seder and the mitzvah to have the four cups of wine are really combined together. Meaning, the first of the four cups is *Kiddush* itself. The Mishna on Pesachim 114a states:

> *The attendants* ***poured*** *the wine of* ***the first cup*** *for the leader of the seder.* ***Beit Shammai say: One recites the blessing over the*** *sanctification of the* ***day,*** *i.e., the kiddush for the Festival: Who blesses Israel and the Festivals,* ***and thereafter he recites the blessing over the wine:*** *Who creates fruit of the vine.* ***And Beit Hillel say: One recites the blessing over the wine and thereafter recites the blessing over the day.***

This Mishnah is referring to the cup of wine of the person who says *Kiddush*. "The first cup" refers to the first of the four cups of wine, and the blessing over the day refers to the *Kiddush*. We learn from this that the cup for *Kiddush* is also the first of the four cups of wine. And the Rosh (Pesachim 10:21) says that everyone, even children, are obligated to have the four cups during the Seder on Pesach.

So we have our answer. Everyone has a cup of wine by *Kiddush* on Pesach because it's not just a cup for everyone to have while someone says the *Kiddush*. It is the first of the four cups, which everyone is required to drink.

However, this does not explain why they are combined. Isn't that a little strange? Wouldn't it make more sense to have *Kiddush*, and later start the four cups as a separate mitzvah? Furthermore, Chazal generally have a problem with combining two *mitzvot* with the same object and *beracha*. We even find this in a more analogous case, combining *Kiddush* for *Yom Tov* with the cup for *Birkat Hamazon*:

> *Rav Huna said that Rav Sheshet said: One does not recite two sanctifications, i.e., for two mitzvot such as borei pri hagephen for Grace after Meals and kiddush, over one cup. What is the reason for this halakha? Rav Naḥman bar Yitzḥak said: Because one does not perform mitzvot in bundles.*
> (Pesachim 102b)

The gemara here says that we should not accomplish two *mitzvot* over one cup because it violates the principle of avoiding performing *mitzvot* in "bundles." So why do we seemingly allow this with regard to combining *Kadesh* with *Arba Kosot*?

The question becomes, why exactly is there a problem of combining *mitzvot*? What precisely bothers Chazal about such a thing? The gemara (Moed Katan 8b) asks, Why can't a person get married on *Chol HaMoed*? The gemara answers that "we do not combine two happy occasions." Tosafot (Moed Katan 8b) suggests that by combining the two *mitzvot* of *kiddushin* and *Chol HaMoed*, one will not be able to have proper intention for both of them at the same time, and connects this to our concept of the prohibition of bundles:

> *Because we don't have two celebrations at the same time… The reason for this seems to be similar to the reason for the prohibition of performing mitzvos in bundles, because his heart would be focused on one mitzvah and he won't have the proper mindset for the other one. This is the case by having two celebrations at the same time because he would be occupied with one and neglect the other.*

However, another approach is offered by Tosafot in Sotah 8a. The gemara in Sotah discusses the case of two different Sotah women brought to the Temple at the same time. The gemara asks, Why can't we make them drink from the same water (with the burnt ashes in it)? Without getting into the minute details of the gemara's discussion, at one point the gemara assumes that it should be prohibited because of this very principle of "we do not bundle *mitzvot*." On this, Tosafot explain:

> *But we do not perform mitzvot in bundles… It is a rabbinical prohibition because he will make it seem to himself like it is a burden…*

There is a concept in psychology that one's actions affect their thoughts. Tosafot is saying something along the lines of that theory. According to them, the reason for the prohibition of the court to give both Sotah women to drink at the same time is because they shouldn't make it seem to themselves that the *mitzvot* are burdensome and that they are trying to rush and get it over with. It seems that the concern is that the person won't view the mitzvah with the proper respect. Therefore, the issue is not only other people seeing the person not viewing the mitzvah with respect, it's also the person himself not viewing the mitzvah with respect.

Having *Kiddush* combined with the first cup of wine should therefore cause these two big problems. The first problem is that the person might not be able to have proper intention when performing either mitzvah, and the second problem is that the person might view the *mitzvot* themselves without proper respect.

To answer the first problem we have to find out what's the intention one should have for Kiddush. Then we need to understand the intention meant to be for the four cups. If we understand these things, the issue of lack of proper intention goes away.

It seems to me that *Kiddush* for Pesach, one's intention should be one of feeling chosen and becoming holy through Hashem's commandments.

> *Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has* ***chosen us from all peoples*** *and has raised us above all tongues* ***and has sanctified us with His***

> ***commandments.*** *And You have given us, Lord our God, appointed times for happiness, holidays and special times for joy, this Festival of Matsot, our season of freedom a holy convocation in memory of the Exodus from Egypt.* ***For You have chosen us and sanctified us above all peoples****. In Your gracious love, You granted us Your special times for happiness and joy. Blessed are You, O Lord, who sanctifies Israel, and the appointed times.*

The time we say Kiddush is the time Hashem took us out of Egypt. The Kiddush for Pesach is about Hashem choosing our nation from within Egypt and then making us holy. It refers to our redemption as a whole.

What's the intention one should have for the Four Cups of Redemption? It seems that when drinking the four cups, one is made to feel as if Hashem is taking them personally through each of the four steps of redemption.

> *Say, therefore, to the Israelite people: I am the Lord. I will free you from the labors of the Egyptians and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and through extraordinary chastisements. And I will take you to be My people, and I will be your God. And you shall know that I, the Lord, am your God who freed you from the labors of the Egyptians.*

In Exodus 6:6-7, God tells Moshe Rabbeinu to tell the children of Israel the four phrases of His redemption for us: that he will stop their suffering and enslavement, he will redeem us, he will take us for a nation, and that he will be a G-d for us. In other words, Hashem will choose us by taking us out of Egypt and then make us holy by becoming our G-d.

The theme between the Kiddish and the four phrases of redemption is the same because they are both about Hashem choosing us and making us holy. Therefore, the first problem of not having proper intention doesn't apply because the intention one is supposed to have for both of them is the same.

The other issue to deal with is about giving respect to each mitzvah, and not let it seem like a burden. However, in the case of *Kiddush* and the four cups, this is not a problem. On the one hand, *Kiddush* refers to the summary of the whole process of our redemption from beginning to end. On the other hand, the first cup corresponds to the first phrase of redemption, "I will free you from the labors of the Egyptians." It refers to Hashem ending our suffering and is the starting point of our redemption. These both emphasize how we are now free, and are both really necessary. They complement each other.

When hearing *Kiddush* and having the first cup of wine, we should concentrate on the ideas of these two *mitzvot*. This idea behind the first cup complements the *Kiddush* because we can see where the redemption started from. We also see how far we've gotten now that Hashem made us holy and sanctified us with his commandments. At the same time, the idea behind the Kiddush complements the first cup because now that Hashem made us holy and sanctified us, we see what it means to end our suffering.

Heseba

Lean Back and Feel Free:

Heseba at the Seder

Rabbi Shmuel Dovid Chait ~ Executive Director

The gemara (Pesachim 108a) tells us that one needs to recline when eating the matzah, but does not need to recline when eating the maror. However, what is the law when it comes to drinking the four cups of wine? Regarding this question, there is a debate whether you need to recline for the first two cups of wine or last two cups of wine. The gemara explains both sides. The one who says you need to recline only for the first two cups is of the opinion that during the drinking of the first two cups is when the theme of the Haggadah focuses on the emancipation of the Jewish people, while the last two cups are after the granting of freedom, and therefore there is no need to recline for them. On the other hand, the one who holds that reclining must be done only for the last two cups is of the opinion that it is at this time in the narrative that we are free and wish to express our ideas as a free nation, whereas during the first two cups, we're still discussing the story of being slaves to Pharaoh.

Although the final halacha is, as the gemara says later on, that we recline for all four cups, the question is, what is the logical debate between these two opinions? Obviously, the first side agrees that during the first two cups of wine we are discussing being slaves. If so, why does he say you should recline? Surely reclining is a symbol of freedom! The second side also must agree that by the last two cups we are already free. So, why does he hold it's better to recline only then?

Perhaps the answer is that the one who holds you need only to recline during the first two cups of wine maintains that the telling of the story itself shows freedom. In other words, the reclining needs to reflect the process of *Cheirus,* the process of becoming free. Meanwhile, during the second two cups, we are free already and so reclining would longer reflect that process. The side who holds you

need to recline only during the drinking of the last two cups maintains that one needs to show freedom by reacting to the story of the *Geulah*. In other words, the reclining needs to reflect the result of the process. Meanwhile, during the first two cups, while we are still telling the story and transforming to free people, we can not yet recline as we have not yet finished the process of the *Geulah*.

Tosafot ask the following question. The side that holds that one reclines only during the first two cups believes that reclining is only necessary during the process of becoming free, but once we're free there's no point in reclining. Why, then, do we recline for the eating of the matzah? The eating of matzah occurs after the drinking of the first two cups. If we have passed the point of becoming free, aren't we already free? Why continue to lean?

Tosafot offer two possible answers. One answer they give is that matzah is the major part of the *seuda*, even more than wine is. Tosafot mean here that the mitzvah of reclining doesn't exist by itself. You can't just recline without eating to fulfill the mitzvah. Reclining is a quality in eating. Without eating you can't fulfill the mitzvah of reclining. So, although the best time to do *heseba*, reclining, is during the process of the *Geulah*, it needs to be part of eating. If you eat the major part of the *seuda* without reclining, you're lacking in the main theme of reclining, which is to show freedom. So although this is not the ideal time of showing your freedom because it's after the time of the process of Geulah, but since bread is the essence of the meal, failure to recline would hinder the fulfillment of Haseiva, as reclining is a quality of eating.

This idea fits in very well with what the Rambam says (Hilchot Chametz UMatzah 7:8): "When must one recline? When eating the *kezayit* of matzah and when drinking these four cups of wine. While eating and drinking at other times: if one reclines, it is praiseworthy; if not, there is no requirement." One may ask, why is it considered praiseworthy to recline while eating his chicken during the Seder? After all, there is no particular mitzvah to eat a piece of chicken the night of the Seder! The answer is that since reclining is a quality of eating, anytime you eat while reclining you're able to express this quality of freedom. Reclining on its own doesn't express any halachic idea. Only while you're eating can you express the quality of reclining. So although the preferred time to recline is during the process of the Geulah, anytime you eat while reclining you fulfill this idea.

With this idea, we can answer another question. There is a debate amongst the *acharonim* whether one should recline during the eating of Karpas. I believe we can explain the opinion of those who hold one should recline. Karpas is done during the time of drinking the first two cups, meaning during the process of telling the Geulah, and it's an act of eating during that time. So although you would not be obligated to recline, however, any eating especially during the time of the process of the Geula is a fulfillment in the mitzvah of reclining the night of the Seder.

Karpas

Herb Your Enthusiasm: The Bitter Truth Behind *Karpas*

Israel Isaac Skuratovsky ~ Shana Aleph; Boca Raton, Florida

The *Mishna* (*Pesaḥim*, *Chapter 10*) is the foundational source for the Passover meal's order. After the *Mishna* records the dispute of the schools of Hillel and Shammai regarding the order of the wine and day blessings, it prescribes the meal's *entrée*, which contemporary Jews identify as the *karpas* ritual:

> They brought before him, he dips in the lettuce, until he reaches the breaking of bread.
>
> – *Mishna, Pesaḥim* 10:3 (Oxford Annotated Mishnah)

This *Mishna* raises three questions:

1. What is "brought before him"?
2. What is the "breaking of bread"?
3. Why do contemporary Jews dip a different vegetable (often celery or parsley), when the only explicit detail is to dip lettuce?

Answering these questions in reverse will illustrate the *karpas* of the *Tannaim.*

The *Mishna* explicitly prescribes eating lettuce (*hasa*) during the Passover meal's *entrée*. However, several *Amoraim* limit this prescription in *Pesaḥim* 114b, and the major commentaries on the

Mishna (cf. *Perush HaMishnayot*, Maimonides) follow them. This is what the Talmud states:

[1] It is **obvious** that **where there are other vegetables** available besides bitter herbs, at the first dipping **one recites over** the **other vegetables the blessing: Who creates fruit of the ground, and eats,** with the intention of including in this blessing the bitter herbs he will eat later. **And then,** at the second dipping, **he recites the blessing:** Commanded us over **eating bitter herbs,** on the lettuce **and eats** it. However, **what is** the *halakha* **where there is only lettuce** available?

[2] **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.

[3] **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.**

[4] **In Syria, they act in accordance with** the opinion of **Rav Huna. And Rav Sheshet, son** of **Rav Yehoshua, acted in accordance with** the opinion of **Rav Ḥisda.**

[5] **And the *halakha* is in accordance with** the opinion of **Rav Ḥisda**.

[6] **Rav Aḥa, son** of **Rava, would seek other vegetables** for Passover **to preclude himself from** taking sides in **the dispute.**

– Babylonian *Talmud, Pesaḥim* 114b–115a (Koren)

This passage generates several questions. First, how does the Talmud know that vegetables other than lettuce are "obviously" preferable, if the *Mishna* stipulates lettuce? Second, how do Syrian Jews accord with Rav Huna's opinion if he presupposes lettuce's exclusive availability? This seems to be a rare occurrence (such as from a famine) upon which to establish the law. Third, why does the *Gemara* highlight that Rav Aḥa, son of Rava, sought vegetables other than lettuce if eating the former is "obvious"? Reading the statements of

this *Gemara* chronologically, not the editors' retroactively organized discussion, will help answer these questions.

The earliest layer of this *Gemara* is its attributed quotes to the *Amoraim* Rav Huna and Rav Hisda, noted in their debate ([2], [3]). They presume one eats lettuce twice: during the *entrée* and the main course. They dispute the proper time for blessing the bitter vegetables: during the *entrée* (when one first eats it) or main course (when one principally fulfills the commandment). The next layer of this *Gemara* is its comment regarding Syrian Jews' accordance with Rav Huna's opinion and Rav Seshet's accordance with Rav Hisda's opinion ([4]). However, Rav Aha, son of Rava, sidesteps the disagreement by not eating (or blessing) lettuce during the *entrée* ([6]). Rav Aha's custom became so ubiquitous that the editors of the Babylonian *Talmud* reinterpreted Rav Huna and Rav Hisda to debate when one only has lettuce ([1]). Finally, the editors rule according to Rav Hisda's opinion ([5]). Thus, not eating lettuce during the Passover meal's *entrée* developed from indecision regarding the proper time for blessing the bitter vegetables.

If this analysis is correct, then the *Mishna* truly believes the ideal food for *karpas* is lettuce. Why would that be? Additionally, the entire purpose for the *karpas* is stated by the Talmud (*Pesaḥim* 114b) that the practice is to be conspicuous for children. Many lay people understand this answer as meaning that eating lettuce is an intentionally discordant provocation for children to question the custom. However, this understanding is humorously circular, as a parent would answer their child's question – "Why are we eating lettuce?" – with, "To make you ask why we are eating lettuce." Instead, the next *Mishna* reasonably explains conspicuousness for children:

> They mixed for him a second cup, and here the son asks his father. And if the son does not have knowledge, his father teaches him: What differentiates this night from all other nights — that on all other nights we eat hamets and matsah; this night is all matsah; that on all other nights we eat all other vegetables, this night, a bitter vegetable; that on all other nights we eat meat roasted, cooked, or boiled, this night is all roasted; that on all other nights we dip only

once, this night twice? And according to the knowledge of the son, his father teaches him.

– *Mishna, Pesaḥim* 10:4 (Oxford Annotated Mishnah)

"All other nights" refers to other festive meals, so the *Mishna* teaches that the Passover meal is similar to them except for its particularities. Accordingly, Rabban Gamaliel II identifies each one's particular symbolism:

Rabban Gamaliel used to say: Whoever does not mention these three things on Passover has not fulfilled his obligation. And these are they: Passover, *matsah*, and bitter vegetable. Passover: because the Omnipresent passed over the houses of our ancestors in Egypt. Matsah: because our ancestors were redeemed from Egypt. Bitter vegetable: because the Egyptians embittered the lives of our ancestors in Egypt.

– *Mishna, Pesaḥim* 10:5 (Oxford Annotated Mishnah)

Thus, the Passover meal's three particulars are eating only unleavened bread to recall the Exodus, roasted meat to remember the first Passover sacrifice, and bitter vegetables to recollect Egyptian slavery's bitterness. Merely eating unleavened bread could not prompt a child's questioning because it was ordinary, but *only* eating unleavened bread was provocative. However, the laws of Passover do not forbid eating non-bitter vegetables. Thus, the Sages ordered the Passover meal to serve bitter vegetables *twice* to demonstrate its unique symbolism. Accordingly, *"karpas"* is a derivative of the commandment to eat bitter vegetables. The first time is not enough to create the question for the child. It is when the same vegetable is used yet again, that the child perks up his or her ears and realizes something is amiss. According to this analysis, the contemporary practice to use two different vegetables may be the preferred law, but might not accord with the Mishnaic practice.

However, the *Mishna* states that one should eat the lettuce until the "breaking of bread." "Breaking" in the literature of the *Tannaim* denotes food that does not make up a main course, unlike

bread. In a separate *Mishna* it conveys a side dish, *hors d'oeuvre*, and dessert:

If one recited the blessing over the ["breaking" *(hors d'oeuvre)*] before the meal, he has exempted the ["breaking" (dessert)] after the meal. If one recited the blessing over the bread, he has exempted the ["breaking" (side dish)]; if he recited the blessing over the ["breaking" (side dish)], he has not exempted the bread.

– *Mishna, Berakhot* 6:5 (Oxford Annotated Mishnah)

In the parallel *Tosefta*, *Pesaḥim* 10:6, "breaking" signifies an *hors d'oeuvre* one eats around dusk. In the *Tosefta, Berakhot* 4:8, "breaking" denotes multiple *hors d'oeuvres* one eats before the main course. The main course always includes bread, so "bread" in "breaking of bread" can refer to the entire main course. If "breaking" means *hors d'oeuvre*, as in the parallel *Tosefta*, and it cannot mean "the *hors d'oeuvre* eaten with the bread," then it must mean "the *hors d'oeuvre* adjacent to the bread" or the final *hors d'oeuvre* of the *entrée* before the main course. Thus, as the lettuce's purpose is to educate children regarding the bitterness of Egyptian slavery, the *Mishna* prescribes this extra bitter vegetable consumption throughout the *entrée* and its *hors d'oeuvres* – not at once. Accordingly, *karpas* is an entire course, not a quick second of eating.

The *Mishna* does not detail the food one eats during the Passover meal's *entrée* beyond lettuce dipping. As the previous two answers developed, the *entrée* included multiple *hors d'oeuvres* without specifying their number or contents. The reason is apparent: the Sages did not fix every detail of the Passover meal. Localities and families had the autonomy to adapt the meal to their tastes. The Passover meal is a festive meal in which one must perform specific commandments, but not everything must be obligatory or symbolic. Nonetheless, the *Tosefta* indicates some popular customs:

אין יוצאין בחליט, ולא בחמעיסה, ולא בספגנין, ולא בדבשנין, ולא באסקריטין, אבל ממלא כריסו מהן, ובלבד שיאכל כזית מצה באחרונה.

– *Tosefta, Pesaḥim* 2:20 (Saul Lieberman)

This *Tosephta* implies that people ate flour pastries before the main course's unleavened bread, so they must have been *entrée hors d'oeuvres*.

השמש מכביש בבני מעים ונותן לפני האורחין, אע"פ שאין ראיה לדבר זכר לדבר, נירו לכם ניר ואל תזרעו אל קוצים.

– *Tosefta, Pesaḥim* 10:5 (Saul Lieberman)

This *Tosephta* supports the waiter feeding his guests organ meats with a verse saying that one should not eat a main course on an empty stomach.

ר' לעזר אמ' חוטפין מצה לתינוקות, בשביל שלא ישנו. ר' יהודה או' אפי' לא אכל אלא פרפרת אחת, אפי' לא טבל אלא חזרת אחת, חוטפין מצה לתינוקות,

– *Tosefta, Pesaḥim* 10:9 (Saul Lieberman)

This *Tosefta* implies the *entrée* had more than one *hors d'oeuvre*, so children could not wait through all of them. Thus, there is ample precedence in the literature of Ḥazal for an extensive *entrée*. Accordingly, *karpas* was not a rigid affair but a lengthy, dynamic preparation for the Passover meal's central commandment.

Yachatz

Cracking the Matzah Code: Unveiling the Thrilling Significance of Yachatz in the Seder

Meir Perl ~ Shana Aleph; Brooklyn, NY

How many *matzot* do you have in front of you at Yachatz? While the common custom is that at the Seder, the head of the household keeps three *matzot* in front of him, the Rambam (Hilchot Chametz UMatzah 8:6) believes that there should be only two, and we break one of them to put away for later. He writes:

> *He takes two cakes [of matzah], divides one of them, and places the broken half inside the whole [cake].*

What is the basis of this dispute? Should we have three matzot, or two? Additionally, why do we break the matzah at all? What does this represent?

There are three reasons given for the practice to break the matzah. The first reason (as found in Berachot 39b) is that matzah is called "poor man's bread" (*lechem oni*). To represent this fully, we break the bread, like the manner of a poor person to eat only a piece and save the rest for later, not knowing when his next meal might come. We might say that we break it to show that like poor people, we didn't know when or where our next meal was going to come from, and we are saving some for our next meal.

The second reason connects the idea of the *korban pesach* to the afikomen. The reason we save it for after the meal is due to it being a stand-in for the *korban pesach* itself. As the Rambam writes (Hilchot Chametz UMatzah 8:9):

> *Afterwards, one continues the meal, eating whatever one desires to eat and drinking whatever one desires to drink.*

> *At its conclusion, one eats from the Paschal sacrifice, even [as small a portion as] a* kezayit*, and does not taste anything afterwards. At present, one eats a* kezayit *of matzah and does not taste anything afterwards, so that, after the completion of the meal, the taste of the meat of the Paschal sacrifice or the matzah will [remain] in one's mouth, for eating them is the mitzvah.*

Just like we ate the *korban pesach* at the end of the meal to show that the *korban* itself is holy and that we aren't just eating it because we are hungry, so too with the matzah. We save it for last because we want to show that we are eating it not because we are hungry, but because we want to eat it for its own sake. The Mishna in Pesachim 119b states, "One does not conclude after the Paschal lamb with an *afikomen*." (Afikomen is being used here in its original context, which was a dessert - the root of the word comes from Greek.) If we replace *korban pesach* with afikomen and afikomen with dessert we see that you shouldn't eat anything after the afikomen.

There is a third reason, which focuses on what both broken pieces of matzah represent. Due to the nature of matzah, with it being hard and taking a while to digest, it really is the bread of oppression (*lechem oni*) and was perfect for when we left Egypt (that and it was the only option.) We break it in two to show that while in the beginning of the Seder we are oppressed (hence the smaller piece being used earlier). We keep the larger one for later to show that we are free to eat whatever we want thereby turning it into the bread of freedom. This also shows that the state of being free isn't just the bread, it's also in the state of your mind.

Now that we understand Yachatz's symbolism, we can answer why there are different customs of how much matzah to have at the table. Normally, for every Shabbat and Yom Tov, we need "*lechem mishnah*," two whole portions of bread, for every meal. This is derived from the verse in Shemot (16:29) regarding the manna: "See that God has given you the Sabbath; therefore He gives you on the sixth day the bread of two days; every man should stay in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day." The bread eaten on Shabbat and the holidays represents this manna.

The Rambam makes it clear that this does not apply to the Seder night. He writes (Hilchot Chametz UMatzah 8:6):

> *Why does he not recite a blessing on two loaves, as on other festivals? Because the Torah calls it "poor man's bread." Just as a poor man is accustomed to eating a broken [loaf], so, too, a broken loaf should be used.*

The Rambam goes according to the first reason, given above, that it is like a poor man who keeps a broken loaf. The Rambam is saying that normally, the principle of *lechem mishnah* applies. However, on the Seder night, we are asked to defy this idea and say that it is poor man's bread. Our *lechem mishnah* is broken up. We don't treat this matzah like manna. Manna taste good, is sweet, and comes down from the heavens. It has a fluffy texture. Matzah couldn't be more different. It stems from oppression and poverty. The Rambam is saying that to compare it to manna would be a farce.

However, the common custom disagrees with this assessment. Manna is relevant to the matzah. The common custom evidently identifies the purpose of Yachatz as unrelated to poor man's bread, but to God's protection in the form of the Korban Pesach. Just like the manna was a gift and sign of protection from God in the wilderness, so too the Korban Pesach represented God's providence over us. *Lechem mishnah* rules still apply, and so you need to have two separate *matzot* to maintain the wholeness of the loaves.

This matzah of Yachatz therefore could be seen in its positive, or in its negative. There are two sides to a matzah, and when we perform Yachatz at the Seder, let us keep in mind how it is both a symbol of oppression and poverty, but also a symbol of freedom and trust.

Maggid

Experience the Exodus

Rabbi Reuven Mann

The most basic religious requirement of Passover, described as the "Season of our Freedom," is to recount the story of the Exodus at the Seder. We fulfill this through discussion and study and also by eating special foods that symbolize what took place in Egypt. During the Seder, we must also comport ourselves in the manner of free people.

Reciting the story of the Exodus is not intended merely as a review of a significant part of our history. If that were the case, there would be no requirements to eat matzah and maror (bitter herbs), drink four cups of wine, and to assume a reclining position in the manner of "free" people.

The Haggadah emphasizes that "In every generation, one is obliged to view it as though he, himself, was a slave in Egypt and was redeemed on this night." It is therefore clear that the Exodus is not merely a historical phenomenon that happened to a group of people who lived a few thousand years ago. Rather, it was a transformative experience that shaped the destiny of the countless generations who descended from the original slaves in Egypt.

We must therefore recognize the true purpose of the Exodus and understand how it relates to us. In that spirit, we rejoice as people who have just attained their freedom and sing songs of praise to the Almighty. In telling the story, we are enjoined to "begin with shame and conclude with praise." The exact interpretation of this requirement is the subject of a Talmudic dispute.

The great sage Shmuel says that "shame" is the physical enslavement we endured and from which we were rescued by Hashem. This aspect of the Exodus is succinctly expressed in the paragraph recited immediately after the "Four Sons," which begins "We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt."

This is the theme of Passover that everyone can relate to and is the cause of the holiday's great appeal to Gentiles as well as Jews.

When Senator Ted Cruz, a leading candidate for the Republican Presidential nomination, visited a matzah factory in Brooklyn recently, he seemed very much at home and proudly stated, that he has attended many Seders. At the end of his visit, the Jews broke out into a rendition of "*Dayenu*," and the Senator enthusiastically joined in the singing.

It is difficult to imagine a worse experience than being a slave to a cruel taskmaster. Slavery is an absolute violation of human dignity and the G-d- given right of every person to fulfill his life's purpose. To enslave a human being is to cripple his soul, as he is reduced to a beast of burden. This state of degradation to which our ancestors were subjected in Egypt is the focal point of the narrative of redemption.

We are frequently told in the Torah to remember that we were slaves in Egypt. Many commandments are accompanied by this reminder. Most prominent is the warning not oppress the "stranger," for "we were strangers in the land of Egypt."

The experience of being enslaved and redeemed is fundamentally transformative. One who has gone through it may emerge as an entirely superior individual. He has tasted genuine evil and been saved from it. He can never again be a neutral bystander to human misery and degradation.

No people has suffered from human evil more than the Jews. Yet this has not embittered us or made us oblivious to the suffering of others. Indeed, Jews are the most kind and merciful people on earth. In the Middle East, the only country providing medical assistance to needy Arabs trapped in the Syrian fighting is Israel.

Though the Jews had descended to the lowest level of impurity in Egypt, Hashem revived and redeemed them, so they could receive the Torah on Mount Sinai. Along with that gift came the charge to become a "Holy Nation" and a light unto mankind.

The ultimate cause of our national spiritual transformation was the "shame" of our enslavement and the glory of our redemption, which enabled us to accept the Torah and become the nation of Hashem. This is the formative experience that forged our character as a people.

We must actually experience the impact of this great story on the night of Passover, so we can emerge as freer, more compassionate, and holier individuals. May we merit to achieve this.

Ha Lachma Anya

The Intricacy of the Bread of Affliction

Yossi Zifkin ~ Shana Aleph; Detroit, Michigan

> *"This is the bread of affliction that our fathers ate in the land of Egypt. Whoever is hungry, let him come and eat; whoever is in need, let him come and join in celebrating the Pesach festival. This year we are in here, next year may we be in the land of Israel! This year, slaves, next year-free men!"*

Why is it that even though one does not fulfill the commandment of the Seder without the Pesach, Matzah, and Maror, we only make a special tribute to Matzah? What makes the Matzah so special that it has its own special mention?

In the past, we had three major aspects of the Seder: Pesach (the Passover offering), Matzah (the unleavened bread), and Maror (the bitter herbs). Although the ideas are still with us, some of the foods are missing. With regard to the Pesach, we do not have the delicious meat of the roasted lamb, as we do not have the Temple. With regard to the Maror, this Torah commandment can only be fulfilled with the Pesach offering. As such, we regard Maror today as a Rabbinical commandment. However, the Matzah is a standalone mitzvah (Shemot 12:18), making it the one and only biblical action we are performing from the three major aspects of the Seder. The Chatam Sofer, in his Haggadah commentary, suggests that this is the reason why matzah is emphasized at the beginning of Maggid.

This being so, why have the 'extra' Maror item with us on the table, as we do during the entire night?

The Torah emphasizes the connection of the Matzah to the remembrance of the exodus by saying, "*You shall eat Matzot, the bread of affliction…so that you will remember the day of your going out of Egypt, all the days of your life*" (*Devarim* 16:3). This is why we uncover the Matzot and keep them uncovered throughout the telling of Maggid.

Within this discussion of what is truly biblical, *Rabbeinu Chananel* holds that the duty of talking about the Matzah in Maggid does not mean that the Haggadah itself must be told over the Matzah. Rather, one should explain the mitzvah of the eating of the Matzah, just as we talk about the other mitzvot of the Pesach and Maror. With this in mind, we can say that according to *Rabbeinu Channanel*, the Torah equates all three of the biblical commandments in so far as their roles are concerned. Therefore the role of the Matzah and Maror is no different than that of the Pesach, justifying its placement.

Mah Nishtanah

The Chacham from the Mah Nishtanah

Rabbi Aryeh Sklar ~ Alumni & Community Coordinator

As a kid, whenever I would do something foolish, my mother would exclaim, "Oh, you're the *chacham* from the Mah Nishtanah!" At some point in my childhood, I began to think about the words. "*Chacham* from the Mah Nishtanah? There is no *chacham* in the Mah Nishtanah!", I thought. "The *chacham* is in the section of the Four Sons!" (It turns out that this is some kind of traditionally Ashkenazi Jewish phrase, but I didn't know that at the time.) I therefore interpreted my mother's words to mean that just like there is no *chacham* in the Mah Nishtanah, what I was doing was not very *chacham* of me. "Yes, this makes perfect sense. It's so logical. What a nice *pshat*. That must be what my mother means."

The next time my mother said it to me (I was not infrequently foolish), I responded that I had never understood what she meant until now, and I proudly explained the entire thing. To my surprise, my mother responded, "Oh, I never thought about it. I meant the *chacham* of the *Arba Banim* then!"

To say I was disappointed was an understatement. I had spent so much time figuring it out. Everything fit so well. But I was wrong. All that time and thinking power were apparently all wasted. The speaker of the phrase told me as much. I truly was the *chacham* of the Mah Nishtanah. I missed my mark. Or… was I? Is it possible that the *chacham* really does belong in this place among the questions?

Who is supposed to recite the Mah Nishtanah? The common practice today is to ask a young child at the table to get up and sing the song. It appears that the Rambam disagrees. Although he does think that children should ask the question, "Why is this night different from all other nights?", this is meant to happen organically, from fun games and roasted nuts handed out during the night (Hilchot Chametz UMatzah 7:3). Indeed, the Rambam makes it sound like the leader is supposed to read to everyone else the four questions of the Mah Nishtanah (Hilchot Chametz UMatzah 8:2). Why does the

Rambam hold this way? What is wrong with the child asking the questions of the Mah Nishtanah?

Another question: The Mah Nishtanah asks why we eat *matzah* tonight while on other nights we eat *chametz* and *matzah*. But didn't we just get through reading how the *matzah* is "*ha lachma anya*", the bread of oppression we ate in Egypt? Why would anyone wonder why we eat it, if we just gave the answer? And for the other questions, how can we ask why things are done differently this night when we haven't even done anything yet? We have yet to dip twice, or eat "only" matzah. So how can anyone ask these questions at this point?

Lastly, Rav Moshe Sternbuch, in his Haggadah, cites an interesting interpretation of the Rambam from his brother-in-law, Rav David Soloveichik. The Rambam states the following regarding the questions of the Seder night (Hilchot Chametz UMatzah 7:3):

> *When a person does not have a son, his wife should ask him. If he does not have a wife, [he and a colleague] should ask each other: "Why is this night different?" This applies even if they are all wise. A person who is alone should ask himself: "Why is this night different?"*

Rabbi David Soloveichik notes that the Rambam says that if a person has no children, his wife should ask him the Mah Nishtanah. The Rambam does not say that others aren't there, only that his wife gets involved if he has no children at the table. Apparently, it's only if he does not have a wife at the table that other people at the table join him in asking the Mah Nishtanah. If so, argued Rabbi Soloveichik, a person's wife has a unique obligation to engage in *sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim* with him through the Mah Nishtanah, even if other people are around.

Rav Sternbuch disagrees with this interpretation, calling it a "*chiddush nifla*." He points out that the mitzvah of *sippur* is a *mitzvat aseh shehazman gerama*, and if the Rambam believed women were obligated like they are in the four cups and in *matzah,* he should have included *sippur* in the list of exemptions that women *are* obligated to perform in his list in Hilchot Avoda Zara 12:3. Rather, Rav Sternbuch believes that it's all to aid the husband. If his wife can do it best, great. If his colleague can do it better, then even better.

However, I think that Rabbi Soloveichik's *diyuk* is solid. To me, it is what the Rambam basically says. Why does the Rambam

make it sound like a man's wife is his ideal intellectual sparring partner for the Mah Nishtanah? And, how can we respond to Rav Sternbuch's point - is it a true obligation on women to do *sippur*?

I believe the answer is the following. Mah Nishtanah is not really here to ask questions and get real answers. Otherwise we would answer each of the questions as they came up. Anyway, there is not much about the night so far that has inspired these questions (barring some unusual things on the table). As we noted, one of the questions, that about matzah, has already been answered! Instead, the father reads it to his children, says the Rambam. Why? It's because the nature of the Mah Nishtanah is not really to ask questions about the night. Again, that should happen organically. Rather, it's a symbol. It's a ritual of recitation that is meant to show that we are already wise, and yet we still ask. We know, yet we still seek. Not every question needed to be asked. Not every answer needs to be given. The point is the debate, the give and take, the upward lilt at the end of the sentence indicating a question mark.

In a good Jewish home and school, this is emphasized. Get more knowledge. Learn. Ask questions. Think about what you do. The father reads it to his child to show that he, even as an adult, asks questions too. The journey of learning and inquiry doesn't end at eighteen years old. It is a life-long endeavor. This inspires the son to ask his own questions, the ones that have actually been bothering him the whole night but he wasn't ready to ask. If he was tasked to read the questions without coming up with his own, he would have missed out on his own ability to think, and he would have missed the lesson from his father and mother, who are teaching him to think for himself.

This is why, even if others are at the table, if there are no children, a wife must ask the questions to her husband. They live together, creating a home of like-minded individuals. This risks a life that does not progress or get challenged. A husband and wife are tasked at least one night of the year, the most educational night, to challenge each other, never letting the other grow accustomed to a thoughtless and rote lifestyle. In their relationship, the Seder comes and reminds them to never expect they know everything there is to know about what they're thinking and how they're feeling. A woman is obligated in this way of thinking, just as much as a man is. If she has a husband, she reads the questions to him, and they inspire each other to look a little deeper.

The very act of reading it out loud is to say we already know. We already have become wise. But we ask anyway. We inquire and research and investigate. We ponder and we analyze. And through this, we show our families and, through that, the world, how to gain a bit more wisdom. And then, we will all become the *chacham* from the Mah Nishtanah.

Avadim Hayinu

Knowledge is Freedom

Gavriel Lowell ~ Shana Bet; Memphis, Tennessee

Avadim Hayinu is a message. It tells us that we were slaves in Egypt, Hashem took us out of Egypt, and if He had not taken us out of Egypt, we would still be slaves in Egypt. There are many lessons to be learned from the Exodus, but I want to focus on one that is commonly taken up by philosophers, the question of freedom and its value. Is freedom important and if so how do we get to this point? Why does leaving Egypt give us more freedom?

In Pirkei Avot 6:2 the Mishna has the following saying "There is no free man but one that occupies himself with the study of the Torah." Now, what does this quote mean? It seems hard to believe the notion that freedom is through subjugation to a book. What could the Mishna mean by this?

Consider the way that people go about their lives. Often, we fall into habits, beliefs, actions and more. The way that people go about their lives act in a way that has been dictated by society, school, peers, and various external influences. How much are these done while having knowledge of what they actually believe in or what they actually are doing? How many of them have examined the things that they believe and do?

Descartes had this idea that became known as Cartesian doubt. He suggested that we need to cast doubt onto everything we think we know and examine each of these things in turn. Arguably, when using Cartesian doubt, we gain a much greater understanding of the things we do then establish and know. By casting doubt onto the thing we believe, it helps us develop an even further belief onto them and a truer understanding of it. Of course, it also removes the things that there is no truth behind and removes the unnecessary if it does not have a purpose that is good. Once this is done, we are in a position to be able to have a much deeper knowledge of what the action is the individual is doing and the purpose behind it.

Consider the following case. An individual is in a society where they are only exposed to certain amounts of things. Perhaps in this background they are aware of certain beliefs. An example of this might be the Jewish people while they were in Egypt. This belief, however, is not in their constant day-to-day lives. It gets muted, dulled down, they don't think much into it. They live in an ignorant bubble which is good enough for them. However, this isn't true freedom, to go about how you are raised, to just just follow what you are told. Maimonides describes this problem of habitual thinking in the Guide to the Perplexed (I:31) like this:

> *Man has love for, and the wish to defend, opinions to which he is habituated and in which he has been brought up and has a feeling of repulsion for opinions other than those. For this reason also man is blind to the apprehension of the true realities and inclines toward the things to which he is habituated. This happened to the multitude with regard to the belief in His corporeality and many other metaphysical subjects as we shall make clear. All this is due to people being habituated to, and brought up on, texts that it is an established usage to think highly of and to regard as true and whose external meaning is indicative of the corporeality of God and of other imaginings with no truth in them.*

I believe that when the Mishna in Pirkei Avot says "the study of Torah" sets one free, it really means, "the study of knowledge." We have a moral imperative to study knowledge and truth and follow this path. The free man is the one who studies knowledge and comes to understand their actions and the world around them. Plato says in the Apology, "The unexamined life is not worth living." This quote cannot be more true. I would take it even further to say that it is in fact immoral to live your life when you have not examined and developed what you believe.

Consider you were raised in a secluded community, away from modern society, where you were taught the moral statement "killing people X way is morally good." For this thought experiment let's define X under our lens of how we define murder. Clearly what we consider murder is morally wrong, but in fact this community never taught that way. Once you go into general society, you come to

learn that X is murder, and murder is morally wrong. For this thought experiment, let's say you had access to the internet, a full library, and access to other communities. You, in your secluded community, could have researched the concept of killing people and the morals behind it. You could have learned different ethical theories, heard discussions about it, talked to other people in other communities, etc. Instead, you decide to live your life while considering murder to be good and you consider to be so. You are trapped in this bubble of delusion and need to break free to learn the truth. In this case, you are not truly free as you did not know learn knowledge, learn truth of these moral laws. You are morally obligated to learn, to question, to think, and develop these beliefs. We must as people not live in unexamined lives, we must seek knowledge and this will further our freedom to live.

The Rambam is clear, you must have a belief in God, and understand what that means, before anything else. Gaining knowledge is essential to life and its freedom. As Rudolf Steiner puts it in The Philosophy Of Freedom, "that an action, of which the agent does not know why he performs it, cannot be free." This is the key to it all. (For more reading, see John Locke: Two Treatises of Government)

This is especially the case with the Jews in Egypt. For when we were taken out of Egypt we did not just gain a greater understanding of our belief in God, in fact we developed a further knowledge of God. Why is it so important to share this knowledge of the story of Egypt? To help guide the people and become free through this knowledge. This was the true purpose of taking us out of Egypt and taking us then to Sinai.

Throughout history the Jewish people time and time again have had restrictions put upon us. From Greece to Nazi Germany there are countless examples of this. As the Jewish people we have the responsibility to promote this teaching from God and share it with others. During the Seder, we should strive to focus on the good that God has granted us and the impact that this has made. We need to reflect on why this is good and learn from it.

Bnei Berak

Until When?

Elijah Berman ~ Shana Aleph; Bronx, NY

Five *Tanaim* gathered in Bnei Brak - Rabbi Eliezer of Lod, Rabbi Yehoshua of Peki'in, Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria, Rabbi Tarfon, and Rabbi Akiva their host. As the story is told, they were engaged in the *mitzvah* of *sippur yetziat Mitzrayim* the entire night, and only paused once their *talmidim* arrived and informed them that the time for *kriyat shema* of *Shacharit* had arrived. Some questions arise: Why did they gather at Rabbi Akiva's place in particular? And, what does *zman kriyat shema* have to do with anything?

The historical context of this *ma'aseh Chaz"al* is vital to answering these questions. The *Tanaim* - the sages of the Mishnaic period - were witnessing the damage inflicted by the Romans after *Churban Bayit Sheni* on the populace, and were craving the liberty to live and worship freely. Enter Shimon bar Kokhba, who led the third and final revolt against the Roman occupation. Bar Kokhva's revolt originated in **Modiin** and spread throughout the land, amassing a force estimated to be between 200,000-400,000 fighters. Bar Kokhba had the support of some of the *Tanaim* including the very Rabbi Akiva mentioned above who proclaimed him to be the *Mashiach* (*Yerushalmi Taanit* 4:5). According to Rabbi Yehuda Leib Maimon - a founder of Mizrachi and the first Minister of Religion for Israel - the answer to the first question revolves around the revolution (*Chagim u'Moadim*, 206). These *Tanaim* went to Rabbi Akiva's Seder to discuss the emerging revolt and their role in it. This is bolstered by the lack of *talmidim* at the Seder proper, because if it were an ordinary Seder there would be no need for them to seemingly linger outside.

With the first question resolved, now all that is left is why mention *kriyat shema*? The answer starts by exploring the relationship between *kriyat shema* and *sipur yetziat Mitzrayim*. The opening segment of *kriyat shema* proclaims, "Hear Israel, Hashem is our God, Hashem is One" - a testament to God's *yichud*. The Sefer HaChinuch (#420) and

others understand this declaration as equivalent to accepting the yoke of heaven (*kibul ol malchut shamayim*).

Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira, the Piaseczna Rebbe expounds on this. He was a leading figure in the Hasidic community of pre-war Poland and after the invasion of 1939 became the Rebbe of the Warsaw Ghetto. In his work *Hakhsharat ha-Averkhim* - which was found in one of the milk jugs of Oneg Shabbos along with another work of his, *Eish Kodesh* - he delves into *kibul ol malchut shamayim* in relation to *kriyat shema*. In the final chapter of the manuscript, he outlines that for one to accept the yoke of Heaven (*mekabel ol malchut shamayim*), one must be willing to be *moser nefesh* (sacrifice his life). He writes that while one is reciting *Shema,* they should think of themselves as being thrown into the fire for *kavod shamayim* (glory of Heaven), because sincere and intense thought will eventually lead to corresponding actions. The supremacy of Hashem and self sacrifice are inherently bound together, because the greatest expression of accepting Hashem's supremacy is understanding that man is worthless in comparison (self-abnegation).

The part in *kriyat shema* of *zecher Yetziat Mitzrayim* is directly correlated with the final *bracha* before the *amidah* - the *bracha* of *geulah* (redemption). *Yetziat Mitzrayim* serves as the blueprint for the future *geulah* of *Bayit Shlishi* - as it was the ultimate showing of Hashem's force. Now with all the facts in place, the story starts to make sense.

The *Tanaim* were gathered in Bnei Brak at Rabbi Akiva's Seder to plan their involvement in the upcoming revolt, which they ultimately believed to be their *geulah*. There is no better time to discuss the *geulah* than the night in which we celebrate the first one! They then recited *shema* which as seen from the writings of the Piaseczna Rebbe demonstrates their *kibul ol malchut shamayim* and willingness to be *moser nefesh,* because they understood that the *geulah* must be prompted by the proper motivation- that of serving Hashem. In the time following the Seder the revolt gained traction. It was an impressive show of Jewish defiance that led to home rule for a brief period of time until the massacre at Beitar. There, Shimon bar Kokhba died of a snake bite- which is ascribed to his killing of his uncle, Rabbi Elazar Hamoda'i. Bar Kokhba's killing of Rabbi Elazar Hamoda'i demonstrates that at this point in the war he was not interested in *geulah* for the sake of worshiping Hashem, but for his own material reasons.

After the revolt, the Romans executed ten leading *Tanaim* including Rabbi Akiva. The Romans decided to burn Rabbi Akiva alive, with his final words being the opening to *kriyat Shema* (*Yerushalmi Brachot* 9:5). What we have to learn from these events is that a successful Jewish future has to center around our belief in Hashem, not in man's abilities as Bar Kochva thought, but like Rabbi Akiva, who was *moser nefesh* and expressed his *emunah* in the most powerful way.

Arba Banim

The Story of the Sons

Judah Belgrade ~ Shana Aleph; Teaneck, New Jersey

The Four Sons is a story about building a healthy relationship between us and the first teachers we have in our lives: our parents. "*Baruch Hamakom Baruch Hu*" sets a backdrop for what a relationship should be like as Hashem gave us the Torah, and we learn from it, and praise and thank Him for it. This is a relationship of taking what we're given, and then recognizing the greatness that was done for us, with praise. But how do we give back to Hashem? The answer to this has a direct connection to the Four Sons.

The first three sons are introduced with "*Mah Hoo Omer?* What Does He Say?" instead of "*Sheol*, Ask" creating a tone that's more assertive than inquisitive. They all start with the defining question word, that being "*Mah,* What," but within the context of a command it shows that they want something more than an answer, but a conversation.

The Chacham wants to know all there is to the Seder at once! "'What are these testimonies, statutes and judgments that the Lord our God commanded you?' (Deuteronomy 6:20)" Since the Seder is something we do every year, there is a priority to finish the Seder with the Korban Pesach. This tells the Chacham that while it is good to ask as many questions as you can, you still need to participate in the Seder in its entirety. "We may not eat an afikoman [a dessert or other foods eaten after the meal] after [we are finished eating] the Pesach sacrifice (Mishnah Pesachim 10:8)." The Seder doesn't end when all the questions get asked, and yet we still source the answer from the Mishnah, pushing his intellectual drive forward, while reminding him that there's more to learning than just hitting the books Or at least, like the Mishnah says, be involved before they fall asleep at the table. Spending lots of time learning is tiring. So make sure they stay up not just for dessert, but for the rest of the Seder.

The Rasha presents himself at the table by marking the Seder as work for everyone except himself. "What is this worship to you?"

(Exodus 12:26). He refuses to acknowledge the reason he is at the Seder, but why is he looking for an answer? "For the sake of this, did the Lord do [this] for *me* in my going out of Egypt" (Exodus 13:8). Yet it would be more appropriate to say that we call his bluff, rather than answer his question. The Rasha, trapped by his words, refuses to lower himself to learn about the traditions of his forefathers. He hides his emotions with pride, unwilling to admit that he doesn't know why. So when educating him, instead of reflecting his uncertainty, you make your reason as clear as possible. "For Hashem, when going through to smite the Egyptians, will see the blood on the lintel and the two doorposts, and Hashem will pass over the door and not let the Destroyer enter and smite your home. And when you enter the land that Hashem will give you, as promised, you shall observe this rite" (Exodus 12:23-24). Benefiting from those around you comes with a responsibility to learn what they do for you, even if you aren't aware of it. Only then can the Rasha truly include himself in the Seder, and it's the job of the parents to lead by an example that they can follow.

The Tam seems to have the easiest question to answer, what with having the shortest section. But this should not be held against him, for he is the most honest of the first three. He simply doesn't know, and asks a question on his own level. "What is this?" (Exodus 13:14). Looking to encourage his honest intellectual growth you respond without delay. "With the strength of [His] hand did the Lord take us out from Egypt, from the house of slaves" (Exodus 13:14). The answer comes immediately after the question in the same *pasuk*, unlike every other interaction that jumps from Perek to Perek or Sefer to Sefer, to set the Tam juxtaposed to the Rasha. Tam meaning "simple" shows us that unlike the Rasha- who couldn't ask a question for himself- he is able to say that he doesn't know honestly. Just like how he asked a simple question once he had it, we respond with a simple answer, no strings attached.

The One That Doesn't Know How To Ask is probably the first of the four that are seen in real life, as a child's first Seder would be one at a very young age. He's a reminder that the responsibility to teach comes first and foremost of the teacher to tell your children what Hashem did for you. As it is stated (Exodus 13:8), "And you will speak to your son on that day saying, for the sake of this, did the Lord do [this] for me in my going out of Egypt." Throughout this story only one person has been able to say they were taken out of Egypt by Hashem, and that's the parent. As the last on the list it is the furthest

from an answer, as there is no question to answer. But the goal was never just to answer each and every question. The goal was to lead by example, to show that there is reason to what you do, and that they can look for their own reason too. And once they find that reason, not only do they praise Hashem for taking them out of Egypt, but they praise the parents for teaching them, and spread these teachings throughout their own lives. That is how we give back to our teachers, and Hashem.

Yakhol MeRosh Chodesh

Maggid: Storytelling and Redemption

Robbie Rosen ~ Shana Aleph; Los Angeles, California

Sandwiched between the Four Sons and the story of our people's transition from idol worship to monotheism (*mit'chila ovdei avodah zarah hayah avoteinu*) are two seemingly innocuous *drashot* concerning the proper time to engage in *Maggid*, telling the story of the Exodus to one's children, as prescribed in Exodus 13:8:

> "You will tell your children on that day, saying, 'It is because of what Hashem did for me as I went out from Egypt'" (AlHaTorah.org).

The *drashot* are as follows:

> **"One might think [that the obligation to 'tell your son' of the Exodus begins] from the beginning of the month. Therefore it says, 'on that day'"**
>
> **"If [it said only] 'on that day,' one might think [that the Torah meant] while it is yet day. Therefore it says, 'on account of this' I did not say 'on account of this,' except at the time that matzah and *maror* are placed before you" (AlHaTorah.org).**
>
> The options for the *Maggid* window are:

1) Rosh Chodesh to the Seder (Possibility 1)
2) anytime on the day of the Seder (Possibility 2)
3) just the daylight hours preceding the Seder (Possibility 3)
4) just the Seder night (Possibility 4)

These proposals require explanation. How is *Maggid* defined such that its proper time would be one answer and not another?

The comments of the 13th century Italian halachist *Shibbolei HaLeket* (*Hilchot Pesach*, 218) provide direction. He suggests that Possibility 1, *Maggid* beginning on Rosh Chodesh, corresponds to Moses' instructing the Israelites on Rosh Chodesh about the *korban pesach*, the paschal lamb offering. The *Shibbolei HaLeket* explains Possibility 2, the *Maggid* period being the day of the 14th and night of the 15th, as corresponding to "the Day of the Miracle", the day on which God struck down the Egyptian firstborn, causing Pharaoh to send out the Israelites from Egypt. Next comes Possibility 3: the *Maggid* window is the daylight hours of the 14th only. He explains Possibility 3 to correspond to the taking and slaughtering of the *Korban Pesach*, which occurred during that window. Finally, the *Shibbolei HaLeket* explains that Possibility 4, *Maggid* occurs during the Seder meal on the night of the 15th, corresponds to the eating of the *Korban Pesach*.

It is clear that, according to the *Shibbolei HaLeket*, *Maggid* parallels *Korban Pesach*. Three of the four timeframes suggested for *Maggid* result from different definitions of *Maggid* such that it would correspond to one stage of the *Korban Pesach* process or another. But what does Possibility 3, "the Day of the Miracle", have to do with *Korban Pesach*?

A lot, in fact. God spared from His plague only those houses which had blood from the *Korban Pesach* painted on their doorposts. This means that any individual Israelite's redemption resulted from his performance of the *Korban Pesach* ritual. In this context, the processes of personal redemption and *Korban Pesach* are equivalent. Thus, if *Maggid* corresponds to some aspect of the *Korban Pesach* process, it must also correspond to some aspect of the redemption process. The question is: *Which aspect of* Korban Pesach*, and by proxy, personal redemption, does* Maggid *correspond to?*

Before explaining the different possibilities, we must clarify the meaning of *personal redemption*. On a surface level, it means transitioning from slavery to self-determination. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik argues in his essay "Redemption, Prayer, Talmud Torah" (*Tradition,* Vol. 17, No. 2 [Spring 1978], pp. 55-56), that more fundamentally, personal redemption is the development of a sense of identity, the sense of being an actor in history. It is a movement from anonymity to a sense of self. This goes hand in hand with having a

personal story to tell; your identity is the story of yourself. Going from slavery to freedom is redemption insofar as it involves an acquisition of self-consciousness.

We can now return to our central question. Possibility 1 has *Maggid* corresponding to Moses' instructing the Israelites in the performance of the *Korban Pesach* ritual. In order to perform the ritual which would effect their redemption, the Israelites needed to know how to do it. Moses' instructions were prerequisite information for the ritual's execution. Correspondingly, *Maggid* is defined here as a prerequisite for personal redemption. To be redeemed means to have a story, and having a story requires knowing a story. In order to identify with the nation of Israel and its essential story (the Exodus), one must know that story. Possibility 1 views *Maggid* as prior to personal redemption; *Maggid* is the conveyance of information and not the internalization of it. In short, Possibility 1 defines *Maggid* as a prerequisite to redemption.

This possibility is rejected, because the Torah states that *Maggid* must take place specifically "on that day", which the Sages take to mean the 14th. No specific time on the 14th is specified (Possibility 2). The relevance of the 14th is that it was "the Day of the Miracle", the day on which God redeemed Israel. *Maggid*, apparently, is not a prerequisite for redemption but tied directly to it. Possibility 2 is not a precise definition of *Maggid*'s relationship with *Korban Pesach*. It is a shift in perspective from viewing that relationship as indirect to viewing it as direct. Precise definitions for the nature of the direct relationship are offered in Possibilities 3 and 4.

Possibility 3 proposes that the *Maggid* window is the daylight hours of the 14th. This was when the *Korban Pesach* was taken and slaughtered, producing blood. It is likely that the painting of the doorposts also occurred during this time. This activity directly resulted in personal redemption, because the blood's presence on the doorposts was the immediate cause of God's sparing a home. Correspondingly, *Maggid* is the activity which directly results in personal redemption. Telling the story is the immediate cause of identification on the part of the listener with the nation of Israel and its history. *Maggid* is no longer defined as conveying the story of the Jews to a listener; rather it is defined as an act of entering a listener into the Jewish tradition via storytelling.

Based on the phrase "on account of this", the Sages reject this proposal. Instead, they state that *Maggid* corresponds to the eating of

the Pesach meal (Possibility 4). Since the destruction of the Temple, this means *matzah* and *maror*, but originally the meal was centered on eating the *Korban Pesach*. The consumption of the *Korban Pesach* was an outcome of the sacrifice process; you can only eat it once you've slaughtered and processed it. Partaking in the meal is an expression of its having been created. *Maggid* can be viewed correspondingly as an outcome and expression of personal redemption. Redemption lies in the knowledge of and identification with the Exodus that is a prerequisite for engaging in *Maggid*. Possibility 4 views redemption as prior to *Maggid*. *Maggid* is defined here as an expression of a Jew's personal redemption (i.e. having a story to tell) through storytelling.

We have seen three aspects of the relationship between storytelling and redemption: prerequisite information for redemption, direct cause of redemption, and result/expression of redemption. The final definition is ultimately the one that the Sages endorse. We shouldn't view *Maggid* as transmitting information, nor should we view it as a way of making children feel Jewish. We should view it as an opportunity to express our own personal redemption, an opportunity to tell our story, in front of our children (*your children*, for the record). The children will identify with that story because of their natural identification with their parents, and not because it is being pushed on them. It uses the natural feelings children have for parents as the mechanism with which Jewish identity is transmitted.

Supporting this theory is the fact that even if a person is alone on Seder night, they are still obligated to engage in *Maggid*. When *Maggid* is viewed as an act of personal expression instead of a lesson, that makes perfect sense. Audience or no audience, the Jew has a story to tell.

Mitechilah

From Idols to Ideals: Change and Judaism

Jake Ordentlich ~ Shana Aleph; Forest Hills, NY

When we read the Haggadah, and we get to the section that talks about the founding of our people and our religion, we are told that the change that was made was the right one and that we are to celebrate this event in our history.

> *From the beginning, our forefathers were idol worshipers. And now, the Place [of all] has brought us close to His worship, as it is stated (Joshua 24:2-4), "Yehoshua said to the whole people, so said the Lord, God of Israel: Over the river did your ancestors dwell from always, Terach the father of Avraham and the father of Nachor, and they worshiped other gods.*

So from this we can see that change in how we believe and behave would be good, right? However, we are also told time and again that our stubbornness in the face of change is a virtue. Like the Chanukah story where we were given the choice to give up our religious practices and identities, or else die, so we went underground until we were able to rise up and overthrow the people who put this choice in front of us, but we did not give up who we are in this entire process. So change must be bad then, right? How can we reconcile these two principles? On the one hand, we owe who we are to someone changing themselves, and on the other hand, we owe who we are to people not changing, and not giving into pressure.

I would argue that the way to reconcile these two is that we can say that one of those is referring to change on a grand scale, and the other is referring to change on the personal level. What do I mean by this? When I say on the grand scale, I mean that when we as a nation have historically been in a situation where change was an option, it was usually with the other option being death, expulsion, or other atrocities. This would mean that the change was usually not in

our best interests, and would seldom have our spiritual growth in mind. Furthermore, change on such a large scale and with so many people would be more likely to fail, leaving division and strife in its wake, especially considering that people are not so fond of being coerced.

However, when I say change on the personal level, on the other hand, I mean that it is change that comes from within, and is a person trying to change himself in some small way to grow closer to the divine will. This is more likely to be successful, as it is self-motivated, and would not need to be done in a sweeping manner that would leave it ineffective, meaning that one trying to change themselves would have the ability to hammer away at their desired improvements bit by bit.

This second approach, of personal change, is one that Abraham himself took. He first rejected the way he was, in a family of idol-worshipers, and acknowledged that change was needed. He might not have even known what he might change to, but he knew that the first step to going wherever he might want to was to leave where he was. Our first story in the Torah about Abraham is "*Lech lecha*" - where God tells Abraham to leave "for yourself," which would allow him to become himself. Every child knows the Midrash found in Genesis Rabbah 38:13. There, the story is told of a young Abraham, who rebels against his father's practices, by literally smashing the idols in his father's shop, and thus smashing his continuity in the ways of old. Beyond change in practice is change in belief, and this too is personal change. As the Rambam states about Abraham's arrival at monotheism (Hilchot Avoda Zara 1:3):

> *His father and mother, along with the rest of the population, were all idol worshippers. He would worship with them, but he would question and wonder, until he found the true and just path from his own correct intuition. And he knew that there is only one God, that He guides the sun, that He created everything, and that there exists no other God besides Him. And he knew that the entire world was mistaken, and that which lead them astray was that they worshiped the stars and the idols, until they lost the truth. And Abraham was 40 years old when he recognized his Creator.*

This would help explain why we emphasize Abraham's change specifically. This was a change that one individual undertook over a significant part of his lifespan, and it shook the world. This change did not happen in one fell swoop but rather he worked and he worked at it, slowly coming to the point where he had reinvented himself. This was one small change that reverberated throughout the world and birthed a nation, and this is the root of what we can learn from the section in the Haggadah that started all of this. We can and must learn that the path to change for ourselves is slow and methodical, focused inwards, with the intent that it brings us closer to Hashem. And through this we will not only change ourselves, but perhaps we will influence those around us to change for the better, and they will do the same for those around them. Perhaps with a little luck, this will result in a positive change for the nation and the world; but it all has to start with us slowly improving ourselves, bit by bit, and with the right motives. This is the lesson that Abraham comes to teach us here.

Baruch Shomer

Baruch Shomer: A Blessing on a Mixed Reality

Rabbi Jonathan Ziring ~ Rosh HaYeshiva

After singing that despite all the travails the Jewish people have faced, it is the covenant between God and His people that has sustained them (*Ve-Hi She-Amda* – it is [the covenant] that stood), we thank God for safeguarding the covenant that He forged with Avraham. Surprisingly, however, the Haggadah cites a verse from the *Berit Bein Ha-Betarim,* the Covenant of the Parts, that includes elements for which we may not be thankful, namely the promise that the Jews would suffer in a foreign land. "He said to Avram, "Know well that your offspring will be foreigners in a land not theirs, and they will enslave them and afflict them for four hundred years. But also the nation whom they will serve, I will judge, and afterwards they will come out with great wealth." (Bereishit 15:13-4) While we express our appreciation for God saving us, why celebrate His commitment to requiring us to suffer?

Several commentaries (Kol Bo, Ritva) dodge the question and interpret the thanks as applying only to the latter verse, namely God's promise to judge our enemy and exact justice. Maharal focuses on the fact that God put a time-limit in the original promise. As such, no matter how badly we were treated, our enemies would not be able to destroy us, as the period in a foreign land had to end with our Exodus. Yet others (Shibbolei HaLeket, Maasei Hashem) focus on the tradition that God shortened the period in Egypt from the promised 400 years to 210, deducting the numerical value of *Ketz* (Kuf+Tzadi=100+90=190). The common denominator between these approaches is that we only thank God for the good.

A contrasting tradition is cited from the Beit Midrash of Rashi that includes the negative in our thanks. Rashi invokes a general principle, that one must bless God for the good and ill. As it appears in the Mishna:

> **One is obligated to recite a blessing for the bad** that befalls him **just as he recites a blessing for the good** that befalls him, **as it is stated: "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,** with all your soul, and with all your might" (Deuteronomy 6:5)"
> (Berachot 9:5, Koren translation)

The Talmud offers two perspectives on this. First, it suggests that we should not differentiate between good and bad. However, this is rejected as we recite different blessings for the two. The Talmud thus concludes that while we articulate different blessings that acknowledge the divergent experiences, our attitude should be similar:

> **One is obligated to recite a blessing** for the bad that befalls him just as he recites a blessing for the good that befalls him. The Gemara asks: **What** does it mean: **One is obligated to recite a blessing for the bad just as for the good? If we say** this means that **just as one recites a blessing for a positive event** with the formula: **Who is good and does good, so too one recites a blessing for a calamity** with the formula: **Who is good and does good, didn't we learn** in our mishna that **over good tidings one recites: Who is good and does good,** while **over bad tidings one recites: Blessed…the true Judge?** Rather, **Rava said:** The mishna's statement **was only necessary** to instruct us **to accept** bad tidings **with** the same **joy** with which we accept good tidings, not to instruct with regard to which blessing to recite.
> (Berachot 60a, Koren translation)

Interestingly, however, in the Haggadah, we seem to follow the rejected initial suggestion, as we simply bless God for keeping his covenant, in both its positive and negative aspects. However, one understands the general principle (denying that evil exists, believing that all ill is for a purpose, that all will be good in the end, etc.) the application in the Haggadah is unique. We are thanking God for His

covenant. We appreciate that our story as a people is part of a plan, where the relationship that we have with God determines the contours of the narrative. In this sense, the good and the bad, insofar as they are captured by the covenant cannot be split.

At the Seder, we note that in every generation we have enemies who try to destroy us and it is God, and his covenant, that ensure our survival. We are commanded to imagine that we have left Egypt so that we can integrate the lessons of that formative experience and find the strength to believe we will survive our current troubles. As we enter Pesach in the middle of a war, started by a tragedy that highlighted our continued vulnerability, as well as the desire of our enemies to destroy us, the Seder reminds us to place our story in Jewish history. We acknowledge God's covenant, with the good and bad that it entails, and place our faith in His promise that we will survive. As the Haggadah reminds us, it is that alone which is constant.

Baruch Shomer

The Divine Promise of Slavery

Eli Weiss ~ Shana Bet; Seattle, Washington

In the section of "Baruch Shomer Havtachaso", we give God praise in a way that seems perplexing. We praise Him for safeguarding his "*havtacha*", commonly translated as promise. Specifically, it is that He calculated an end-time to the slavery, in line with what He told Avraham would happen. We then quote two key *pesukim* from God's dialogue with Avraham:

> *And He said to Avram, 'You shall surely know that transient will your descendants be in a land which is not theirs – and they will enslave them and they will oppress them – four hundred years; And also the nation that they will serve shall I bring to justice and afterwards they will go out with great possessions.* (Bereshit 15:13-14)

There are several problems with this section in the Haggadah. Firstly, why are we praising God for keeping His promise? Isn't it obvious that He would do this? Even people are expected to do this! Secondly, what is meant by the idea that He is "*shomer*", "safeguards" His promise? "Guarding" the promise seems to be slightly different than simply keeping it. Thirdly, why are we praising Hashem for the end-time being four hundred years? This is a very long slavery to be thankful for! Why didn't He make the end-time shorter? As an alternative, why couldn't He simply bring us to the land of Israel and not be slaves at all! Finally, what's the relevance of the latter *pasuk*, which relates how they will go out with riches and receive justice? It doesn't seem to be relevant as a proof that God calculated the end-time of the slavery. Furthermore, why did Hashem tell Avraham these two things, both about being enslaved for four hundred years and that they would leave with great possessions? Hashem doesn't tell him every detail of what happens in the future,

so why does Avraham need to be informed of these two specific events?

In the Torah, our forefathers receive many *havtachot* from Hashem. By examining one of them, we can come to understand the basic idea of a *havtacha* given by God, and this can help us answer our questions.

In the beginning of *Parshat Vayetze*, Yaakov Avinu receives his famous prophecy of the angels going up and down a ladder. In this dream, God makes a *havtacha* to Yaakov, promising him that He will be with him and protect him. The next day, the Torah tells us:

> *Yaakov took a vow, saying, 'If God will be with me and watch over me on this path that I go, and give me food to eat and clothing to wear, and I return in peace to my father's house, and Hashem will be for me a God, and this stone that I set as a monument will be a house of God, and all that you give me, I will surely tithe to you.'* (Bereshit 28: 20-22).

Yaakov's response to God's *havtacha* is, surprisingly, a conditional one. He speaks as if God's fulfillment of His *Havtacha* is only one possibility, "If God will be with me," implying it is possible that it could fail to occur. The Radak, Chizkuni, Rabbi Avraham ben Harambam, as well as others, explain that Yaakov was afraid he might sin. If he were to act sinfully, he could lose the protection guaranteed in the *havtacha*.

This teaches us an important principle in how *havtachos* work. Apparently, they only guarantee the future based on the current state of perfection of the participants. The *havtacha*, therefore, is the current projection of their future based on this level. However, since we have free will, we can change our level at any time. If we corrupt our level, we can forfeit our merit to the *havtacha*.

Now that we understand how *havtachos* work in general, we can more properly investigate the *havtacha* given to Avraham. In order to understand what God tells Avraham, we need to first look at the context. After the battle of the four and five kings. Avraham still has no children to continue his mission/nation. God reassures him that He will protect him and his descendants will be as numerous as the stars in the sky (Bereshit 15:5) and that they'll inherit the land of Israel (15:7). Avraham asks God a simple question: how do I know that my

descendants will actually inherit the land (15:8)? This question makes sense in light of our understanding of God's promises. They're not set in stone. The plan could change. Therefore, Avraham was questioning that it was actually going to happen. How does he know that his descendants will stray from his path and not merit to get Israel? This is precisely how the Ramban explains Avraham's question. He adds, God responds by making a covenant with Avraham that this won't happen. With this *havtacha*, Avraham doesn't need to worry about such a concern. God continues to tell Avraham about the future slavery, which are the *pesukim* quoted in the Haggadah, the *pesukim* we are talking about.

This brings us to another question. How is this an answer to Avraham's question? How does this slavery allow us to merit the land of Israel? For this, we need to better understand what the requirement was for a nation to inherit the land.

The Ramban on the first *pasuk* in Bereshit states that we were given the land in place of the other nations, because we are servants of God. As a support, he quotes Tehillim, "And He gave them the lands of the nations, and they took the labor of the peoples in possession; So that they should keep His statutes, and observe His laws" (Psalms 105:44-45). On this *pasuk*, the Radak explains it in the same way. He states, "He gave them the land on condition that they keep His statutes and laws." The inheritance of the land of Israel is only insofar as it's part of the system of the Torah. Without accepting the Torah, they won't get the land. Therefore, Avraham's descendants would need to be fitting to get the Torah in order to get the land. Now the question becomes, what did it take for a nation to accept the Torah?

The *gemara* (Avoda Zara 2b) relates that God actually offered the Torah to all the other nations, but they rejected it. This indicates that the Jews were unique in their ability to accept the Torah. The average nation has a lot of resistance to the system of Torah. It's not a system easily accepted. The restrictions and demands the Torah places on a person is much more than they're looking for. The Torah restricts the satisfaction of desires through *kashrut* and prohibited sexual relations, as well as completely eliminating any outlet of *avoda zara*. In addition, Halacha guides almost every little detail of a person's life, as there's even a discussion in the gemara (Shabbat 61a) about what order to put on one's shoes! Accepting the system of the Torah is not

emotionally appealing. The question is, what differentiated the Jews from the rest of the world such that they were able to accept the Torah?

This is precisely the question that God answered to Avraham. The first thing God tells him is that they'll be lowly slaves for four hundred years. It seems that the slavery itself served to prepare the Jews to be able to accept the Torah. Firstly, it forced them to live a life not steeped in their instincts and desires. They were forced to work all day every day. This allowed them to adopt the system of the Torah, which puts a primacy on the intellect over the desires. As mentioned before, the Torah demands that the desires are restricted. Secondly, it limited their ego and trained them to be a servant. A central value in Torah is being an *Eved Hashem*, a servant of Hashem. Our greatest role model, Moshe Rabbeinu, is praised for being "more humble than any other person on the face of the earth," and God goes out of His way to call him "My servant" (Bamidbar 12:3, 8). Furthermore, the Rambam (Hilchot Deot 2:3), tells us that ego is one of the only two character traits that we must go to the extreme in avoiding. With such training through slavery, the nation was properly able to become servants of God.

God adds two more components to the plan - He will judge/punish the Egyptians, and the Jews will leave with great wealth. Why was this necessary to happen? Perhaps God is addressing here the negative side effects of being enslaved. Firstly, they could develop a certain awe of the master. While they needed to learn to be slaves, they had to remove the notion that the Egyptians were their true masters. This must be reserved for Hashem. God judging/punishing the Egyptians in front of the Jews deals with this. This especially comes to fruition at the Yam Suf. When the Jews saw the Egyptians chasing after them, Rashi quotes the Tanchuma which says they saw the "*sar shel mitzrayim*" coming from the heavens to help the Egyptians (Shemot 14:10). Perhaps this refers to the awe and intimidation the Jews had for the Egyptians. The Jews viewed the Egyptian army as if it were aided by a heavenly angel. When they saw the entire army be completely destroyed by God right in front of them, this illusion dissipated.

Secondly, another side effect of the slave mentality is that it could break a person down. It could completely destroy their self-confidence. It's very difficult to start a nation that's operating with this mindset. Leaving with great wealth helped address this. They didn't escape Egypt in a precarious and scarring manner. Rather, they left

with their heads held high, with great wealth. This allowed them to move on in a psychologically healthy state.

After understanding God's message to Avraham, we can properly understand the idea being conveyed in the Haggadah. God made a *havtacha* to Avraham that his descendants will be a great nation and will inherit the land of Israel. However, unlike an ordinary *havtacha*, God orchestrated the development of this nation such that they will merit the land and ensure the fulfillment of the *havtacha*. He guided the nation into a slavery that was fine-tuned to prepare their character traits to accept the Torah and inherit the land. He guarded the *havtacha*. This is an integral part of the origin story of our nation. God intervened with the natural course of our history so that we would merit to get the Torah and the land that comes with it. This is an amazing thing, which deserves praise.

Vehi Sheamdah

The More Things Change, The More They Stay The Same

Nathan Sered ~ Shana Aleph; Fort Lauderdale, Florida

Vehi Sheamda discusses the idea that in every generation, the Jews were oppressed and our enemies tried to destroy us, yet Hashem saved us every time. If people without any background knowledge on *Vehi Sheamda* were to read this short passage and guess when it was written, they would give many answers. Perhaps it was written after the slavery in Egypt. Maybe, after the Spanish Inquisition. Possibly, after the Six-Day War. Unfortunately, there were many times in Jewish history that this paragraph can apply to!

In reality, *Vehi Sheamda* is found in the first *haggadot* in the eighth century. Upon reading this, many would wonder why it was written then. A history buff might point to the year 681 when The Twelfth Council of Toledo enacted antisemitic laws including the burning of the Talmud and Jewish books or the year 722 when Byzantine emperor Leo II forcibly converted Jews to Christianity as a catalyst. Regardless, Vehi Sheamda was not written at a time notorious for antisemitism and it was written before some of the worst periods in Jewish history where its establishment would make more sense. After the 8th century, time and time again our adversaries tried wiping us off the map, whether it be the Crusades, the Holocaust, or the War of Independence. As the saying goes, history repeats itself. The fact that Vehi Sheamda is still relevant 1300 years after it was written is unbelievable. The fact that Jews are still surviving and thriving is a testament to God's greatness; we must have a lot of Hakarat HaTov for all he does for us.

At first glance, this may seem paradoxical. We're hated every generation yet we should have Hakarat Hatov we *didn't* get destroyed? Why is it necessary for us to be hated in the first place? Wouldn't we be far more thankful if we lived in peace always? Perhaps, this constant antisemitism reflects on something much

deeper. While antisemitism does appear consistently as Vehi Sheamda attests, "Sheb'chol Dor VaDor Omdim Aleinu Lechaloteinu", (in every generation people tried to kill us) we do have a cure, a remedy to prevent these attacks "Vehi She'amda", (the Torah). The fact that "the Torah" isn't mentioned explicitly but rather represented using the word "Vehi" may be indicative of the fact that the Torah represents so much more than just a book but rather a cure to keep the Jewish people alive and safe from our enemies. We, unlike any other nation in the world, have a direct cause-and-effect relationship with God where we can dictate our future. If we want to retain the privilege of being God's "*Am Segulah*" we need to earn it by following his commandments. Maybe, that's why God created this steady antisemitism in the first place. Maybe, without antisemitism, we would never repent and we would lose our status as the "chosen people". When I said we have to have *Hakarat Hatov* for Hashem saving us, it's because we are thankful for our lasting connection which is expressed through our Mitzvot.

When life is good, people often forget that God's in the picture. However, when things get bad that's when people look to God. For example, during the entire Sefer Shoftim; when life was good the Jews started worshiping Avodah Zarah. Then, they got oppressed because they weren't keeping the Torah. Next, they cried out to God for salvation and Hashem sent a leader to redeem them. After all of this, the Jews still returned to sinning. What's more, this cycle happened over and over again. It is pretty clear that when things are bad, the Jews finally do the Mitzvot. Perhaps then following that logic, Antisemitism is God's way of telling us that we aren't acting properly.

We are currently living through another episode where our enemies, in this case, Hamas and its supporters, want to destroy us. Once again, this is God's reminder to his people that we need to be doing a better job keeping the Mitzvot. Of course, we have to be thankful to the Chayalim risking their lives every day to protect the Jewish people but we must never forget that Hashem is the one who is pulling the strings. Let us keep the Mitzvot to merit salvation from this war and be determined to follow them when things get good again and break this cycle once and for all.

Tzei U'limad - "Rav"

The Roots of Judaism's Great Tree

Michael Chetrit ~ Shana Aleph; Flushing, New York

The Haggadah states:

> *Go out and learn what Lavan the Aramean sought to do to Ya'akov, our father; since Pharaoh only decreed [the death sentence] on the males but Lavan sought to uproot the whole [people]. As it is stated (Deuteronomy 26:5), "An Aramean was destroying my father and he went down to Egypt, and he resided there with a small number and he became there a nation, great, powerful and numerous."*

There are several questions that can be raised about this excerpt. How, precisely, is Lavan worse than Pharoah? What did Lavan do that was so bad? The Haggadah says Lavan tried to wipe out the Jewish people, but where do we see that?

There are also different ways one could interpret the words "*Arami Oved Avi*." Who is this "Aramean" who tried to destroy my father? The Haggadah identifies him as Lavan, but this is far from clear. Though it is possible to understand *arami* as referring to Yaakov, translating it as "A lost/wandering Aramean was my father" like the Ibn Ezra indicates, I will base my analysis and answer my questions on the assumption that the word *arami* is referring to Lavan himself, since this is what the Haggadah says.

In order to answer our questions, the first step is analyzing the text, and picking up on some irregularities. When reading the text carefully, and recalling how the Torah describes Yaakov's time with Lavan, it becomes evident that Lavan never actually physically harmed Yaakov, at least not directly. Rather, the Haggadah is evidently referring to something else that Lavan did that was so horrible, such that we could say it was actually worse than what the Pharaoh and the Egyptians did, who brought us physical harm.

Firstly, the word *bikesh*, which means "he sought." This implies an intention that Lavan had to harm Yaakov in some way, but it also proves that there was never an actual physical manifestation of this intention. The use of the word *oved*, which means "one who destroys," or perhaps "one who loses," is also interesting in this context, because it implies that Lavan was in some way trying to either get rid of Yaakov, or more correctly in my opinion, trying to rid Yaakov of something. Finally, the last word that stands out is *la'akor*. This translates to "to uproot," which is interesting because that also doesn't necessarily indicate any intention of causing direct physical harm, but rather, it indicates an intention to upend a certain philosophy and way of life.

At this point I would like to take some inspiration from a parable given by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks in his Haggadah on this matter. The sun and the wind are arguing about which one is stronger. To settle the debate, they agree to decide the matter by competition. Whoever can get the jacket off of the farmer while he's working his field is the strongest. The wind blows and blows, trying to get the jacket off the farmer, but the farmer simply clutches his jacket closer to his body. When it is the sun's turn, all it does is shine hotly onto the farmer's back, to the point where the farmer takes his jacket off of his own accord.

Rabbi Sacks explains the meaning of this story is the contrast between the methods of the Egyptians and Lavan to destroy the Jews. While the Egyptians tried to work us and kill us out of existence, like the wind, the Jews just held tightly on. Lavan used a different approach. Lavan tried to slowly coerce Yaakov out of his Judaism and his God-fearing values by enhancing his situation and keeping him around, giving himself opportunities to corrupt him.

I'm not so sure a comparison of the heat of the sun to the comfortable life of Yaakov at Lavan's house completely fits. Firstly, the uncomfortable heat isn't related to easy conditions, and is in fact the opposite. Secondly, the Torah does not exactly describe Yaakov's stay at Lavan's as under such amazing conditions. This is made evident by the story in the Torah, which describes the constant tricks that Lavan played on Yaakov to make his life as difficult as possible. This is real heat from the sun.

If so, let's offer a different understanding of what Lavan tried to do to Yaakov. The method with which Lavan tried to corrupt Yaakov should be adjusted. Instead of making him comfortable, he

tried to corrupt him by exasperating him and bringing out the worst in him. Now the contrast between Lavan and Pharaoh also changes. Pharaoh and the Egyptians declared death on all the Jewish males. We can withstand such barbarism. But Lavan was a philosophical death by a thousand cuts. He was hoping to wear Yaakov down and cause his way of life to fade away.

Perhaps a better parable would go like this. Yaakov's ideology can be compared to a tree (and here is where the word *la'akor* really fits in nicely). If you were to uproot a tree, it would at first glance seem fine, since you did not destroy any of the components of the tree. However, eventually, the tree will wither away, since its roots aren't grounded in anything. Similarly, if you uproot a philosophy, succeed in corrupting it and give it no opportunity to flourish, the philosophy will fade and die by itself eventually.

So now that we've established what it is that Lavan did that was so bad, we must address the question: how is it worse than what Pharaoh did? Just on a technical level, Pharaoh didn't go out of his way to kill everyone. He only wanted to kill the newborn boys, but he wasn't really looking to rid the world of the ideology that Jews had. Despite this, there is clearly a deeper level of meaning to this, which we can attribute to the methods Pharaoh and Lavan used. Whether or not Pharaoh wanted to kill all of us, he tried to destroy our ideology, our backbone, by bringing us physical harm, and as we have seen throughout history, this very often doesn't work. As long as there are a number of remaining members, the ideology can be carried on, because there is nothing to indicate that the ideology in itself is a failure. However, if one undermines the ideology itself, there is no need to kill the people who hold it. The ideology will simply fade away, since undermining its core values will indicate a failure in its function. Lavan was smart. He knew that, especially while the nation is still very small, he has a better chance of getting rid of Yaakov's ideals and values, which he so despised, by trying to undermine the ideology itself, rather than by killing the person who carries it.

As we sit around the table and discuss this story, let us focus on the need to share our roots with the next generation. May we be reminded of the enduring strength of our beliefs and values, even in the face of adversity and subtle forms of oppression. Let us remain vigilant in safeguarding our ideologies, nurturing them like sturdy trees firmly rooted in our collective heritage.

Arami Oved Avi

Jacob's Decision to Allow Enslavement

Moshe Koppel ~ Shana Bet; Bergenfield, New Jersey

The Talmud (Pesachim 116a) delves into the verses of Deuteronomy 26 which outline the declarations one must make when presenting first fruits in Jerusalem. The Haggadah, in turn, references the Sifrei to elucidate these verses, offering readers a deeper understanding.

The Sifrei's interpretation, as we read in the Haggadah, emphasizes that our descent into Egypt was not by choice, but rather forced upon us. It underscores Jacob's original intention for Egypt to be a temporary dwelling, indicating his reluctance to remain there. As it is quoted in the Haggadah: "And he sojourned there - [this] teaches that Ya'akov, our father, didn't go down to settle in Egypt, but rather [only] to sojourn there." At first glance, one might question the necessity of such an explanation—was it not obvious that neither Jacob nor the Jews desired centuries of enslavement? Additionally, why does the story start with Jacob instead of with slavery itself? However, the Sifrei's purpose becomes clearer upon closer examination.

In his commentary on the Passover Haggadah, the Ritva highlights God's decree to Abraham that the Jewish nation would indeed journey to Egypt. Despite this foreknowledge, Jacob willingly ventured into Egypt, fully aware of the trials his family would endure until their eventual liberation. His confidence rested in God's promise of providence and eventual redemption. The Sifrei, therefore, may be guiding us to comprehend the intricate considerations Jacob faced. By invoking Abraham's prophecy, it provides insight into Jacob's decision-making process as he led his family into Egypt, along with all their possessions.

Jacob recognized that enduring Pharaoh's rule for generations was a necessary step in the formation of the Jewish nation. This period of subjugation would serve as a crucial foundation for the Jewish people's understanding of their relationship with God. It was

crucial for the Jewish nation to understand that subjugation to God is just as severe as slavery to a king. Our service of God is a constant one, which requires our focus at every moment, ideally, to be on the Holy One Blessed Be He. To instill this ideology into the Jewish people, God had to subject enough generations to slavery for the mentality of the nation to be one that necessitated serving a higher purpose.

Yet, acknowledging the necessity of this sacrifice did not diminish the weight of Jacob's decision. Thus, the Sifrei emphasizes that despite the difficulty, Jacob and the Jewish nation were richly rewarded for their endurance. Their eventual growth in numbers and departure with great wealth emphasized the significance of their challenging sacrifice. We see by the great reward the nation received that they earned it, presumably because of the promise God made to the forefathers.

This narrative offers a timeless lesson. Life often presents difficult decisions that demand sacrifice. For example, when the humane thing is to put Old Yeller down, the immediate outcome seems horrible, but we understand that the end goal is good, because he would be ending the suffering of a beloved companion. Yet, we must keep in mind that once a careful calculation is made, it's crucial to trust in that decision and persevere, even when faced with daunting challenges. Jacob's unwavering faith in God's plan, despite the harrowing knowledge of what the future held, shows us the confidence we must have when making difficult decisions.

"Vayareiu" – "Et Lachatzeinu"

The Mitzvah of Hindsight - And Learning from It

Chai Redner ~ Shana Aleph; Flushing, NY

In the few *pesukim* following "*Ve'hi Sheamdah*," we encounter a pivotal moment in Jewish history. The Seder shifts its focus to unpacking several *pesukim* about slavery. By examining these closely, we can comprehend that the Baal Haggadah is illustrating the process of enslavement, a cycle of events that we must recognize not merely as a historical narrative but as a pattern repeating even in modern times.

"*Vayareiu Otanu*," commonly translated as "The Egyptians treated us badly," narrates the inception of the enslavement: "As it is stated (Exodus 1:10): Let us be wise towards him, lest he multiply and it will be that when war is called, he too will join with our enemies and fight against us and go up from the land." How does this inherently depict the Egyptians' bad treatment toward us? The answer lies in our mistranslation of "*Vayareiu otanu*." If it meant "They treated us badly," it would have been written as "*Vayareiu lanu*." What does "*otanu*" mean then? It implies that they cast us as the villains of their narrative - they portrayed us as the malevolent ones.

The Ramban (on Exodus 1:1) asserts, "It would have been a gross treachery to smite, without reason, a people brought to Egypt by the command of a former king." How did Pharaoh persuade his people to enslave the Jews? The Ramban elucidates that the Egyptians deliberated with him, and he could not act without their consent. Moreover, the Israelites had become a formidable presence and had flourished while in Egypt. Pharaoh needed to scheme cunningly, thus he said, "Let us deal wisely (*haba nitchakmah*)." They needed to act in a manner that would not evoke enmity among the Jews before their presumed subjugation.

This was the rationale behind imposing taxes on the Israelites, a customary levy for foreigners to pay the king. Rav Shimon

Shwab elucidates on the correlation between the taxes and the subsequent verse of "*Lemaan Onohto Besivlotam*," to torture the Jews and make them suffer. These seem disconnected! Taxation and the torment and suffering inflicted upon the Israelites by Pharaoh appear as disparate circumstances. Rav Shwab elucidates that the imposition of taxes and the subsequent appointment of tax collectors among the Israelites were meant "to humiliate and degrade the Jews, conveying to them that they were incapable of fulfilling their duties without supervision, portraying them as uncouth and undignified, lacking integrity and unsuitable work ethic."

Once Pharaoh effectively orchestrated all the propaganda, he could proceed to the next stage and commence torturing those he had dehumanized in the eyes of his people. Regrettably, we see this tactic all too frequently today. Not long ago, Nazis likened Jews to rats and insects. Hamas and its supporters exploit the media to evoke sympathy and radicalize those who claim impartiality. Anti-Semitism has become a global trend, openly displayed to the world. Most have grown accustomed to this heightened level of hatred, and there is little we can do except strive to build a better future for ourselves.

This theme extends into the subsequent *derasha*. The following words are "*Vayitnu Aleinu Ovodah Kasha*," which the Baal Haggadah links with the verse "*Vayavidu Mitzrayim Et Bnai Yisrael BEFARECH.*" "*Befarech*" is typically translated as "backbreaking labor," but this does not capture the full picture. According to some interpretations by Chazal, initially, the work was "*rach*," soft or easy, but later it became "*shibud kashe*," arduous labor. This concept is also reflected in maror, where the early growth of the plant is sweet, but by Pesach, when we consume it, it has become bitter.

Why should we expend any effort remembering the relatively innocuous, soft, and easy phase of slavery in Egypt? The Ktav Sofer explains that during Joseph's rule in Egypt, that was the easy period. The Israelites enjoyed the fruits of the land and lived prosperously. Then, following Joseph's death, the harsh, oppressive era of slave labor commenced. This teaches us a sobering lesson - when those whom you treated well, who were your neighbors, suddenly turn against you, it is the most agonizing form of suffering. The comfortable position you held in society, which garnered respect and camaraderie, turning against you is the bitterest. Thus, the Ktav Sofer concludes that maror serves to remind us that nothing is more bitter than believing in something initially sweet, only for it to turn

acrid. As the saying goes, "An open enemy is better than a false friend." This sentiment rings true today, as we witness even our supposed allies turning against us, making it all the more difficult to contend with.

The lessons from these *pesukim* are not confined to the past; we have an obligation every year to recall key themes in *Yetziat Mitzrayim* and make them relevant. The use of propaganda by our enemies to dehumanize and justify their actions to the general populace is still prevalent. Consider Gaza and the surge of anti-Semitism worldwide, despite it being a regional conflict. Look at how younger Americans, who some may consider friends, favor Hamas over Israel, even post-October 7th.

There may come a time when these false friends openly attack Jews, and we will experience the same bitterness as the Jews in Egypt, symbolized by the maror we consume at the Seder. (I hope that day never arrives!) However, we can learn from the past, as we have a mitzvah every year during Pesach, and pass these lessons down to our children, grandchildren, and even great-grandchildren.

Makkot

Divine Hand Gestures

Avi Grad ~ Shana Bet; Cherry Hill, New Jersey

Throughout the plagues, the Torah seems very focused on the exact motions used by Moshe (and sometimes Aaron) to perform the plagues. As I read through the descriptions of all the plagues, I discovered that there seems to be a strange pattern (or lack thereof). With some of the plagues, God commands the use of Moshe's staff to perform the plague. Other times, God commands the use of his hand. However, not always would Moshe comply. Sometimes when God commands the staff, he would use his hand, and sometimes, he would use his hand when God had commanded him to use his staff. How could Moshe do anything other than what God commanded? And why not always use the staff, or always use his hand, to perform the plagues? Why would it change depending on the plague?

The Ohr HaChaim (Rabbi Chaim ibn Attar) offers an approach that might help us answer these questions. Although God commands Moshe to use his staff for most of the plagues, with regard to the plague of darkness, he commands Moshe to use his hand (Exodus 10:21): "And God said unto Moshe: 'Stretch out your hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt…" The next verse states: "And Moshe stretched forth his hand toward heaven, and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt for three days." Why the sudden use of hands instead of the staff, wonders the Ohr HaChaim?

Drawing from the Midrash (Shemot Rabbah 14), the Ohr HaChaim suggests that this revolves around the qualitatively different nature of the darkness. There is a type of deep darkness described by Psalms 18:12: "He made darkness His screen, dark thunderheads, dense clouds of the sky were His pavilion around Him." This darkness clearly transcends natural phenomena, and it is this darkness, writes the Ohr HaChaim, that Moshe was being commanded to summon. The Ohr HaChaim suggests that Moshe was to use his hand to perform such an extraordinary act because this

darkness surpassed the plagues preceding it, and as such, it was improper to use his staff. (The Ohr HaChaim does not explain, however, why using the staff would be improper.)

Through this answer, the Ohr HaChaim turns us toward understanding the power of hands in the plagues. A staff is less great, somehow, and less honorable, than using his hand. But it still is not clear why this is. Additionally, while this explains the choice of Moshe's hand for the plague of darkness, it doesn't explain several other plagues that have Moshe specifically using his staff when he should have used his hand as God commanded, or vice versa. For example, regarding the plague of hail, for example, God commands Moshe to "Hold out your arm toward the sky that hail may fall on all the land of Egypt," but instead "Moshe held out his staff toward the sky" (Exodus 9:22-23). So, too, regarding the plague of locusts, God commands Moshe saying, "Hold out your hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, that they may come upon the land of Egypt," but, instead, "Moshe held out his staff over the land of Egypt" (Exodus 10:12-13).

So, if hands means a special gesture meant for special plagues, how could Moshe go against these commands? And, why did God specifically command Moshe to use his hand starting with the plague of hail, anyway?

To understand the deeper significance of Moshe using his hand, Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed* offers insight. Maimonides associates the hand with action: "An eye, an ear, a **hand**, a mouth, a tongue, have been figuratively ascribed to Him so that by this means, sight, hearing, **action**, and speech should be indicated" (Guide for the Perplexed I:46). The Rambam is saying that when the Torah uses the term hand in reference to God, it is a reference to His action in the world. Thus, when Moshe is instructed to use his hand, it may symbolize a direct manifestation of God's action in this world even more so than the other plagues.

This interpretation gains support from the three instances where God instructs Moshe to use his hand. The uniqueness of the darkness plague arises from the exceptional nature of the darkness itself, as the Ohr HaChaim states.

However, to grasp the distinctiveness of the hail and locust plagues, one must examine the verses. The first time that God commands Moshe to use his hand by the plague of hail, it is described by saying that "The hail was very heavy—fire flashing in the midst of

the hail—such as had not fallen on the land of Egypt since it had become a nation" (Exodus 9:24). The other place where Moshe is commanded to use his hand is by the plague of locusts where it says that "Locusts invaded all the land of Egypt … never before had there been so many, nor will there ever be so many again" (Exodus 10:14).

In both cases the plagues specify that it was so great that it had never been seen before, showing how they were in some way greater than the rest of the miraculous plagues. Moshe's decision to forego using his hand in favor of his staff is symbolic of a delicate balance between the awe-inspiring display of God's power during the plague of darkness, where he employed his hand, and the comparatively less dramatic plagues where his staff sufficed. Perhaps Moshe was allowed some control over the situation when he sensed that the use of the hand would be overly done and the effect diminished.

Therefore, the hand begins to be commanded when God "ups the ante" with the last few plagues. However, Moshe could decide how it should be used to have the greatest effect, as a symbol of the direct working of God on earth! Sometimes, he decided it was necessary to show the amazingness of God's glory (such as darkness). Sometimes, he wished to cover over that incredible feeling by using his staff. This was his prerogative.

This holds a powerful lesson for us. Sometimes, we need to look around to see the "hand of God" in our lives. Other times, we can't see God's "hand" working at all. And that is ok. Because when we see it again, it will be that much more powerful. As we read the story of the Exodus, let us get more and more inspired to see the miracles we should see in everyday life.

Makkot

The Makkot Through the Eyes of the Rambam

Aaron Feinerman ~ Shana Bet; Hollywood, Florida

The Rambam's interpretation of miracles diverges from more traditional understandings. While a common interpretation of miracles is one in which God bends the laws of nature at a particular place and time, the Rambam seems to disagree as seen by the following comment of his:

> *"He placed into their nature that they should do everything that they would do in the future, whether they be things that would happen constantly, that being a natural thing; or whether it be something unusual, that being a miracle" - (Rambam, commentary to Avot 5:6)*

In other words, miracles only take place while adhering to the laws of nature, and what defines an event as being miraculous is the programmed unique timing of the event. Given the Rambam's viewpoint, how are we to understand the plagues in Egypt as not defying nature?

Drawing from insights gleaned from various sources, including scientific research and historical evidence, we can propose possible scientific explanations. Firstly, let's consider the context of the events. Around 1500 BCE, the Santorini caldera erupted, unleashing catastrophic effects felt over vast distances.[5] The volcanic activity, including ash clouds and seismic disturbances, could have set off a chain reaction leading to the plagues described in the Torah.

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[5] Hardy DA (1989). *"Therea and the Aegean World III", Volume III—Chronology (Proceedings of the Third International Congress, Hardy DA, editor)*

The first plague of blood for example, may have been caused by an underground carbon dioxide release due to the eruption,[6] turning water red due to iron oxidation.[7] Subsequently, the disruption in the ecosystem led to phenomena such as frog infestation trying to escape the unfit waters(second plague) and lice outbreaks (third plague).

The fourth plague, Arov, described as swarms of bugs or wild animals, could be attributed to the volcanic disturbances displacing diverse wildlife populations from neighboring regions into Egypt. Similarly, the fifth plague, affecting only Egyptian animals, may be linked to bacterial growth in polluted waters. Likewise the sixth plague of boils may have been a result of deteriorating hygiene conditions exacerbated by continuous environmental degradation. Likewise, the seventh plague of hail, accompanied by lightning, could be explained by atmospheric disturbances caused by volcanic ash. The subsequent plagues, including swarms of locusts and palpable darkness, may have been further consequences of ecological imbalance and atmospheric changes induced by the volcanic eruption.

In exploring these naturalistic explanations, we don't diminish the miraculous nature of the events but rather highlight the divine orchestration within the realm of nature, aligning with the Rambam's perspective. Through divine timing and natural phenomena, these events unfold as part of a larger plan, underscoring the intricate workings of God's wisdom through His natural tapestry.

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[6] https://www.britannica.com/event/Lake-Nyos-disaster

[7] In 1986, Lake Nyos experienced a similar phenomena resulting in the death of over 1700 people and the lake appearning red. Gas cloud kills Cameroon villagers". *HISTORY*. A&E Television Networks. 13 November 2009

Makkot

Not Everything is Rational

Zevi Lehrer ~ Shana Aleph; Woodmere, NY

It has become a trend in Modern Orthodox Judaism and other modern theologies to explain biblical events in a rational manner, despite seemingly supernatural occurrences. One such case is with the Ten Plagues. However, applying this filter to the Plagues misses a critical point: the Bible didn't think they were rational. The Plagues each have etiological reasons and textual parallels that speak to their divine nature. Here are three such cases:

Blood.

- **[Isaiah 15:9]** *For the waters of Dibon are full of blood, yet I will bring upon Dibon even more — a lion for those of Moab who escape, for the remnant of the land*
- **[II Kings 3:22-23]** *When they rose early in the morning and the sun shone upon the water, the Moabites saw the water opposite them as red as blood. They said, "This is blood; the kings must have fought together and killed one another. Now then, Moab, to the spoil!"*
- **[The Exaltation of Inanna 45]** *Blood is poured into their rivers because of you, and their people must drink it*
- **[Admonitions of Ipu-wer]** - *Indeed, the river is blood, yet men drink of it. Men shrink from human beings and thirst after water.*

Both biblical texts and other Near Eastern texts clearly regard blood-like water as a supernatural curse or bad omen. The plague of blood follows this motif, and in addition, is etiological: The Egyptians threw all Hebrew sons into the Nile (Exodus 1:22); now, the Lord responded by turning the Nile blood-red, symbolizing the blood of the killed infants, and beginning the plagues of Egypt.

Pestilence.

- **[Leviticus 26:25]** *I will bring the sword against you, executing vengeance for the covenant, and if you withdraw into your cities, I will send pestilence among you, and you shall be delivered into enemy hands*
- **[Deuteronomy 28:21]** *The Lord will make the pestilence cling to you until it has consumed you off the land that you are entering to possess.*
- **[Deuteronomy 32:23-24]** - *I will heap disasters upon them, spend my arrows against them: wasting hunger, burning consumption, bitter pestilence. The teeth of beasts I will send against them, with venom of things crawling in the dust.*
- **[Ezekiel 5:16-17]** - *When I loose against you my deadly arrows of famine, arrows for destruction, which I will let loose to destroy you, and when I bring more and more famine upon you and cut off your supply of bread. 17 I will send famine and wild animals against you, and they will rob you of your children; pestilence and bloodshed shall pass through you, and I will bring the sword upon you. I, the Lord, have spoken."*

Pestilence is a disease that is brought many times in the Bible by the Lord against people who he judges unfavorably. This includes enemy nations but also Israel itself when they sin (See 2 Samuel 24 – Notably, David specifically asks to fall in the hands of the Lord when choosing to be struck with the plague of pestilence, further speaking to its divine nature). In this case, Egypt is struck with **animal** pestilence, a seemingly novel concept. Origen, in Homiliae in Exodum, points out that it would be a fitting punishment for Egyptian animal worship.

Hail.

- **[Isaiah 30:30]** - *And the Lord will cause his majestic voice to be heard and the descending blow of his arm to be seen, in furious anger and a flame of devouring fire, with a cloudburst and tempest and hailstones.*
- **[Ezekiel 13:11]** - *Say to those who smear whitewash on it that it shall fall. There will be a deluge of rain, great hailstones will fall, and a stormy wind will break out*
- **[Joshua 10:11]** - As they fled before Israel, while they were going down the slope of Beth-horon, the Lord threw down huge stones from heaven on them as far as Azekah, and

they died; there were more who died because of the hailstones than the Israelites killed with the sword.

- **[Exodus 9:27]** - *Then Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron and said to them, "This time I have sinned; the Lord is in the right, and I and my people are in the wrong*

Hail is a weapon of the Lord used in the Prophets. In the occurrence here, in the plagues, there is an additional layer: fire flashing within the hail (Exodus 9:24), which would seemingly put each other out. This display of divine power seems to scare Pharaoh. He immediately calls to Moses (and Aaron) and admits to having sinned, something he hadn't done previously.

Additionally, there is another element here that was not seen in previous plagues: allowing Egyptians who fear the Lord to prevent damage upon themselves – bring in their animals/property lest they get destroyed by the incoming hail (Exodus 9:19). This highlights the fact that this was a divine show of power, and it provided an opportunity for some Egyptians to profess faith, or at least acknowledge that there's a chance of His divinity. This speaks to the divine nature of this plague, that God did this not only as a weapon to punish but as a means to convince Egyptians to listen to Him, furthering the etiological nature of the Plagues.

The Bible clearly doesn't believe (at least some of) the Plagues to be rational phenomena. Most plagues have biblical or other Near Eastern parallels that make it fitting events to show the people the power of the Lord, the Plagues' entire purpose (Exodus 9:14-16). Therefore, the fact that the eruption of Thera is now dated c. 1600 BCE, well before the Exodus (1446-1225 BCE), isn't even the main problem with the rationalist interpretation; it is simply that the Bible doesn't portray it as so.

Reading the Bible must be done without modern biases. Although as Modern Orthodox Jews, we try to preserve the Torah while accepting modern knowledge, we cannot reinterpret the Bible with ideas that were not present then. The Bible serves to deliver its message to the Israelites, and we must read it from that lens. We need not make it work with Enlightenment rationalism and science because that was not relevant to the ancient Israelites. This trend must stop; just read the Bible.

Detzach Adash Be'achav

Rabbi Yehuda's Acronym: Themes and Thoughts

Evan Simon ~ Shana Aleph; Toronto, Canada

At the very end of the exegesis on Arami Oved Avi, there is a curious idea by Rabbi Yehuda to create an acronym to the plagues: "DeTZaCh, ADaSh, BeAChaV." This is just thrown at us with no context in the Haggadah, and it seems unnecessary. We, too, can make mnemonics like these. Isn't it just the first letter to each one of the plagues?

The key to understanding Rabbi Yehuda's acronym about the plagues is not to focus on the acronym, but its division: three, three, four. By understanding this breakup of the plagues, Rabbi Yehuda is teaching us something profound about how to understand the Makkot at the Seder.

Our examination does not start at the plagues, but starts two chapters earlier - in chapter five. This is the first conversation of Moshe with Pharaoh. The first time Moshe goes to Pharaoh, he says YKVK says to let the Jews celebrate in the desert. Then Pharaoh responds, "Who is YKVK? Apparently, Pharaoh does not have this conception of the Israelite god called YKVK. He also says that he has never heard of this god. Moshe then responds that the God of the Hebrews said this.

The question is, what does Pharaoh think about Moshe's statement at this point? It would seem that he just thinks that YKVK is the name of what the Israelites believe is their god. Pharaoh needs a serious theological education to really believe in the One True God. I believe this occurs through the plagues with three main ideas. First, that God is worthy of being considered a divine being. Second, that God is specifically a god that has chosen the Jewish people to be the banner of His existence on Earth. Third, that God is a completely different conception of a divine being than the one Pharaoh has; Pharaoh knows of pantheons, of gods of different abilities and

powers, but he doesn't know of YKVK, the all-powerful God. This is what God declares in Shemot 7:5: "And Egypt will know that I am the Lord (YKVK), when I stretch forth My hand over Egypt and I bring out the Children of Israel from their midst."

In other words, as I will show, Rabbi Yehuda broke these plagues into three parts because he sees these three ideas as the true purpose of the plagues: to teach Egypt that YKVK is God, that He is our personal God, and that our God is a completely different conception of God than the one that Pharaoh has.

Let's start with examining the introduction to the first plague, blood. In Shemot 7:17, God says to Moshe to tell Pharaoh: "Thus says the Lord, 'By this you shall know that I am YKVK.' Behold, with the staff in my hand, I will strike the waters that are in the river and they will turn into blood."

Listen to these word choices: "By this you shall know that I am YKVK." Through the first plague, Pharaoh is meant to learn about God's existence. But it would take more than just the first plague. The one plague would not be fully effective to get through to the hard heart of Pharaoh. Although God turns the Nile's waters to blood, Pharaoh's magicians are able to do it as well. Pharaoh is thus not convinced that it was a God, and but not only that, Pharaoh is able to ignore the effects of the plague: "Pharaoh turned and came to his house, and did not take even this to heart" (Shemot 7:23). Why didn't it work? Because he was able to go into his palace and ignore the effects of the plague; he was separated from it.

The plague of frogs then comes next. At first glance, this plague is very similar to the one of blood. The frogs come and the magicians are able to replicate it. Pharaoh is not convinced, and refuses to send out the Israelites. At the same time, there is a crucial difference between frogs and blood. The frogs really do affect Pharaoh, he is not able to ignore it: "The river shall swarm forth frogs and they shall come up and come into your house, and into your bedroom, and onto your bed, and into the houses of your servants and your people, and into your ovens and into your kneading bowls" (Shemot 7:28). Pharaoh cannot ignore the frogs when they enter his palace, into his bedroom and his kitchen. The frogs directly affected Pharaoh, unlike the blood where he was able to ignore it. He had to confront the power of the plague first hand.

Since Pharaoh is not able to ignore it, he has to ask Moshe to tell God to stop the plague. However, he demonstrates in this request

that he still does not understand or really believe in God. While he says, "Plead with the Lord to remove the frogs from me and my people" (Shemot 8:4), when Moshe asks when to do it (Shemot 8:5), Pharaoh responds that it should happen the following day. Why does he do that? Why not immediately? The answer is that he still does not believe in God. He is testing Moshe, thinking that Moshe would have expected a request to stop immediately and could have planned for it. Pharaoh thinks if he asks for an unexpected time, Moshe and his god YKVK will not be able to do it. He is wrong, as Moshe (somewhat smugly responds, "As you say—that you may know that there is none like the Lord our God" (Shemot 8:7). Then Moshe does it and the frogs disappear. But Pharaoh ignores the evidence again.

Then we get to the lice. After the previous two plagues of Pharaoh not getting the message, God sends lice. This time, when the magicians try to do it, they fail. It is beyond human capacity to replicate it, so they say it is a finger of God. It must be a divine act. But they don't fully understand the concept of YKVK yet. The magicians say that is "a finger of *Elohim*" (Shemot 8:15). This is a generic name for a god. They still will not accept that it is the Jewish god, YKVK. They do think it is a god that is doing it, but it could be part of their pantheon of gods. Not a new god that they've never heard of before in Egypt. Because they call this god "*Elohim*," the verse continues, "And Pharaoh did not listen to them [Moshe and Aharon] as YKVK had spoken." He accepted the idea of the divine being, but could not see beyond that to the uniqueness of this god and how vastly it differed from his preconceptions. He could not see YKVK, he only saw a god, one of many (*chas veshalom*).

For the next set of *makkot* we can go according to the view of the Akeidat Yitzchak, Rabbi Yitzchak Arama. He writes that the purpose of the second set of *makkot* was to show Pharaoh the special relationship between YKVK and the Jewish people. The plague of *arov*, wild animals, contains an important verse toward this theory: "I will separate the land of Goshen" (Shemot 8:18). God does this to show that He has a special relationship with the Jewish people, and so the animals would not harm them showing that relationship.

Then we get to pestilence, after wild animals. Pharaoh did not listen, the Akeidat Yitzchak says, because Pharaoh rationalized to himself that it was the land itself, the land of Goshen, that created the separation of plagues. The Jews were in Goshen, and it was the fact that they were in Goshen that God saved them. Pharaoh reasoned,

there must be something special about Goshen, not that God has a relationship with the Jewish people. This is the misconception that pestilence deals with. God says once again, "I will differentiate between the animals of Israel and the animals of Egypt" (Shemot 9:4). But now, this has nothing to do with the land. This gets rid of the rationalization that Pharaoh has about God's relationship with the Jews.

According to the Akeidat Yitzchak, Pharaoh still had one last rationalization. He tells himself, maybe the Jews just had dumb luck. Maybe God was not helping them - it was all a coincidence. Thus, Pharaoh refuses to let the Jewish people go. This false trap is what boils is coming to tell Pharaoh. With boils, it is extremely clear, the Egyptians themselves had boils the Jews did not. There is no way for Pharaoh to rationalize it. Three times the charm. This isn't simple luck, it's not a land difference. He is forced to accept that God must have a special relationship with the Jewish people.

Pharaoh still maintains a massive misconception about what God as YKVK is, and fixing that is the goal of the last set of *makkot*. Pharaoh is about to find out that God is a completely different conception of a deity than the one Pharaoh knows of. Hail is the first of these. Here, fire and ice come together. Two opposite forces occupying the same space. Pharaoh knew of the god of fire (the sun god Ra), and Pharaoh knew of the god of water (Tefnut, maybe Anuket, gods of water and the Nile), but to have the two "forces" together? That was completely impossible! Thus, it proved that YKVK is a God that transcends nature, a completely different conception of God than the one that Pharaoh had:

> *For this time I will send all My plagues upon your person, and your courtiers, and your people, in order that you may know that there is none like Me in all the world… I have spared you for this purpose: in order to show you My power, and in order that My fame may resound throughout the world… This time tomorrow I will rain down a very heavy hail, such as has not been in Egypt from the day it was founded until now. (Shemot 9:14-18)*

This would be a conception of God that Egypt had never seen before, and it would be on full display through the plague of hail. That is why

Pharaoh finally submits he finally recognizes what YKVK is, as it says: "Pharaoh sent and called for Moshe and Aharon, and he said to them, 'I have sinned this time. YKVK is righteous and I and my people are wicked" (Shemot 9:27). He finally recognizes God and says that he has sinned.

So we're done, right? The plagues are over. We might assume, if we didn't know that there were to be ten *makkot*, that lucky number seven would win the day (like it does so many times in the Torah) and the Jewish people can go free.

However, this is not to be. The problem is that Egypt as a whole was not completely on board. Even Pharaoh continued to harbor doubts:

> *Those who paid no regard to the word of YKVK left their slaves and livestock in the open… Moses said… The hail will fall no more, so that you may know that the earth is YKVK's… But I know that you and your courtiers do not yet fear the YKVK God. (Shemot 9:21, 29-30)*

Bad theologies are as hard to break as bad habits. Pharaoh and Egypt in general needed more knowledge of this god to really start believing in Him wholeheartedly. Hail taught them that YKVK is all-powerful and is above nature. But did you know that He can also work through nature itself? The key thing about the next plague, locusts, is that it was done through a natural way. The Torah goes out of its way to tell us that the locusts were brought in with a wind (Shemot 10:13), and they were also brought out with a wind (10:19). The "plague" of locusts is just that they eat all the remaining crops - things they do anyway. Pharaoh and Egypt now learn that not only is YKVK a God above nature, but that He also controls nature itself and that He is the cause of nature. They learned what they lacked at hail: that "the earth is YKVK's."

Next comes darkness. All this talk of the natural world has Pharaoh looking for natural excuses. But this will not work with darkness. God uses nothing to create the darkness. It just exists as soon as Moshe lifts his hand at God's command: "And Moshe stretched forth his hand to the sky and there was absolute darkness in all of the land of Egypt for three days" (Shemot 10:22). There is no method to how the plague was brought, Moshe just raised his hand and there was darkness. It's unlike hail, because in hail God was

breaking the rules of nature but He still did it through a quasi-natural method. Darkness comes to dispel this notion, there were no natural parts, no natural method, just Moshe raising his hand and God bringing darkness. That is what darkness comes to teach, that not only is God in control of nature and is able to break it but that He does not need to use nature at all, that God is truly in control of every aspect of this world and beyond it.

Lastly comes the plague of the firstborn. Before this plague, Pharaoh might have thought that God has complete control, but human death is beyond His reach. Surely Egyptians will be protected in the end through their gods, like Osiris and Isis, gods of death and life! This is not so. *Makkat Bechorot* teaches Pharaoh and everyone else that YKVK is the type of God that has complete control, complete in the fullest sense of the word. Everything comes from Him including your life, and He could end it at any moment. This plague shows us the true nature of the type of God YKVK is.

That is what Rabbi Yehuda's acronym represents. Now we understand why he created these three groups through this acronym. The three groupings represent a major difference in what each group of plagues was specifically meant to teach. The first three were to teach that YKVK is a divine being, worthy of worship. The second three were meant to teach that YKVK has a special relationship with the Jewish people. And the last three were meant to teach that YKVK is a completely separate conception of God than the one Egypt and Pharaoh had. It is not just a simple acronym. If you say it is just a simple acronym you have missed the entire point. It is a tool to understand the *makkot* and give us a fundamental lesson in theology.

R' Yosi, R' Eliezer, R' Akiva

The More Plagues, the More Justice

Moe Wiedermann ~ Madrich; Dallas, Texas

In this section of Maggid, Rabbi Yossi Hagelili, Rabbi Eliezer, and Rabbi Akiva, each present their own mathematical reasonings for why the allegorical number of plagues faced by the Egyptians in Egypt and by the sea was exponentially higher than the ten discussed in the previous section. It culminates with the calculations of Rabbi Akiva, who asserts that a whole fifty plagues were inflicted upon in Egypt and 250 at the Sea of Reeds. Why is there a need to increase the number of plagues? What is the lesson that we can learn from these sayings?

For our first question, the reasoning brought down by the Vilna Gaon, as well as many other scholars, is taken from Deuteronomy (7:15):

> *The Lord will keep you free from all sickness. All the terrible diseases of Egypt that you knew, He will not inflict upon you, but He will lay them upon all those who hate you.*

What is the promise that Hashem makes here? The idea is that when we keep the Torah, everything we experienced in Egypt will be given instead to our enemies. This includes the Egyptians. Therefore, the Gra suggests, every punishment given to our enemies is one that we are spared from. This sounds like a good deal: divine retribution and protection combined into one!

I wish to offer another interpretation, one that takes us to the modern equivalent of our enslavement in Egypt. After the Holocaust, many Jews were asking what punishment the willing participants would face for their crimes. Thousands upon thousands of Germans (among countless people of neighboring countries) committed the most egregious crimes against humanity in history. Could we possibly punish all of them? There were some who tried. The paramilitary

organization *Nakam* attempted to kill six million Germans by poisoning the water supply in Nuremberg. Their plan failed after they were caught by the British. Later, they successfully poisoned three thousand loaves of bread intended for German prisoners of war. Sadly, very few of the organizers of the Holocaust ever received a punishment for their crimes. In our days we can only hope that they face divine punishment in the World to Come.

The same reason why we have uncertainty today as to what was the divine fate of the Germans is why it was so important for us to understand that the Egyptians faced much greater punishment than initially implied. The Jews leaving Egypt deserved the satisfaction of knowing that the Egyptians were delivered justice equal to the injustices that they committed. Every person who was worked to death, every baby thrown into the Nile, all of them needed to be avenged. Perhaps some might say that Hashem didn't do enough to punish the Egyptians.

If so, perhaps the goal of Rabbi Yossi Hagelili, Rabbi Eliezer, and Rabbi Akiva was to settle this argument and to prove that measure for measure, the Jews would have their closure for their relatives lost in Egypt.

The need for justice is a powerful one. May all victims of Hamas' terrible acts of terror find justice and Hamas be removed from the face of the earth.

Yam Suf

Crossing the Sea - A Preview of Shemita

Yehonatan Rothstein ~ Shana Aleph; Seattle, Washington

We find in Avot DeRabbi Natan (33) how when Bnei Yisrael passed through the sea, God not only made the land dry for them, but also protected them from the elements with a layer of clouds. He also grew fruit trees for nourishment, acting as a source for nectar for the young children. There was also flowing drinking water in rivulets from springs in the ground.

This Midrash is reminiscent of the year of Shemita:

> *Speak to the Israelite people and say to them:When you enter the land that I assign to you. the land shall observe a sabbath of the Lord.*
> (Vayikra 25:2)

Every seven years, in Eretz Yisrael, we are commanded to let the earth rest. Nothing new is planted and the produce that grows does not belong to anyone - it is *hefker*, meaning anyone can come and eat it. Similarly with the splitting of the sea, God created an environment for the Jewish people to take what was needed. It did not matter if it was Moshe or the average person, one could take what was needed.

The Shemita year teaches us to allow the land to rest and replenish its nutrients, with the produce being available to everyone. This allows them to take some more time to learn Torah and replenish their souls. In one sense, Shemitta reflects the relationship of the six days a week of work to Shabbat, the day of rest. There are six years of working the land, followed by a year long Shabbat.

The Sefer Hachinuch (84) explains that the Shemita year helps a person remember that the real master of the land is Hashem:

The outcome of this is that a person will add to his trust in G-d. since anyone who finds it in his heart to give and abandon to the world all of the produce of his lands and his ancestral Inheritance for an entire year - and educates himself and his family through this for all of his days - will never have the trait of stinginess overcome him too much, nor will he have a deficient amount of trust.

Already by the sea we can see a preview of what is to come, of our life in Eretz Yisrael. Everything that happens in Eretz Yisrael is related to our connection to Hashem. Just like Hashem took care of us and nourished us like children by the sea, when we were most vulnerable, so we need to learn to take care of our families, our friends and our communities during the year of Shemita.

In the diaspora, how can we connect to the Shemita year?

Just like Bnei Yisrael got a preview of what life in Eretz Yisrael is going to be like, we can practice in the diaspora for our life in Eretz Yisrael. We all left our families and came to Israel for the year. We got a taste of life in Israel at Migdal HaTorah. This is a place where our rabbis and friends helped us build foundations not just for this year but for our future lives. Some of us have the opportunity to come back to Eretz Yisrael, but some of us don't and are returning to the diaspora. Either way, we need to remember where our heart should be focused on and that is doing the work of God. All that being said, and done hopefully, next year, we will all be celebrating together in the holy land of Jerusalem.

Yam Suf

Order from the Chaos: Onkelos' Interpretation of the Song of the Sea

Simon Pinter ~ Madrich; Lawrence, NY

Note: This poem should be read left to right, top to bottom, like regular writing but with gaps. True appreciation of this piece can only be reached if the reader has an understanding of *trope*/cantillation symbols used in the reading of the Torah, or if listened to being sung by one who does. The *trope* mimics the *trope* of the Song of the Sea closely, and the *trope* of *Parshat Ha'azinu* vaguely. Footnotes explain where to find the ideas that certain lines allude to.

"*Az Yashir*" began Moshe, and the Children of Israel, as they began their praise of Hashem, and they said, "I shall sing the praises of Hashem" at least that's what's in the Torah:[8] But Onkelos has his own idea in which he collectivizes the song, changing it to being from the future:[9] Onkelos helps to connect the poem to Pesach: Instead of chaos, Onkelos brings order celebrating the unity of the Jewish people:

Instead of using the singular past tense,
turning the song into the collective call
They're united in their singular message
but also stating He will save them again:[11]
They praise what He will continue to do:
Instead of saying He will one day have it:[12]
Forever relevant with no embellishment
Not only is the story of the Sea of Reeds
But it is forever about the love of Hashem
Through Onkelos, order (*seder*) is found
Bringing to Pesach Hashem's love and unity

Onkelos chooses to use a plural future
of one nation standing before Hashem:[10]
Thanking Hashem for saving them then
Instead of just praising his actions then
They affirm his current total supremacy
Onkelos makes the Jews' song enduring
Fitting for Pesach's themes even now:
About the Jewish people fleeing Egypt
And what He will always do for Israel:
In the tumult and turbulence of the sea
And the promise for us to be all we can be:

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[8] Exodus 15:1
[9] Targum Onkelos on Exodus 15:7
[10] Targum Onkelos on Exodus 15:1
[11] Rashi on Targum Onkelos on Exodus 15:17
[12] Targum Onkelos on Exodus 15:18

Dayenu

Dayenu: Does the Order Really Matter?

Gavi Teller ~ Shana Aleph; Atlanta, Georgia

Dayenu is, in my opinion, the most interesting song sung at the Seder. Appearing in the Maggid section of the Haggadah, this song goes through a list of miracles that Hashem performed for us, beginning with the Exodus from Egypt and concluding with the building of the Holy Temple. With each stanza, we say that had God only performed miracle X and not miracle Y, it would have been enough of a miracle for us. However, while most events in *Dayenu* follow a chronological order, there are two events that seem not to follow this pattern. By examining this issue, we can learn some important and interesting ideas and lessons from these two events.

The first event that doesn't follow the chronological order takes place in the third stanza: the judgment of the Egyptian gods/ideology. It goes: "If He had judged their gods and not killed their firstborn, it would have been enough." What we would assume, then, if this was in chronological order, is that the gods of Egypt were judged first, and then the firstborn plague occurred. However, in Exodus 12:12, we find the order switched. There, it says, "For that night I will go through the land of Egypt and strike down every [male] firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human and beast; and I will judge all the gods of Egypt." In this verse, we clearly see that God promises to kill the firstborn in a plague first, and only then judge the gods of Egypt. If so, why did the author of *Dayenu* write the events out of order according to the Biblical chronology?

The Kos Shel Eliyahu (Rabbi Eliyahu ben Harush, a 19th century Haggadah commentator) has an interesting answer about this in his commentary on *Dayenu*. He says that *Dayenu* switches the order because it teaches us an important lesson on how God judges people. First, God will judge a person's god, meaning, their ideology. After a person's beliefs are examined, God judges the person themselves and their actions. Says the Kos Shel Eliyahu, that is why *Dayenu* describes God as judging the Egyptian gods before performing the last plague.

Dayenu is all about God's miracles for us, so it talks from God's point of view, and amplifies God's great good for us and how grateful we must be. Why, then, does the Torah describe it in the reverse? Kos Shel Eliyahu suggests fascinatingly that the Torah "reflects the aspect of the judgment which the Israelites experienced first – the death of the first born." According to him, the Torah here was relating the events from the perspective of the Israelites, and not God.

There is another event that doesn't follow the chronological order of events, this time in the 10th stanza. Here it says, "If He had fed us the manna and had not given us the Shabbat, it would have been enough for us." At first glance, there does not seem to be any issue chronologically, at least according to *pshat* in the Torah. The Torah conveys that we were given the manna before the event at Sinai, and Sinai was when Shabbat was first commanded to the Israelites through the Ten Commandments. So it would seem that this stanza is fine.

However, Chazal tell us (Sanhedrin 56b) that Shabbat was given to the Jews at Mara, which takes place before the manna:

> *Were the descendants of Noah commanded to establish courts of judgment? But isn't it taught, The Jewish people were commanded ten mitzvot when they were in Marah: Seven that the descendants of Noah accepted upon themselves, and God added to them Judgment, and Shabbat, and honoring one's father and mother!"*

We see that at Mara, they were already commanded about Shabbat, even before receiving it with the Ten Commandments at Sinai. So, if the rabbis in the *gemara* agree that Shabbat was mentioned before the giving of the manna, why here does the author of Dayenu, a rabbi, ignore this?

The Marbeh Lesaper (Rabbi Yedidiah Taih Wiel, an 18th century German Haggadah commentator), suggests something quite interesting for the switch in order here. He says that while the Jews were given the laws of Shabbat at Mara before getting the manna (emphasis mine), "It was through the gift of manna that the people *came to understand* the meaning of the Sabbath." In other words, by being commanded to collect a double portion of the sixth day and that no manna would come on the seventh day - meaning, actually keeping Shabbat in practice - the Jews came to a better understanding of what

the day of Shabbat actually meant, rather than just what the laws were. According to this, the author of *Dayenu* ignored the fact that Shabbat was already commanded at Mara because it wasn't *truly* commanded/taught to them until they lived it. Therefore, it was only after the manna came that they could say they were *truly* taught the laws of Shabbat.

So what can we learn from these two anomalies? Each event helps to teach us an important lesson. The first teaches us that we should try to imitate God. *Dayenu* tells us that God judged the Egyptians' ideology before their actions. When people judge others, they tend to look at the action first and then focus on the kind of person they are judging. We should be more like God and focus on what kind of person the person is and then judge their actions and how they flowed from that mistaken ideology or thinking. We judge people all the time, both for wrong reasons but sometimes also for necessary reasons. You're a boss and need to judge someone to decide who to hire. Should you judge them based on their clothes, their previous jobs, or should you look into their perspective and understand who they really are first? You meet a new person and want to decide if they should be your friend. Look at who they are before you look at what they do and you'll go far. Don't just look at what they have accomplished in life, but first look at what kind of person they are. That is a much more significant marker of success.

The second case tells us of the importance of experiencing something over just knowing about it theoretically. *Dayenu* emphasizes the manna first and then Shabbat, because even if you learn something, without practice, it doesn't "click." You can't learn how to drive by just reading a book about driving. You can't learn to swim by watching someone else. Instead, you need to get behind the wheel, or jump into the water, and experience it for yourself. That solidifies the knowledge you've already gained. The same applies to the *mitzvot*. You can sit in *shiur* all day and learn all about the *mitzvot,* but by experiencing it, actually practicing it, you will come to better understand the action itself and not just how to do it.

So when you are reading the Haggadah at the Pesach Seder, read it carefully and look for the time when ideas seem out of place or not in order. Look for them and spend a little time to understand why they are written this way and what lesson we can take away from that.

Dayenu

Dayenu!

Rabbi Avi Herzog

Dayenu is one of those songs we all loved as kids. Besides being sung to a fun tune (who doesn't love singing "*Dai, dai, dayenu*" over and over again?), it's one of the few moments of the Seder where everyone is participating and singing together as one. *Dayenu* has the power to unite us! And believe it or not, perhaps this idea of *achdut*, of being united, is alluded to in the lyrics of the song as itself!

The formula of *Dayenu* is simple and straightforward: If only God had given us (or done for us) A, but didn't give us B, *dayenu* - that would be enough for us! In other words, we would be grateful for A alone, even had there been no B. For example: "If God had taken us out of Egypt, but hadn't passed judgment upon the Egyptians, *dayenu*!" The very act of *yetzi'at Mitzrayim* alone is certainly an event for which we would be grateful.

This formula holds true for every verse of *Dayenu* except one: "If God had brought us to Har Sinai, but hadn't given us the Torah, *dayenu*!" Really? Had we merely arrived at Har Sinai, and hadn't received the Torah, *dayenu*? How can we make sense of this seemingly incongruous statement?

Rashi compares our quandary to one who is passing by a spice store (a bakery works here too). Even if one doesn't buy anything, just the aroma alone gives one a wonderful feeling. It was worth passing by for that alone. And the same holds true, explains Rashi, for this obscure verse of *Dayenu*. Simply being present at Sinai, thereby having the opportunity to breathe in the incredible ever-present "spiritual scent" (my term, not Rashi's), would be enough for us to declare "*dayenu*!"

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik (the Rav) explains our verse in a different, nuanced fashion. He takes us back to the text in the Torah describing our encampment at Har Sinai. There we find (Shemot 19:2): "And Israel camped (*vayichan*) there opposite the mountain." "*Vayichan*" is written in the singular form, meaning "he camped." This

is in sharp contrast to every single other mention of Bnei Yisrael's camping, where the plural "*vayachanu*", meaning "they camped," is used. In his commentary on this verse, Rashi teaches us: Bnei Yisrael camped there "like one man with one heart." In other words, at Har Sinai, we put aside our differences and got along with one another. We were united! Unfortunately, adds Rashi, this was only true so long as we faced the mountain.

This is how the Rav explains our strange verse in *Dayenu*: If God had only brought us to Har Sinai, where we experienced *achdut*, where we focused on what we have in common, on that which brings us together, rather than on our differences, that which tears us apart, indeed we would have reason to burst out in song with "*dayenu*!"

This year, the need for renewed *achdut*, and the actual display of it, is perhaps felt more than ever before in our lifetime. It's even embedded in the slogan of the war: "*Beyachad nanetzach*" - Together we will prevail! And more than ever before, we must all do our best to ensure that this slogan remains a reality beyond the difficult times in which we currently find ourselves. Let us always remember and be cognizant of what we have in common, and let us make sure to always respect all others, despite our differences. If we succeed in this endeavor, if we are once again transformed into a people of *vayichan*, then indeed we will have reason to be thankful to God and sing "*dayenu*!"

Pesach-Matzah-Maror

Pesach: An Uplifting Experience (?)

Avi Mann ~ Shana Bet; Netanya, Israel

In Pesachim (116a-b), the Mishnah states: "Rabban Gamliel would say: Anyone who did not say these three matters on Passover has not fulfilled his obligation: Pesach, Matzah, and Maror…"

In the Gemara, Rava explains that when mentioning the matzah and maror, one must lift them up. However, there is no need to raise the meat. In fact, one should not raise the meat, as he would appear to be violating the prohibition of eating sacrificial meat outside the Temple by doing so.

Rashi adds that we don't lift up the meat because it is merely a remembrance of the actual Korban Pesach. Since it is not the actual korban, we can't say "this Pesach". Instead we say "The Pesach that our forefathers ate…" This is not the case by Matzah and Maror, as we say "This Matzah" or "This Maror".

In *Siach HaGrid* (a Haggadah based on the teachings of the Rav) the Rav notes that Rashi's reasoning for not lifting the meat is due to the fact that it is merely a remembrance of the actual Korban. However, this implies that when we do have the Beit HaMikdash and the actual Korban Pesach, we would lift it up. The Rambam however, seems to disagree. Below is the text of the Rambam in Hilchot Chametz U'Matzah.

The Rambam states: "The table is returned before him and he says: **This Paschal sacrifice** which we eat…" He then says: "**He lifts up the maror** in his hands and says: This maror that we eat…" He continues : "**And he lifts up the matzah** in his hand and says:This matzah which we eat…" Lastly, he adds: **At present**, he says: "The Paschal sacrifice, which our ancestors would eat when the Temple was standing…"(Chametz U'Matzah 8, 4)

In *Siach HaGrid*, the Rav notes that while the Rambam is clearly talking about the times of the Beit HaMikdash - as can be seen from the fact that he says "this Pesach", and later switches to the

present tense - he doesn't require us to lift the Pesach. Thus, the opinions of Rashi and the Rambam seem to oppose each other.

I believe that this dispute between Rashi and the Rambam can be boiled down to two different ways of understanding the action of lifting up the Pesach.

Rashi implies that when we have the actual Korban Pesach, we should lift it up. Perhaps according to Rashi, lifting the meat could be defined as a halachic action used to create and express our relationship with the Korban. This relationship would be qualitatively different from the one achieved through simply talking about the Korban. Therefore, we must lift the Pesach just as we would lift the Matzah and Maror in order to establish a proper relationship with them.

The Rambam however, would seemingly say that while a strong recognition and relationship with the Pesach is essential, lifting it up isn't necessarily required. The Korban Pesach by its very nature is a central focus of what we do on the night of Pesach, and is the main focus of our energy. Therefore, the Rambam would say that we already have a proper relationship with the Pesach, and that there is no need to lift it up. The Rambam seems to say that lifting an item is not considered a purely Halachic action, but rather a means for a person to achieve a proper relationship with that item. Therefore, when the relationship is already extant, there is no need to lift the item.

The Matzah and Maror however, still require lifting. Therefore, the Rambam would seem to say that we do not relate to the Matzah and Maror properly until we lift them up. This difference between the Pesach versus the Matzah and Maror can be seen in the language of the following *Pasuk* in Bamidbar: "They shall eat it (the Pesach) with unleavened bread and bitter herbs" (Bamidbar 9:11). This *pasuk* indicates that within the framework of the Pesach, the Matzah and Maror play a more secondary role. Although the Pesach is the main focus of the night, there is still a need to remind ourselves of the ideas behind the Matzah and Maror as well by lifting them up.

When mentioning the Pesach, we are reminded of our miraculous redemption orchestrated by God, and the freedom that ensued. It is easy to get caught up in the idea of freedom and redemption, and to forget the difficulties which preceded it. It is essential that we recognize the entire process which led to our redemption in all of its detail. The addition of Maror to the Pesach

represents the bitterness and difficulty of our slavery, while the Matzah illustrates the manner in which we left Egypt. Attaching these two items to the Pesach allows us to view the entire process of our redemption as a whole, and to learn the valuable lessons and ideas that it offers. Thus, when focusing on the Pesach, we must "bring in" the ideas of Matzah and Maror in order to emphasize their importance alongside the Pesach.

Bechol Dor v'Dor

Our Spiritual Journey

Meir Orlansky ~ Shana Aleph; Baltimore, Maryland

The Haggadah states: "In every generation after generation, it is one's duty to regard himself as though he personally had gone out of Egypt… Therefore we are obligated to thank… the one who performed… these miracles: He brought us forth from slavery… to redemption. Therefore we shall recite before him a new song."

This requires some explanation. First, what does it mean to say that God brought us, personally, out from Egypt? We didn't leave Egypt ourselves. So why pretend like we did? Second, the explanation for praising God seems to be *ignoring completely* the fact that God brought our fathers out from Egypt. It does not state that the idea that we ourselves were taken out is an *additional* reason we praise God; instead, it is *the* reason we praise Him. Why do we not praise Him for both? Do we not care about our fathers' redemption?

I would argue that the phrasing of this seemingly innocuous paragraph teaches us a central idea about the Seder.

At the time of saying *b'chol dor v'dor*, we have just finished recounting the tale of *Yetziat Mitzrayim*, of our fathers' redemption and its history. This paragraph indicates a transition from the first part of the Seder - a historical retelling - and the second part - our own re-enactment of history and journey to the promised land.

Why are we here, ritualizing on Pesach night? It is not to retell our history, but to praise God for our *current* spiritual journey towards redemption. The above verse is clearly not speaking in the literal sense; we did not personally literally exit Egypt, of course. Rather, God brought us out from Egypt in the spiritual sense: from the metaphorical manifestation of Egypt in our lives.

I would argue that the first part of the Seder is there only, or at least primarily, to enhance our understanding for the second, more important half. Recounting the journey our fathers experienced can better help us understand our journey. We need to visualize ourselves coming out of Egypt because our journey mirrors theirs.

As an example, the Haggadah speaks about how, in every generation, just like in Egypt, the Jews have an enemy who desires to destroy them. Soon after it describes the Jews praying to God, and God answering. The lesson is clear: we too should cry out to God when we are oppressed. There will always be times of hatred and animosity toward us. Our only refuge is in God. God saves us. This is true time and time again, throughout our history.

The nature of our spiritual journeys is complex and different for each of us. There are many possible interpretations of what the Exodus from Egypt represents. There are dozens of parts of the exodus that the Haggadah recounts. Each point toward an uncountable number of metaphorical meanings. The above example is most obviously applicable to our journey as a nation, but can be applied to us as individuals as well. There are many more events from the Exodus whose lessons are connected to both, or to either one. It is our job to draw parallels from them and apply their lessons to our own lives.

It's not that we don't appreciate our father's salvation by God's hand, but that's not what we're here for tonight. We're here to praise God for our journey, for our redemption, for our salvation, which we learn to navigate by reading through our history. May we be successful on our path and spend our next year in Jerusalem.

Hallel

מה נשתנה ההלל הזה מכל ההללות?

What Makes this Hallel Different from All Other Hallels?

Eliezer Graber ~ Madrich; West Hempstead, NY

There's something distinct about Hallel on the Seder night. Beyond being recited at night, this Hallel comprises two parts. It's not just the Hallel Hamitzri, the normal Hallel recited after *shacharit* on every *yom tov*, but also Hallel Hagadol, including the paragraph of *tehillim* containing the list of "*hodu lashem ki tov…*" (Tehillim 136) and other similar *tefillot*. Why is this so? *Mah nishtanah hahallel hazeh mikol hahallelot*?

To understand this, we should analyze the two parts of Hallel. The first part, Hallel Hamitzri, is recited eighteen times a year in Israel, or twenty-one times in the diaspora (Arakhin 10a). According to the Ramban (Hasagot HaRamban on Sefer HaMitzvot, Shorash 1), this Hallel revolves around thanking God for taking us out of Egypt, which explains the name Hallel Hamitzri. While much of it sounds like general praise, it is thematically focused around the paragraph of "*betzet yisrael mimitzrayim*" (Tehillim 114). The three regalim celebrate Bnei Yisrael leaving Egypt, receiving the Torah, and journeying through the desert. Overall, we give praise to God for the special actions He does for the Bnei Yisrael

Hallel Hagadol, to which we also add Nishmat Kol Hai, the concluding praise and *berakha* of *pesukei dezimra* on Shabbat, is more centered around the incredible things that God does for humanity as a whole.

Given the theme of the Seder, it makes sense to recite Hallel Hamitzri. Why is Hallel Hagadol recited specifically on the Seder night within our mitzvah of Hallel? Why not on other *yamim tovim*?

Additionally, why is it placed here, as the final act done prior to drinking the fourth cup of wine?

Rav Soloveitchik, as noted in the Siach HaGrid Haggadah (p. 94), suggests a reason for the halakhic necessity of Hallel Hagadol. He explains that there are two categories of Hallel, as we explained earlier. Hallel thanking God for helping specifically the Bnei Yisrael, and a universal Hallel thanking God for events like creation. There are multiple things that can fit into each category. Based on a gemara in Shabbat (118b), *pesukei dizimra* and *nishmat kol hai*, are considered halakhically Hallel, but the gemara doesn't mention which type. Based on their themes, however, they seem to fit the universal Hallel category, as opposed to Hallel Hamitzri, which obviously focuses on Yetziat Mitzrayim and Bnei Yisrael.

Rav Soloveitchik also draws a parallel between the Seder and another gemara (Berakhot 54a) which discusses a case where someone passes a location where a miracle occured to him. The gemara says that this person needs to make a berakha on all the miracles that occurred to him, not just the ones that occurred in that specific place. The reason offered is that when someone praises God for one thing in particular, he is obligated to expand the praise and mention all things that God did for him.

The parallel for the Seder is that Hallel Hamitzri, normally recited after *shacharit* on *yom tov*, is recited not just as part of our remembrance of leaving Egypt, but as a reenactment, as if we had actually left ourselves. In this context of acting as if we are physically passing the locations where miracles have occurred, we are required to continue our praise of God to include all miracles, and not just discuss the specific ones. This creates a requirement for Hallel not just from the category surrounding Bnei Yisrael, but for universal Hallel as well.

However, instead of continuing with the normal universal Hallel, that of *pesukei dezimra*, we recite Hallel Hagadol. This is because Hallel Hagadol actually contains both themes, it fits into both categories. It starts off thanking God for creating the world, but continues with mentions of the various events that God helped Bnei Yisrael with on the way out of Egypt and into Eretz Yisrael. This idea of the second category of universal Hallel also explains why the concluding *berakha* is *nishmat kol hai*, that of *pesukei dezimra*. By being more universal it encompasses both themes. It is interesting to note, however, that according to the Rashbam, both concluding *berakhot* are

said, the universal *nishmat*, and the specific *yihallelukhah*. The one from Hallel Hamitzri would be recited earlier, and at this point, after Hallel Hagadol, *nishmat* would be said. Many versions of the Haggadah only have *nishmat* as the concluding *berakha*, the more universal of the two.

This idea of expanding our praise on Seder night to include that which is beyond the scope of *Yetziat Mitzrayim* gives an enlightening perspective on what's going on here. Up until this point, the night has been focused almost exclusively on the development of Bnei Yisrael as a nation. Maggid, and the mitzvot of the night, all of which have been done except for the fourth cup, focus on leaving Egypt and the journey of Bnei Yisrael, the founding moments of our nation. It's only here, right before the end, that we take a step back and look at the broader picture.

At this moment, by thanking God for creation and not just for our nationhood, we highlight the context that surrounds us as a nation. Even as a nation with special goals and a relationship with God, we only exist as part of a broader world. Understanding this helps us to understand God's creation and our place in it.

Gaal Yisrael

Not Such a Strange Bracha

Ezra Feder ~ Shana Bet; Far Rockaway, NY

The Maggid section of the Seder involved the telling of the whole story of the Exodus, through all the troubles that we went through, and all the amazing miracles that God performed to save us. Obviously, the only proper response is to burst forth in thanks and praise to God. Imagine what you would want to say. It would probably consist of a long list of all the things that God did for us, all the *makkos, krias yam suf*, taking us out in riches, etc. and many praises and thanks to God for all that he did. However, the bracha we recite for this section does not seem to reflect the above points.

We start off by thanking God for the fact that he redeemed us, *Goel*. What exactly is the idea of *Geula*? Why don't we just thank him for taking us out of Egypt? Is that the same thing as redeeming us?

We then thank God for redeeming our forefathers, as well as that he made us reach this night in order to eat matzah and maror. Why does the fact that He redeemed our forefathers deserve a specific mention? It's true that He did save them, but is that essential to what we are thanking God for? Aren't we really thanking Him for the fact that *we* are free? Additionally, what does it mean that he made us reach this night in order to eat matzah and maror? Is that even true? And even if it is, what does that have to do with the savior from Egypt? Why are we mentioning it?

Next in the bracha, we request that God help us reach other holidays and festivals, and that we should celebrate in the building of His city (Jerusalem) and in His service (in the *Beit Hamikdash*). We also ask that we should eat from the *korban pesach* and other *karbanos* which are offered on the *mizbeach*, and that we will say a new praise on our redemption. What in the world is this doing here? We are in the middle of praising God for taking us out of Egypt, and then we go into a long request for even more seemingly unrelated items?! It seems like we are denying the good that God gave us, and just asking for more!

It would make sense to mention at some point that we hope to rebuild the *Beit Hamikdash*, but is now really the proper time? Why is this praise so different from what we would expect?

In order to understand the purpose of such a bizarre praise, we must re-examine *what* exactly we are praising God for. The story of the Exodus is often viewed as us being a nation of hard-working slaves, with lives filled with pain and suffering, and then God came and gave us our freedom, taking off the heavy burden of physical servitude. However, that way of viewing it is missing the essential point of the Exodus. We do not praise God for "taking us out of Egypt," but rather for "redeeming us from Egypt." What is the meaning of redemption?

There is a whole other lens through which we can see the story, one which captures the main idea and reason for praise of God. We were slaves in Egypt, slaves who had no direction in our lives. We had no knowledge of what it meant to live a proper life, one which is in line with our purpose and leads to the greatest happiness. In addition, even if we did know what we wanted with our lives, we had no method of freeing ourselves from all of our crippling desires; rather we were aimlessly chasing one passion after the other. This was the state of all of mankind. Then God came and saved us. He first did all the Makkos, teaching us the basic foundations which are necessary for a proper life. He taught us about His existence and control over the whole universe. He then started giving us *mitzvot*, which both help teach us what the proper way of life is, and help train us to remove ourselves from the grips of our instinctual desires. This culminated in God giving us the Torah at Har Sinai, which gave us a complete system which can both teach us the best way of life and help us guide our lives in that direction.

With this new understanding of what we are praising God for, we can explain the nature of this bracha. First, we thank God for redeeming us, beyond just taking us out of Egypt, because that is the essential greatness in what God did. To give us a system of Torah and *mitzvot* which teach us how to live the best lives possible is much more praiseworthy than simply physically taking us out of Egypt. The reason why we praise God for not just freeing us but also our forefathers, and also for making us reach this night to eat matzah and maror follows from this point. If God just took out one generation from Egypt and taught them this way of life, it would not last very long. In order for it to become a lasting thing you need a *mesorah*, or

tradition. It is essential to the Exodus that it was done in a way which will be remembered. One of the ways by which God did that was by establishing one night a year which is dedicated to commemorating the Exodus, and specifically commemorating it through objects of mitzvah, the very system which we received from God. We are not only thanking God for teaching this way of life, but for creating a system like this which will last and reach us, today, thousands of years later.

Next we transition into a request from God to build the *Beit HaMikdash*. Why? When God gave us this amazing system of Torah, a big part of it is tied to that which we unfortunately are missing today. The system is not complete, which takes away from the value of what we have. If we were to praise God for the amazing system which God gave us and were to ignore that fact, it would be as if we are denying that part of the system. We are thanking God for the amazing way of life which he taught us and had us transmit through our *mesorah*, but a part of that system is missing. If we don't mention that, it would be as if we are saying that we have the complete perfect system as is.

Therefore, in mentioning the praise for the Torah which God gave us, we must recognize the part of the Torah which we are missing, and recognize that we would be in a better state with it back in force. In addition, the very fact that we recognize what we are lacking and request that God give us this missing aspect serves as an implicit praise to God. God gave the Torah and *mitzvot* and taught about this way of life to the extent that we recognize the great loss of what we are missing.

Only someone who is taught the proper life by Torah would be on a level to recognize and long for the *Beit Hamikdash* to be rebuilt. With this new view of what the greatness of the exodus was hopefully we can use that to try to put into practice this amazing system that we were given by God.

Rachtzah

The Order of Rachtzah

Moshe Levin ~ Shana Bet; Teaneck, New Jersey

It would seem that the Jewish ritual of hand washing during *Leyl Pesach* contains one question: Why wash our hands? Ah—simple! Chullin 106a states:

> ***Rav Idi bar Avin says*** *that* ***Rav Yitzḥak bar Ashiyan says:*** *The obligation of* ***washing hands*** *before eating* ***non-sacred*** *food is* ***due to an ancillary*** *decree on account of* ***terumah.*** *And to paraphrase the Rashi there:* ***...In order for*** *the Kohanim* ***to be accustomed to always washing their hands before eating Terumah,*** *the Rabbis* ***made a decree that*** *everyone should wash their hands, even non-Kohanim, when eating* ***non-censecretaed foods***

And even though no *Kohanim* are eating *Terumah* today, we still wash our hands in remembrance, or if you're more practical, so that we know what the *Halacha* is when the third *Beis HaMikdash* is built. (Aruch Hashulchan, OC 158: 2, 3).

But wait—was this not already fulfilled during *Urchatz*? Not actually. Water is one of the seven liquids *Halachah* says is a modem for *Tumah*. So, if our hands are *Tamei* and we touch *Karpas* dipped in saltwater, it will become *Tamei*, we wash our hands just in case. Of course, it's okay for us to become *Tamei*, but we need to be *Tahor* during the *Seder* in order to eat the *Korban Pesach*. And God forbid that the *Korban Pesach* isn't plattered before us during the *Seder,* we still wash our hands in remembrance. An additional *Takkanah* was instituted before bread ("non-censecrated foods" meant before a meal, and bread is the food that designates any act of eating as a meal) as another remembrance for what Jews used to do, and that's what we do during *Rachtzah*.

However, this is by no means a normal night; *Netilas Yadayim* is divided into two parts, *Rachtzah* and *Urchatz,* and it behooves us to wonder why these steps cannot be combined into one hand washing that covers *Karpas* and Matzah, such that we either move the meal to *Karpas* or vice versa.

(An examination on the *Seder* of *Karpas* and *Motzi/Matzah* in the *Seder* is in *Seder* in *Seder* to understand their *Seder* in the *Seder*. *B'Seder*. Translation: An examination on the order of *Karpas* and *Motzi/Matzah* in the 'Order' must be had, in order to understand their nature in the 'Order'. OK.)

It's easy to understand the placement of the festive meal. As a result of the recitation of the Exodus, the natural reaction of triumph and freedom results in partying, if you will. Much like *Purim*, the Halachic form of this reaction is the meal, which requires washing and bread beforehand.

Karpas is a bit harder—the custom originated from a ye olde practice to have dipped vegetables before one began his meal. In that case, we see that *Karpas* must occur before *Motzi/Matzah,* which must occur after *Maggid*. This formulation pushes the question into a dark Brooklyn alley, where we and the question both know the absence of any escape.

Why, then, can't *Karpas* occur after *Maggid* and *Motzi/Matzah*?

Rabbi Ziring suggests that the dipping of *Karpas* before the meal renders the *Maror's* dipping auxiliary (as all dipping should have occurred before the meal with *Karpas*) thereby kickstarting the 'night of surprises' for child education.

However, we could have chosen any strange custom of ours to begin our pedagogical festivities; why the *Karpas*?

One may suggest that *Chazal* desired a transformative process of harsh slavery to lavish freedom expressed via interactive, sensual phenomena throughout the night. Thus, just as *Shulchan Orech* is a reaction to the freedom felt upon concluding *Magid*, the saltiness induces a mindset of sadness and slavery that flows directly into the beginning of the Exodus.

Motzi Matzah

Matzah on Pesach

Noah Radzik ~ Shana Aleph; Woodmere, NY

It is commonly known that on Pesach we eat matzah, a simple combination of flour and water. Anyone who knows me, knows that my day is not complete without my daily dose of Kinder eggs. Can one infuse the Matzah with liquid Kinder chocolate?

When looking at this question of utmost importance, we need to separate this into two questions: A) Does adding in additional ingredients affect the process of fermentation and make the dough become Chametz, and if not B) can it be used to fulfill the unique Mitzvah of eating Matzah at the Seder?

> *Rabba bar bar Ḥana said that Reish Lakish said: If dough is kneaded with wine, oil, and honey, one is not liable for its leavening; it is not considered dough in terms of the prohibition of leavening that leads to the punishment of karet.*
> *(Pesachim, 35a)*

We see that at the minimum the gemara claims that adding in a sweetener like honey, downgrades the prohibition by preventing the possibility of Karet. The gemara then presents an argument regarding that more lenient status.

> *One may not knead dough for the Paschal offering with wine, oil, or honey. And if one kneaded dough with them, Rabban Gamliel says it shall be immediately burned, and the Sages say one may eat it.*
> *(Pesachim, 36a)*

According to the Sages, the majority opinion, it seems that it would be permissible to eat on Pesach. However, the Rishonim argue as to the scope of this lenience:

Rashi (s.v. Ein Lashin), explains that the argument between the sages is dependent on the ability to ensure that it will not become Chametz. According to Rabban Gamliel, the added ingredients hasten the fermentation process and as such there is a higher concern that it will become chametz. The sages disagree however arguing it is not a concern. According to both positions though, the mixture still has the potential to become chametz. Conversely, Rabbeinu Tam, (Pesachim 35B d"h Umei) contends that the position of the Sages is that when it is a pure mixture of flour and fruit juice then the mixture will never become chametz, however when the fruit juice in added in addition to water, then it actually hastens the fermentation and as such must be burned immediately.

The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim Siman 462) rules in accordance with the position of Rabbeinu Tam, and as such, permits the inclusion of fruit juice, honey, or sugar in matzah dough so long as there is no water in the mixture as well. Conversely, the Ramah is strict (presumably like the position of Rashi.)

My brethren of Sephardic descent should not celebrate just yet though! While it may be permissible to eat Kinder Matzah on Pesach based on the above, the above Shulchan Aruch also rules that they would still be invalid for Seder use. This is based on the gemara which states:

> *Rabbi Akiva says: The repetition of matzot matzot serves to amplify, and teaches that all types of matza may be eaten on Passover. The baraita asks: If so, what is the meaning when the verse states leḥem oni, poor man's bread? The baraita answers: This phrase excludes dough that was kneaded with wine, oil, or honey, which is not classified as poor man's bread and therefore cannot be used for this mitzvah.*
> *(Pesachim 36a)*

So it would seem that in order to fulfill the mitzvah of eating matzah you must have "*lechem oni*", poor man's bread on the first night of Pesach. Since adding extra things to matzah would make it a rich man's bread (matza ashira) instead, no Kinder Matzah for the sephardim the first night. So despite Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews disagreeing on what matzah you can eat on Pesach they are unified in their stance against Kinder Matzah at the Seder.

Maror

Maror: Suffering or Mercy?

Aryeh Pasch ~ Shana Bet; Baltimore, MD

The maror we eat at the Seder is commonly thought to symbolize the bitterness of the time the Jews spent in Egypt. But is this the only understanding? The Mishna in Pesachim (39a) discusses what may be used as maror. Later on (39a), Rav Aha, son of Rava is asked why he seeks a particular herb. He was searching for "*merirata*", meaning "the most bitter herb", and was told not only that the Mishna teaches "*hazeret*" first, but Beit Shmuel and Rabbi Oshaya teach it is optimal to use at the Seder. Rava then raises the question: What is *hazeret*?

The gemara defines *hazeret* as "*hassa,*" lettuce, and provides two reasons as to why this is relevant. The first answer is that *hassa* is a similar word to *hass* (mercy) and serves as a remembrance of the mercy God had on the Jews. The second answer cites the verse in Exodus 1:14, which states that the Egyptians "embittered [our] lives". From this we learn the Egyptians are likened to bitter herbs. Rabbi Yochanan teaches from this verse that "just as these bitter herbs are soft at first and harsh in the end, so too, the Egyptians were soft at first, but were harsh in the end" (39a). This analogy to our time in Egypt explains why lettuce is the most preferable item to use for maror.

We find an interesting *machloket* amongst the *acharonim* regarding this gemara. The Shulchan Aruch (OC 473:5), as well as many other *poskim,* hold that *hazeret,* or lettuce, is the ideal food for maror. The Chacham Tzvi also states that it possesses all the signs mentioned in the gemara for the identity of maror (Chacham Tzvi 119). This all appears to be very solid support for *hazeret* as lettuce; however, the Ridbaz, as well as the Chazon Ish, disagree. The Ridbaz states that lettuce does not have a bitter taste and therefore does not fulfill one's *chiyuv* (based on Yerushalmi Berachot 6). The Chazon Ish goes as far as to argue that the bitter taste is the *ikkar* (essential) part of the mitzvah (124).

Organizing the two opinions, it appears that Chacham Tzvi believes maror teaches about how Egypt's bitterness shows God's mercy, while Ridbaz believes the focus of maror is the negative aspects of our time in Egypt. Chacham Tzvi draws support from the Gemara likening *hassa* to God's mercy, and the analogy to our time in Egypt. God showed us mercy by only subjecting the Jews to oppression after a period of time. The Ridbaz believes the lesson of maror is in regards to the suffering. Since the bitterness of the maror teaches what the Ridbaz holds is essential, it is impossible to fulfill one's obligation without bitter maror. Through this argument, we derive two unique conceptions of the obligation of maror.

Korekh

Korech: Sandwich of the Ages

Ari Zuntz ~ Shana Aleph; Brooklyn, NY

Passover is a quintessential representation of *Edut*, symbolic Mitzvos that connect us to pivotal moments in Jewish history. The Seder commemorates our journey from Egyptian slavery to freedom, primarily through the rituals of *Pesach*, *Matzah* and *Maror*. These are eaten in sequence, fulfilling their individual obligations. However, following these is the ritual of *Korech*, in which Matzah and Maror are combined. Why is this done?

The foundation for Korech lies in the instructions for those who missed the initial Pesach offering. The Torah states: "On the fourteenth day of the second month at evening they shall keep it; *on Matzos and Maror they shall eat it*" (Bamidbar 9:11). Notably, the specific word used here is not *Im*, "with," but instead *Al*, "on," a subtle difference which provides a precedent for eating them together. In analysis of this, the Talmud in *Pesachim* suggests that the obligations of Matzah and Maror may be fulfilled either separately or together, as practiced by Hillel. In the Seder, we eat them first separately, then combined. As their obligations have already been fulfilled, this seemingly redundant practice hints at a deeper meaning behind the Korech sandwich.

Pesach, Matzah and Maror, by themselves, each hold profound symbolic meaning. The Pesach offering, sacrificed annually in the Temple, recalled the lamb offered in the final days of the exile. Matzah, unleavened bread, represents the hasty exodus and newfound freedom in which it was first eaten. Maror, the bitter herbs, relive the harshness of servitude. Together, they tell the story of the sentiment of slavery and exodus.

Korech, then, becomes a powerful symbol. Matzah and Maror, representing freedom and hardship, are joined together. This reflects the historical reality of the Jewish experience, a constant oscillation between freedom and exile, self-rule and oppression. King Solomon's reign exemplified a peak of autonomy, but it was followed

by chapters of division and later foreign domination. Even during the Second Temple period, despite a degree of self-governance, foreign rule was a constant reality. This duality continues today, with the horrors of persecution and anti-Semitic violence, culminating in the Holocaust, giving rise to the reestablishment of Jewish national autonomy in Israel.

By eating the Korech sandwich we acknowledge this complexity. The combination of Matzah and Maror serves as a reminder of our historical reality in which freedom and hardship are often entwined, but also of how in the face of the bitterness of hardship we are able to persevere. Hillel's flavorful precursor to today's shawarma sandwich is a symbol of Jewish resilience. It represents the spirit of the Jewish people, which has sustained us through millennia of trial and continues to inspire us as we face the challenges of today.

Tzafun

The Pivotal Transition of Tzafun

Rabbi Dr. Dvir Ginsberg ~ Senior Rosh HaYeshiva

The word "*afikoman*" often conjures up scenes of hiding matzah and rewarding those who find the piece. While this practice could enhance a child's interest in the Seder experience, one should understand the fundamental role this part of the Seder has in the entire evening. Tzafun is much more than giving gifts and swallowing that final piece of food.

The source of *afikomam* can be found in the Mishneh in Pesachim, where we are presented with a cryptic directive (119b):

"We may not have afikoman after Pesach"

What is "*afikoman*"? There is a debate in the Talmud as to the meaning of the word and subsequent halachic requirement. Our focus will be on the position of Shmuel as understood by various commentators.

The Talmud presents an even more opaque position:

> *Samuel said: E.g., mushrooms for myself and pigeons for Abba.*

What is Shmuel referring to?

Rashbam understands Shmuel as understanding "*afikoman*" as the removing of the main course and bringing in sweets – in other words, the serving of dessert. What is the prohibition cited in the Mishnah? The Sages decreed that one may not eat foods (what this specifically refers to is a separate debate) after the consumption of the Korban Pesach "in order to not lose the taste of the Korban Pesach and because its law is to be consumed 'on' satiation". The latter part of Rashbam's commentary relates to the halacha where the Korban Pesach must be that which brings a person into the state of satiation. Therefore, to ensure this state is achieved, one cannot eat after the completion of the Korban Pesach. Why is this such an important idea that it demands an additional Rabbinical decree?

Baal Meor (Pesachim 26b) questions this entire line of reasoning, as why would it matter if the taste of the Korban Pesach is or is not present. He notes that during the time of the Temple, the Jews would gather within the walls of Jerusalem to consume their sacrificial meat. As such, there was not a lot of space, and immediately after completing the meal, people would head up to the roofs to recite Hallel. The Sages were then concerned that people would not remember to recite Hallel. They forbade eating after the Korban Pesach, as the flavor of this meat would serve as a reminder to recite Hallel. How does retaining the flavor of Korban Pesach in one's mouth serve to accomplish this objective?

Orchot Chaim (1:28) offers another explanation, conflating the Korban Pesach with matza. One must not consume any food after the end of the meal, as the flavor in one's mouth serves as an indicator that the obligation to recall the story of the Exodus is an all-night phenomenon. What idea is Orchot Chaim bringing forth?

If one took a broad look at the Seder night, it would be tempting to see two distinct halves. The first half is dominated by the recitation and review of the miracles and wonders of the night, the story of the Exodus. Once this half is completed, "dinner" begins, where the rest of the night is defined by a savory culinary experience. It is possible that, according to all three of the above commentators, the Sages sought to banish this view of the Seder night, allowing us to see a thematically fluid event.

During the times of the Temple, the Korban Pesach took center stage, a universal sacrificial obligation, culminating in its consumption that very evening. Normally, the importance of a meal is defined by the introduction of bread (or matza), reflected in the necessity of reciting Birkat HaMazon afterwards. At the Seder, the meal is defined by the Korban Pesach. One could even propose that the Korban Pesach is an essential idea in the entire Seder evening. To ensure one is cognizant of this reality, the Sages enter the scene and demand it be eaten at the end of the meal. Being the food that brings one to satiation will cause a reflection on the meal itself, relating to the Korban Pesach in its proper place in the Seder evening.

Baal Meor takes a different approach. It would be normal to assume that the completion of the Seder meal would bring the evening to a close. While the meal itself demands Birkat HaMazon, once completed people would go their separate ways. Yet there is something different about the Seder night. The consumption of the

Korban Pesach demands a response by the Jewish nation, and this is captured in the recitation of Hallel. Rather than simply see the Korban Pesach through a gastronomic lens, the Jewish people must see it as reflecting the unique relationship Hashem has with the nation. To ensure there is a natural transition from meal to Hallel, the Sages prohibit any eating after the Korban Pesach, as the flavor of the meat will serve as a reminder of the unique function of this sacrifice.

Finally, Orchot Chaim adds a slightly different perspective. When looking at the various foods of the Seder night, there are two identities present. The first is how each item is an object of mitzvah, and the fulfillment of the mitzvah occurs through consumption. The second centers around the role these foods play in the telling of the story of the Exodus. For example, there is are separate obligations to consume matzah, maror and the Korban Pesach. In this framework, the foods are functioning as objects of mitzvah, no different than a lulav or tefillin. Concurrently, these foods are props for the story of the Exodus, representative of the events of the evening. We point to these objects throughout the night, and their presence on the table throughout reflects this other role. The culmination of this second framework occurs with the famous dictum of R' Gamliel, where these items are held while reciting their relationship to the Exodus. That said, Orchot Chaim sees a similar problem as Baal Meor. The natural ending point of the evening would come with the completion of the meal. The story of the Exodus took place in the first half of the night, coming to an end with "dinner". To disabuse us of this mistaken assumption, the Sages insist the flavor of the meal continues to be present. The first framework, that of objects of mitzvah, is completed with the consumption of the various items. Since the obligation of reviewing the story of the Exodus is tied to the entire evening, the second framework, that of these objects serving as buttresses for the story, is still extant.

Yes, the tradition of gift giving for the "found" matzah is a common association with Tzafun. Yet when we investigate the unique rabbinical commandment at this point in the Seder evening, a whole new perspective emerges. While the end of the meal should bring with it a finality of eating, as per the requirement, one should see an overarching continuation of the themes of the night.

Barech

The Mini-Seder All Year Round

Moshe Rosenthal ~ Shana Bet; West Hempstead, NY

Blessings capture experiences and frame them in ways that give *hodaa*, thanks, to God. The Talmud describes the makeup of Birchas HaMazon, Grace after Meals.

> *Rabbi Nachman said: Moses instituted for Israel the blessing of HaZon, The One Who Feeds, when the manna descended for them. Joshua instituted the blessing of HaAretz, The Land, when they entered the Land of Israel. David and Solomon instituted Bonei Yerushalayim, The One Who Builds Jerusalem. David instituted "…on Israel Your people and on Jerusalem Your city…" and Solomon instituted "…on the great and Holy Temple…" They [Sanhedrin] instituted the blessing, HaTov VeHaMeitiv, The One Who Is Good and Does Good, at Yavne in reference to the slain of Beitar.* (Berachos 48b)

Birchas HaMazon contains multiple elements. As opposed to most blessings in Judaism, which target just one specific topic, Birchas HaMazon discusses four different ideas. They highlight the following concepts: God nourishing man and the entire world, God giving the land of Israel to the Jewish people, Jerusalem and the Temple, and thanks to God for preserving the bodies of Beitar from rotting and for allowing them to be buried. Why is there a need to include four separate themes in Birchas HaMazon? Furthermore, since only the first blessing of Birchas HaMazon, HaZon, gives thanks to God for providing food, it seems that it is the essential blessing on eating a meal of bread. If so, what is the function of the other three blessings?

To answer this question, it is helpful to note a key distinction between the first and the last three blessings. While the first one discusses God as Nourisher of the whole world by means of *hashgacha klalis*, the natural order, the last three blessings view the relationship

between Hashem and the Jewish people through the means of *hashgacha pratis*, special providence. What follows from this observation is that there are two possible reasons to have the last three blessings of Birchas HaMazon. Either there is some problem with only thanking God on the natural order, and therefore Halacha mandates thanking God also on His particular involvement with human affairs; or, the blessing on *hashgacha klalis* is sufficient praise, just that once the Torah requires a blessing on food, Halacha uses it as a *pesach*, an opening, to give *hodaa* in areas without independent Halachic structures facilitating formal thanksgiving.

Why would one think that hodaa on just hashgacha klalis would or would not be adequate to mention when thanking God in Birchos HaMazon? The Talmud (Megillah 18a; Makkos 10a; Horyos 13b;) expounds a verse (Psalms 106:2) that "Who is the one fit to speak the mighty acts of God? The one who can pronounce all His praises." The Talmud lists many other derashos focusing on the concept that giving a little praise to God is worse than reciting no praise at all. The reason for this is that attempting to praise God—given the human limits in terms of understanding God—necessarily produces a praise of God that is incomplete. If someone partially praises God, they imply they have sufficiently praised God while in fact minimizing the degree of His praise. If that's the case, it seems clear to say that by Birchos HaMazon, merely recognizing hashgacha klalis is a lack of recognition. But could one entertain the possibility that hodaa on the natural order is sufficient thanks, and Halacha just used Birchas HaMazon to address other hodaos of God as well? To better understand the nature of the relationship between the first and last three blessings of Birchos HaMazon, we must find the specific address of the blessing of HaZon.

One understanding of the focus of the blessing of HaZon is that it emphasizes the method of producing food. After eating a meal of bread, one must recognize the wisdom of nature in its ability to make food. Halacha doesn't allow one to go through the physical experience of eating and satiation alone. Rather, it requires one to appreciate the wisdom of how hashgacha klalis operates, how the laws of nature work and produce satiating food. If the thanksgiving of HaZon is on the wisdom of God's method of intervention, it is improper to just recognize general providence. Rather, it is necessary to also give notice to God's method of special intervention through the other three blessings.

However, another way of understanding the address of the blessing of HaZon is that it aims to teach the idea that God sustains everyone. When someone eats a food of sustenance like bread, it replenishes the body and makes one feel strong. To curb a sense of self-importance associated with a strong and healthy body, the blessing of HaZon emphasizes the effect of hashgacha klalis, the fact that God gives food to everyone. When one knows that everyone else receives what they themselves receive, the specialness of that thing is diminished. The blessing teaches that sustaining the body is just a natural process aimed at maintaining survival of the entire world. It removes the individual from the equation, thereby lowering the sense of power felt by the experience of eating. According to this understanding of the first blessing, just saying HaZon would suffice in terms of correcting an improper attitude that one might gain from eating. However, Halacha saw Birchas HaMazon also as a frequent opportunity to additionally give thanks to God for special providence.

The second blessing, Birchas HaAretz, consists of many examples of hashgacha between Hashem and the Jewish people. It mentions God redeeming the Jews from Egypt, giving them the land of Israel, Bris Milah, and Torah. Once the text mentions these aspects of God's relationship with the Jewish nation, why is there a need to add a third blessing, one for Jerusalem and the Temple? Why not just include it in the blessing of HaAretz?

It seems that while both blessings address God as personally engaging with the Jewish people, the nature of each intervention is different. Birchas HaAretz refers solely to God's intervention in the past by making covenants with our forefathers requiring us to circumcise, promising us that He will bring us out of Egypt and ultimately bring us into the land of Israel. Likewise, the Torah was given to our ancestors as a "morasha," an heritage (Deuteronomy 33:4). These institutions cannot be altered because they were promised under contractual agreements to our ancestors who merited to have God make these covenants with them.

In contrast to Birchas HaAretz which illustrates the continuous effects of God's actions of the past, Bonei Yerushalayim tells of hashgacha in the present. Rashba (Berachos 48b) explains the development of the structure of the text of Birchas HaMazon and specifically Bonei Yerushalayim.

The structure of the blessings the Rabbis structured certainly wasn't the same one before and after conquering the land and

building the Temple. Clearly, the Rabbis didn't institute to thank God for the land God caused them to inherit and the built Temple in Jerusalem before each event occurred. Likewise, with the blessing of Bonei Yerushalayim, when the Jews had the Temple, their text requested to maintain the kingdom, the Temple, and to continue the rule of the land. Afterward, we request to return the kingdom and to build the Temple.

The maintenance of the Jewish kingdom, the Jewish rule over the land of Israel, and the Temple, all are things that constantly depend on the level of the relationship between the Jews and God. If the Jewish people follow the Torah and have knowledge of God, then they will merit to have the kingdom, Jerusalem, and the Temple. If not, they lose their privilege to these merits. Because hashgacha for these areas is dependent on the Jewish people's religious state, there exists an element of bakasha, request, in this blessing. Nowadays, we start this blessing with the word rachem, meaning God have mercy on us. This is because ultimately, the right of the Jews to land, kingdom, and Temple isn't cemented on past promises God made to our ancestors, but rather it is based on our current state of religiosity.

Rishonim (Ra'ah, Ritvah, Tosfos HaRosh Berachos 48b) point out that the reason the Rabbis instituted the blessing of HaTov VeHaMeitiv was because it is entirely hodaah, thanks and recognition. By consisting entirely of hodaa, it is reasonable why the Rabbis could add a blessing to Birchas HaMazon which in essence is hodaa. Even if it is broadly thematically related to the rest of Birchas HaMazon by being only hodaah, what reason did the Rabbis see fit to add it specifically to Birchas HaMazon?

Tosfos HaRosh (Berachos 48a) quotes the reason for adding HaTov VeHaMeitiv to Birchas HaMazon because it is entirely hodaah. He adds another point from the Yerushalmi that "when Beitar was destroyed, the pride of Israel was cut down and would not return until the Son of David [Messiah] would come. Therefore, they juxtaposed it [HaTov VeHaMeitiv] with Bonei Yerushalyim." This reason gives insight into the reason the Rabbis instituted this blessing in Birchas HaMazon in general, and specifically next to Bonei Yeruhalayim.

After that the bodies of the slain Bar Kochva revolt were eventually allowed by the Romans to be buried and the bodies miraculously had not rotten since the loss of the battle at Beitar, the Rabbis recognized that this event needed recognition. However, the Rabbis realized a struggle people would have in that they would not

be able to remember the tova, good act, done by God without recalling the context which brought about this kindness by God. The fact that the last great effort for Jewish sovereignty in the Second Temple Period was crushed would cloud the hodaa. Therefore, to facilitate proper recognition of the chesed Hashem, kindness of God, without bringing in a feeling of loss for the Jewish nation's dominion, the sad aspect was given an outlet through Bonei Yerushalayim. Since the kingdom, Jerusalem, and the Temple have their own blessing incorporating a bakasha to return them, one won't recall the negative context of Bietar when mentioning the kindness God did at that time. Rather, they will channel their sorrows toward a hopeful future of the Messianic age when the Jewish people's previous state of glory will be returned. In this way, the Rabbis were able to capture this tremendous tova God performed for them without having the people harbor feelings of sadness and loss for the Jewish rule that would hinder their ability to recognize the good done for them.

The whole institution of Birchas HaMazon is essentially one of hodaa, recognition of the good God does for us in our lives. It starts off with reflecting on the method in which God relates to us to provide us with food, through hashgacha klalis, nature. This blessing curbs feelings of human power and importance that a rejuvenated person often feels. Birchos HaMazon continues with thanks to God for the hashgacha of the past that still affects us to this day. Then, it turns to hashgacha pratis on the Jewish people that is necessitated by our proper conduct. Even after the Biblical Birchas HaMazon was set, the Rabbis saw the event at Beitar and recognized the need to formalize hodaa to God for what He did. They corrected the sense of helplessness that would cloud that thanksgiving by juxtaposing it with Bonei Yerushalayim, giving the Jews hope toward the future.

The night of Pesach consists of telling the story of the Jewish Exodus from Egypt. As a response to the experience of leaving Egypt cultivated by the maggid, telling of the Exodus story, and the mitzvos halayla, commandments of the night, we respond in praise, Hallel. Likewise, after a meal of bread, we react to the experience of going from a state of hunger to one of satiation with hodaa to Hashem through Birchas HaMazon.

Shefoch

Wrong Place, Wrong Time; Right Place, Future Time

Menachem Weiss ~ Shana Aleph; Lawrence, NY

At first glance, the placement of *Shefoch Chamatcha* before Hallel is strange. Why are we asking Hashem things like, "Pour your wrath upon the nations that did not know You and upon the kingdoms that did not call upon Your Name! Since they have consumed Ya'akov and laid waste his habitation" in this part of the Seder? Wouldn't it seem more fitting for *Shefoch Chamatcha* to be where we recount Hashem's punishments, like during the *Makkot*?

We can understand this better by taking a closer look at the structure of Hallel. The Yerushalmi in Megillah (18b) separates Hallel into distinct sections: the first part, focused on the historical salvation of Israel, is about the past, while the following chapters, *Lo Lanu* and on, focus on the future. *Shefoch Chamatcha* is an introduction to the second part of Hallel, like how *Lefichach Anachnu Chayavim* introduces the part of Hallel before the meal. It serves as a segway into thinking about the future, where Hashem pours out his anger onto those who oppose his reign.

Essentially, *Shefoch Chamatcha* serves as a transition between the two parts of Hallel at the Seder night, marking a shift from remembering past salvation to praying for future divine intervention. *Shefoch Chamatcha* encourages us to think about how Hashem's promise of justice and rescue endures. During the Passover Seder, as we retell the story of the Exodus from Egypt, we not only recount historical events but also reflect on their broader implications for our lives today. *Shefoch Chamatcha* prompts us to consider the timeless relevance of Hashem's promise of justice and rescue, not just for our ancestors in ancient times, but for us in our current situation as well.

At the Seder, where we gather with family and friends to recount the story of our liberation from slavery, *Shefoch Chamatcha* invites us to introspect on the state of the world around us. It

encourages us to confront the injustices and challenges that persist in our society, while simultaneously reaffirming our belief in Hashem's ultimate sovereignty and the eventual triumph of righteousness. Thus, contemplating *Shefoch Chamatcha* at the Seder serves as a call to action, reminding us of our responsibility to strive for justice and to work towards a better future, guided by the enduring hope of Hashem's promise.

This strengthens our belief that God's supreme authority will triumph over any challenges to His sovereignty. It's crucial to keep in mind that God is an active presence in our lives, especially during challenging times, so that we can maintain hope for the future.

Kos Shel Eliyahu

The Cup for Eliyahu

Rabbi Chaim Ozer Chait ~ Rosh HaYeshiva Emeritus

One of the mysteries of the Sedar is the *kos shel Eliyahu*. It does not appear in the Gemara, and many wonder what the origin is. Both the Mishnah Berurah and the Aruch HaShulchan (SA OH 480:10) bring down the practice, but do not explain its reason.

The Gr"a offers the following solution based on the argument between the *rishonim* if there should only be four cups of wine or five. This is based on the standard version of the text in Pesachim (117b) that quotes the Mishnah that states: "On the fourth (cup) we complete the Hallel as well as *Birkas Hashir* (*Hodu lashem ki tov* etc.)." The Rif's text (26b *bedapei haRif*) states, however: "On the fifth (cup) we say '*Hodu lashem ki tov*." Generally, when we have a debate of such a nature, the solution is to be *machmir*, and follow the stricter view; by drinking five cups, it would appear to fulfill both opinions. However, in our situation, this would be problematic, as there exists a principle that one may not add additional cups of wine.on to the standard requirement. Drinking the fifth cup would violate this rule according to Tosfos, who is of the opinion that we are to have only four cups of wine. The Gr"a goes on to explain that since we do not rule out the opinion of the Rif, we make a compromise and put the fifth cup on the table but we do not drink from it. By placing it there, we are stating the debate over the fifth cup will be solved when Eliyahu comes. Hence, the name "The Cup of Eliyahu."

The Rambam takes a different approach in solving the problem of the "Fifth Cup." He writes (Hilchot Chametz UMatzah 8:10), "The fourth cup is drunk and nothing else is taken the rest of that night except water. One may, however, take a fifth cup of wine and recite over it the Great Hallel (i.e., Psalm 136). This cup, unlike the preceding four cups, is not obligatory."

At first glance the Rambam seems to be self-contradictory. He begins by saying that after the fourth cup "nothing else is taken the rest of the night except water," but then he immediately states

"one may however take a fifth cup of wine." How can we understand this?

To understand the Rambam we must go back to the origin of the obligation of drinking four cups of wine. Rashi points out in the Gemara Pesachim (99b), the four cups of wine are to correspond to the four expression of redemption that are found in Shemot: "I shall bring you out, I shall rescue you, I shall redeem you, I shall take you to Me for a people" (6:6-7). However, in verse 8 there also exist the idea of the ultimate goal of the Jewish people, "I shall bring you unto the land that I swore to give it to Avraham, to Yitzchak, and to Yaakov." In other words, the ultimate goal is to bringing the Jewish people into the land of Israel. In these few sentences, we have two ideas. 1) The redemption of the Jewish people, from bondage to freedom, and this is expressed the night of the Seder by drinking the four cups of wine. 2) The ultimate goal of the redemption of the Jewish people, to bring them to the land of Israel, and this is expressed by drinking the fifth cup.

With this we may understand the Rambam. The prohibition to add an additional cup is to stray away from the theme of redemption, an essential component to the theme of the Seder.

The fifth cup, the ultimate and final goal of the Jewish people, settling in the Land of Israel, the land that G-d promised our forefathers, does not violate this dictum. Therefore, the Rambam says "it is not obligatory" and he leaves it to the discretion of the conductor of the Seder.

Applying the approach of the Gra to the Rambam will now help us understand the origin for the cup for Eliyahu. The Rambam doesn't tell us which practice he prefers. Unsure of what to do, the compromise solution was to place a cup on the table with the understanding that no one will drink from it. When Eliyahu ushers in the coming of the Messiah, he will surely advise us what to do, hence the name "the Cup for Eliyahu."

Hallel Part II

Praise and Thanks

Noah Berlinger ~ Shana Aleph; Spring Valley, NY

One of the last parts of the Seder, after finishing the meal and *benching*, is the second half of Hallel. Hallel happens to include a very interesting set of chapters in Psalms (113-118), but something in particular pops out to me about one of them. As I looked over this chapter, I realized it has something pretty profound to say about Pesach and Judaism in general.

Firstly, this chapter stands out by just how short it is; it is the shortest chapter in all of Tanach, with only two *pesukim*. In fact, when people say Hallel, they aren't even aware that it is its own chapter, since it is so short, and it is thus usually read as a quasi-introduction to the next part. The chapter I am referring to is Psalms 117. It goes like this:

> "Praise (*hallelu*) the name of the Lord, all nations (*goyim*); extol Him (*shabechuhu*) all peoples (*ha'umim*). Since His kindness has overwhelmed us and the truth of the Lord is forever. Hallelujah!"

The first question to ask, and many of the commentaries do, is, what is the difference between *goyim* and *umim* here? Both of the words mean nations. Are they just meant to be poetic synonyms, or is there a deeper message? As it turns out, the Artscroll Tehillim series offers three completely different (and for one of them, really strange) interpretations of the possible differences between these two words:

1. *Goyim* represents those who oppress Israel, and *umim* represents those who do not. All will praise the Jews in the future to come, even formerly hostile nations.
2. *Goyim* are small, unknown nations, while *umim* (which really says "*ha-umim*") refers to the well-known major nations of the world.
3. *Goyim* represent the angels above, and *umim* are the nations down below.

4. I'll add a fourth here, of the Malbim on Genesis 25:23, who explains the prophecy to Rebecca that there are two "*goyim/umim*" in her womb, that *goyim* refer to mere collections of people who form a nation, while *umim* refer to nations composed through shared religious beliefs.

It is interesting to note that in all these answers (with the exception of number three, for obvious reasons), the word *goyim* always seems to have a somewhat negative understanding, while *umim* always seems to be a positive. Taking this broader approach, I think there might be another answer to this question. But first, let me ask a few more questions.

Is there any difference between the two types of praise in the chapter, *hallelu* vs. *shabechuhu*? They both mean praise, so why use different words to express it?

And then there is the question in terms of meaning. Why would it be that either *goyim* or *umim* would praise God for the kindness He has shown the Jewish people? Certainly throughout history, we have seen our fair share of countries that hate us. It does not seem to come naturally that nations would see what good happens to us and they turn to thanks to God for that good. Why talk about their reaction? Maybe Hallel would be better off focusing on our own giving of thanks?

The Ibn Ezra suggests that David HaMelech wrote this chapter, and he was thinking about all the non-Jewish ethnicities who lived among the Jewish people in *Eretz Yisrael* while he was king. Those non-Jews, since they lived in the Jewish state, would be very happy if good things happen to the Jews, since that would inevitably mean that good things would be happening to them, in economics, and in general stability of the region.

This makes a lot of sense in the context of Psalms itself. But I think that the presence of Hallel at the Seder specifically should make us think of *Yetziat Mitzrayim*. This is the great kindness that "overwhelms us" (*gavar aleinu*) at the Seder. If so, who do we know among the non-Jews that talk about their reaction to hearing about *Yetziat Mitzrayim*? If we can find some instances, we can understand this short chapter so much better.

The first is Moshe Rabbeinu's father-in-law, Yitro. He comes soon after the splitting of the sea and the miraculous defeat of Amalek, and he is filled with praise, just like Psalms 117 says should happen

when good things happen to the Jews. The Torah tells us (Exodus 18:9-11):

> *And Yitro rejoiced for all the goodness which God had done to Israel, in that He had delivered them out of the hand of the Egyptians. And Yitro said: "Blessed be God, who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of Pharaoh; who has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. Now I know that God is greater than all gods; yea, for that they dealt proudly against them."*

This is a very positive reaction, and specifically directed at God. "Blessed be God," Yitro says. This is truly an application of "*hallelu et Hashem*!"

However, the next time we learn about non-Jewish reactions to the Exodus is very different. This is in Number 22, the beginning of Parshat Bilaam. There, Balak states, "Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt; behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they settle next to me." Instead of praise of joy, this is one of fear. Balak knew the Jewish people were powerful, explicitly linking their national status to *Yetziat Mitzrayim*. Yet this is a "praise" that is pessimistic and fearful.

We know that it wasn't just Balak and Moav who were afraid. Take a look at what Rachav tells the spies about the inhabitants of *Eretz Yisrael* about their reaction to *Yetziat Mitzrayim* (Joshua 2:9-11):

> *I know that God has given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. For we have heard how God dried up the water of the Red Sea before you, when you came out of Egypt; and what you did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were beyond the Jordan, unto Sihon and to Og, whom you utterly destroyed. And as soon as we had heard it, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more spirit in any man, because of you; for God, your God, He is God in heaven above, and on earth below.*

Here, again, we see a reaction of fear to what God had done for the Jewish people and what that might mean for them. Their hearts, instead of being full like Yitro's, "melted," and they lacked any spirit. Yet, as Rachav ends her speech, the reason they are afraid is that they now know how powerful God is "in heaven above and on the earth below."

So, we see two types of reactions to God's performance of *Yetziat Mitzrayim* for the Jewish people in the Torah - rejoicing in them, or fear of them. Either way God is praised, but the praise is very, very different.

Perhaps that explains the difference between "*goyim*" vs "*umim*". Psalms 117 uses the negatively-connoted *goyim* to mean the people who react in fear when good things happen to the Jews. However, *umim* are those who love when something good happens to the Jews, and that they can praise God for the great good that He gives his people.

Both see God's greatness, but they interpret those great acts for the Jewish people completely differently. One is negative - God is so great He will crush me and my people if we stand in the way of His people. The other is positive - God is so great and He protects his followers; the Jewish people should be cherished and loved as the people of God.

This also explains the difference in verbs. According to this approach, "*Hallelu*" denotes a mere recognition of God's power. But it is "*shabechuhu*" where that recognition is expressed as admiration and joy.

Perhaps this can help explain why we split Hallel into two at the Pesach Seder. Because more than anything else in Tanach, the Jewish story of the Exodus had such opposite reactions, and we want to say that either way, God gets praised. It's up to the Jewish people to show the light of Judaism to the world and prevent *chilul hashem*, which would result in fear and antisemitism instead of love and joy.

At the Pesach Seder, we have become very familiar with the story of the Exodus. We have thought about how and why it happened the way it did, and we have discussed its details for a very long time. But now we turn toward the future. Just like people reacted to the Exodus with great praise (and fear) of the Jewish people, so should this happen once again with the advent of the Messianic age.

Chasal Siddur Pesach

Nirtzah - A Reasonable Addition?

Eitan Bitansky ~ Shana Aleph; Springfield, NJ

There are many interesting passages in the Haggadah, but one that is often overlooked is the final step, Nirtzah. We begin with the phrase, "*Chasal Siddur Pesach*," "completed is the Seder of Pesach." This is the ending of a liturgical poem from around the 10th century written by Rabbi Yosef Tov Elem, a prolific poet. It was originally written to be recited on Shabbat HaGadol, the Shabbat before Pesach. In it, the poet details the order and laws of Pesach. The ending is the final refrain we say today in Nirtzah. It essentially expresses that the explanation of the order has been completed according to all the specific laws and commandments. Just like it has been described in the poem, so may we do it in the coming Seder. In the next line it then asks to redeem the Jewish nation and bring them back to Zion in joy. This last line seems to be the rationale as to why most households say the popular line "Next Year in Jerusalem".

Interestingly, Nirtzah itself is a relatively new addition. Maimonides, who lived in the 12th century, did not have the Nirtzah section at all in his Haggadah. In Maimonides' Haggadah, Hallel is the end of the Haggadah. For there to be an entire section of liturgy that differs from community to community is a bit unusual. One might compare it to the pre-*havdalah* verses which are said, as they are meant to be a good omen for success and salvation in the coming weeks. Yet, this custom is first codified by the Rema (O.C 296:1). When Nirtzah and these *pesukim* are not mentioned by Chazal at all, what are we really accomplishing by reciting them?

In *Chazon L'Yamim*, the Haggadah of Rabbi Yonason Sacks, Rosh Yeshiva of Landers College, points to two possible answers. First, he quotes the Maggid Mesharim, who says that Nirtzah is a plea that our Seder is accepted, and through the praise and songs that people sing will help complete the acceptance. He also quotes the Maharal, who says that Nirtzah is really only a continuation of the second part of Hallel. This part speaks of the future redemption, and

we continue on that theme with Nirtzah, where we hope God will redeem us from our current exile just as he freed the Jews from Egypt. According to him, the Seder only has fourteen steps, which corresponds to the strong arm with which God took us out of Egypt. We see the *gematria* of "*yad*" (hand or arm) is fourteen. The Maharal also says that it is written in one step in the Chida's Haggadah.

It is interesting to note that although the poem was meant originally to help align us to what we are meant to accomplish in the coming days in preparation for Passover and the Seder, an additional deeper meaning can be found in these last lines. We ask that we merit not just to complete our Seder, but the full Seder in Jerusalem with the Paschal Lamb. Just like before havdalah we say *pesukim* hoping to merit good tidings in the coming week, so here we ask at the end of the Seder to be able to repeat it but in Jerusalem with all of the Jewish people.

Vayyehi Bachatzi Hallaylah

Midnight Metaphysics: A Hegelian Perspective on Divine Intervention

Benjamin Golani ~ Shana Aleph; Suffern, NY

The Seder's last, festive stage traditionally includes recitation of *And it Happened at Midnight*, a liturgical poem written by the late fifth-early sixth century poet Yannai as part of his poetry collection, *Oni Pitrei Rachamatayim*.

And it Happened narrates the relationship between God and His people in the present exile and, by contrast, Messianic era. The poem relays twelve biblical examples of divine intervention: namely that God (a) made Abraham victorious in his war against the four kings *in the middle of the night* [Genesis 14:15] (b) judged King Abimelech in a *nocturnal dream* [Genesis 20:3] (c) warned Laban against deceiving Jacob *in the dark of the night* [Genesis 21:24] (d) imbued Israel with the strength to withstand and dominate an angel *at night* [Genesis 32:25-30] (e) decimated the firstborn of Egypt *in the middle of the night* [Exodus 12:29] (f) swept away the attack of Sisera *by the stars of the night* [Judges 5:20] (g) allowed King Hezekiah to prevail over Assyrian King Sennacherib *at night* [Kings II 19:35] (h) caused King Nebuchadnezzar to dream that his idol was destroyed *in the pitch of night* [Daniel II 2:31-35] (i) revealed to Daniel and allowed him to interpret "secret visions" *at night* [Daniel II] (j) killed King Belshazzar *in the middle of the night* [Daniel 5:30] (k) aroused victory upon Haman by disturbing Ahashverosh's sleep *at night*, thereby causing him to pore over the kingdom's chronicles and discover that Mordecai the Jew had saved his life [Esther 6:1-2] and (l) will fulfill Isaiah's prophecy of redemption *at night* [Isaiah 21:11-12].

Less essential than the particulars of each intervention is the commonality of all occurring at night, as provided by the poem's name. Yannai's work is more than an attempt to diagnose the universe's Creator with insomnia, however. As stated in the closing supplication of *And it Happened*, "bring close the day which is not day

and not night, High One, make known that Yours is the day and also Yours is the night…" The last stanza, wherein the reader implores God to bring close the day which is neither day nor night, is critical. If the nighttime metaphorizes divine "hiddenness" the daytime must metaphorize its opposite: divine "non-hiddenness." But for Yannai, divine non-hiddenness isn't viable in the present exile. So long as the Jewish nation is in exile, divine intervention is a thing of the night: concealed. Only when day and night are fused– namely, in the Messianic era– will God "stop hiding."

Surely *And it Happened at Midnight* is more than a treatise on philosophy– poetry should affect us personally. It's ironic, then, that it's Hegel of all people whose work sheds light onto the humanistic side of Yannai's poem. Hegel invented the eponymous Hegelian dialectic: a method of argumentation that pits against each other a thesis and antithesis– two contradictory notions– and resolves them in synthesis. Framing *And it Happened* in the context of a dialectic sheds light onto how we relate to divine intervention psychologically.

Call the nighttime, a.k.a. divine hiddenness, our thesis and its counterpart, divine non-hiddenness, our antithesis. Within the established Hegelian framework, in order to synthesize the two, we must discover (a) how our thesis manifests in history (b) how our antithesis manifests in history and (c) the crux of the contradiction between them.

As for (a), how our thesis– divine hiddenness– manifests in history, there's no issue. As laid out above, *And it Happened at Midnight* recounts plenty of examples of God intervening at night, a.k.a., in the midst of exile. But how does (b), our antithesis– divine non-hiddenness– manifest in history, especially since divine non-hiddenness is, for Yannai, expressly a feature of the Messianic era? I contend that divine non-hiddenness indeed has no manifestation in exile; in fact, divine hiddenness and non-hiddenness should not be thought of as contradictory notions at all, but simply as different degrees of divine presence. Rather, at the root of our antithesis is not divine non-hiddenness, but *false* divine non-hiddenness, that is, the claim that "God *has* intervened in a public, directly accessible manner" (the manner in which He *will* intervene come the Messiah) when he has not. In other words, our antithesis is false prophecy and those who perpetuate it, be it the Christian Jesus, Islamic Mohammed, Jewish Shabbatai Zevi, and any and all other false prophets.

(c) is now intelligible. There is a fundamental contradiction between (a) God's hidden, divine intervention while His nation is in exile and (b) man's inclination to *preempt* divine intervention that is not hidden, but accessible and personal– an inclination so profound that it drives him to erect false prophets. In Hasidic terms, the soul yearns to meet its maker. The two are irreconcilable so long as the *synthetical* Messianic era is not present: only then, when God intervenes in the night and day alike, will man truly encounter non-hidden, accessible and personal intervention and surpass his base inclination to preempt it. The soul will no longer be distant from God, but joyous, because it will have at last met its maker. It is only appropriate, then, that we conclude the Seder by declaring "next year in Jerusalem."

Echad Mi Yode'a

Cultural Assimilation at the Seder

Sam Savestky ~ Shana Bet; Bergenfield, NJ

"Who knows one?!" "I know one!" is something every young child looks forward to sleepily shouting at the end of the Seder night, belly full of afikomen and hopefully not too much wine. *Echad Mi Yodea* occupies a peculiar spot within the corpus of Haggadic texts, not just as one of the two most recent pieces included in it (alongside *Chad Gadya*), but also as a most amusing work. Entertainment value aside, the most fascinating aspect of these two pieces lies in their history - it would appear that their origins lie, at least in part, in foreign, non-Jewish songs.

Shocking as it may seem, the song was written quite late. There are copies of the 1527 iteration of the Prague Haggadah with these songs handwritten in the margin, but they were not part of the original text of the Prague Haggadah. The first printed edition with these songs would not emerge until the 1590 edition of the Prague Haggadah. Indeed, there are striking similarities of both *Echad Mi Yodea* and *Chad Gadya* to popular German folk songs of the era, *Guter Freund, ich frage dich* (Good friend I ask you) and *Der Bauer schickt den Jockel aus* (The Farmer sends out the jockel) respectively. All these songs emerged around the same time period, likely due to cross-cultural exchange. I leave it to the academics to figure out who inspired whom. But assuming that our songs were in some way influenced by these German songs, the question becomes, what are songs influenced by German culture doing at our Pesach Seder? At a time that we forbid any *chametz*, this seems to be a bit of *chametz* in our midst.

There are many midrashim that praise the Israelites for leaving Egypt without getting corrupted by their ways. They go like this: "There were four things for which we merited the redemption: we didn't change our names, our language, we didn't speak *lashon hara*, and we were not promiscuous." *Pesikta Zutrata Devarim* states the following, "Another interpretation: 'And there they became a nation

– this teaches that the Israelites were distinct there, in that their clothing, food, and language was different from the Egyptians." Over time, those two midrashim have been blended together into the familiar formula we know today, only stating the ideas of language, dress, and names. This common version is found in the ethical will of the Chatam Sofer, who singled out only three of the list as crucial to maintaining Jewish survival: language, dress, and names. Interestingly enough, the Chatam Sofer did not link these things to the survival of the Israelites in Egypt. It was his own generation and their descendants that he was worried about.

We have a holiday centered around remembering our ancestors who merited redemption because they stayed true to their culture, and we have multiple sources stating the important things to maintain one's culture, and then we have two songs that seem to have come from a foreign language (our secular names, dress, and us currently speaking English aside).

Rav Asher Weiss has a very interesting essay on the issue of Jewish people and foreign culture. After a long discussion of the sources, he opines that the primary issue at hand would be an individual changing their name, clothing, and language *in order to assimilate*. When one practices the commandments with pride and confidence, it is not forbidden. While the songs may be adapted from another language, we are singing them in Hebrew, in the context of practicing the mitzvot with pride.

There is another approach to this issue. The gemara tells us that Elisha ben Avuyah, otherwise known as Acher, stopped practicing Judaism because "Greek tunes never ceased from his mouth" (Chagigah 15b). Should we conclude from here that using foreign songs is totally forbidden, and even spiritually dangerous? Well, like everything, it depends. Is the issue for Acher that they were "Greek" songs? Obviously, the language of Greek was not the deciding factor. Clearly, it was the content of the songs that was problematic. In fact, the Marasha clarifies for us what exactly a "Greek tune" is and asserts that the primary issue with the tunes that Acher sang contained heresy within them, hence a "Greek tune." Aside from perhaps a Maimonideanly-questionable assertion that "God is in the Heavens and the Earth," there is no heresy to be found in *Echad Mi Yodea*, and it seems we can all rest easy.

As the world continues to modernize, the contemporary Jew is left to question their place in society. We could attempt to integrate

secular influences in a Jewish framework, or bury our heads in the sand and return to the ghettos of early modern Europe. I think we should follow the spirit of our ancestors and do our best to modernize while staying true to our Jewish traditions.

Tanu Tanu Rabanan

The Mystery of Tanu Rabanan:

The Questions Not Asked

Rabbi Aryeh Wasserman ~ Dean of Students

For the past several editions of the Haggadah supplement, I have taken upon myself to tackle the newest and most neglected part of the Seder. As such I have written on the less known songs from the Nirtzah section, such as Adir Hu, Chasal Siddur Pesach and the like. This year it is my intention to up the ante by discussing a song that doesn't even appear in the standard Haggadah printing, and in so doing, highlight a very powerful lesson.

After my grandfather, Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Levene zt"l, retired from his long tenure as the Rav of the Lower Merion Synagogue in Philadelphia, my grandparents began the practice of joining us at our Seder in Pittsburgh. Due to the fact that my father also served as a pulpit rabbi, we never had the opportunity to spend chag with my grandparents. As such, for us it was an extremely exciting opportunity. For the next seventeen years, we spent sedarim together and my grandfather would sing an extra song right before *Chad Gadya* titled "*Tanu Tanu Rabanan*".

The song is structured in the same manner as "אחד מי יודע" in that the song begins with the number one and progresses upward each stanza, interspersed with a repeated chorus. Each stanza consists of a Mishnah that starts with the ascending number. Like the traditional "Mi Yodea" each stanza includes all of the previous ones in descending order. Perhaps the idea behind this song was to upgrade the conclusion of the Seder from simply a collection of cute songs that children enjoy singing to an engaging challenge of Torah learning and knowledge. The ability to scan the recesses of one's mind for random Mishnayot that start with each number in ascending sequence before the advent of the internet and computer database searching capabilities, is an impressive display of Torah knowledge.

The origins of this song are unknown. According to Avi Ravina, in an article featured in Kikar Shabbat, Rabbi Shlomo Kanievsky reportedly told his students in Yeshivat Kiryat Melech, that he remembers his father Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky (who was married to my grandfather's first cousin) singing this song. Another report records that this song was sung by Rav Chaim Kanievsky's father, Rabbi Yaakov Kanievsky (known as the Steipler Gaon) on Yom Tov and that he learned it when he was a student at the famed Novardok Yeshiva. Rabbi Yehuda Leib Fishman Maimon, records in his sefer, Chagim U'moadim (~1940), that the lomdim, the "ones that pride themselves by their Torah knowledge" would sing this song during Hakafot on Simchat Torah.

The way my Zaida sang it was different from the standard versions that I have found of this song. The standard version structures the chorus in the same manner as the traditional "Echad Mi Yodea" with the refrain: "Echad Mi Yodea? Echad Ani Yodea" followed by the stanza which included the relevant Mishnah, plus all the preceding Mishnayot in reverse order, to be concluded with the chorus, "Tanu Tannu Rabanan..." My Zaida however, did not include that question and response and would simply sing the chorus of "Tanu Tanu Rabanan…" between each of the stanzas.

In addition, the wording of the chorus which I remember from my Zaida is different from that of the standard versions. One version goes as follows:

> "תנו (תנו) רבנן, (רבנן) בברייתא, בריך הוא רחמנא, דיהיב לן אורייתא"
>
> "The Rabbis taught in the Braita, Blessed is He, the Merciful One that gives us the Torah"

The challenge with this version is that all the texts cited in the stanzas are quotes from Mishnayot not Braitot. However, there are varying versions as to which texts were "fair game" so there were those that could have quoted relevant Braitot as well.

Another version goes as follows:

> תנו (תנו) רבנן, (רבנן) בתרייתא, בריך הוא רחמנא, דיהיב לן אורייתא

"The later Rabbis taught, Blessed is He, the Merciful
One that gives us the Torah"

This version too is challenging since the teachers of the Mishnah are not usually referred to as "the later rabbis".

Unfortunately, I never asked my grandfather where he learned the song from. I also never took the opportunity to clarify the words he was singing, and neither seemingly did anyone else in the family. Amazingly, despite the fact we all sang along, none of us actually asked my grandfather. What's even more stunning, is that in my recent research on this topic, I have asked multiple family members to try and confirm these details and I have received different answers from everyone!

When I asked my Zaida's younger brother, Rabbi Benji Levene about the song, he informed me that he does not remember singing the song growing up but remembers learning the standard version (above) from a Rebbe of his in the Yeshiva of Hudson County. When I asked his other two siblings (may they all live and be well!) they didn't even know the song! Interestingly, my grandmother remembers spending her first Seder in Jersey City with the family after marrying my Zaida, and told me that they sang this song during that Seder in my great grandparent's house. It is strange that they would not remember singing it at the Seder when it seemed to have been the custom in their parents home and was passed down to my Zaida.

My father believes that my Zaida had told him that his father, HaRav Chaim Yaakov, learned the song from a Rabbi Shlomo Maimon during his tenure as a Rav in Seattle, Washington. Thanks to Shana Bet student Eli Weiss, who comes from a long-time Seattle family, whose great grandfather knew my great grandfather, I was able to connect with Rabbi Maimon's son, Rabbi Michael Maimon. In speaking with him, I hoped to go to the source and confirm the wording and the origin of the practice in our family. To my dismay, while he did know of the song (again the standard version referenced above), he did not remember his father ever singing it at the Seder. It is likely that the song my Zaida picked up from the Maimons was the ladino version of *Echad Mi Yodea* (which we also would try to sing along with my Zaida each year) and while he fondly told me about that song which his father would sing, I had come to another roadblock in my quest for clarification. It is possible that my great-grandfather, HaRav Chaim Yaakov Levene, could have picked it up

from one of the litvish yeshivot he had learned in and for some reason only sang it at that Seder. Alternatively, the reason my grandfather's siblings don't remember it is because they were much younger at the time. (My grandfather was ten years older than Rav Benji.)

My uncle remembers always singing the song growing up in my Zaida's house and reports the words to be as follows:

"תנו (תנו) רבנן, מתניתא ואורייתא, בריך שמיה, דמרא לן, מתניתא ואורייתא"

"The Rabbis taught the Mishnah (Torah SheBaal Peh) and the Torah (SheBichtav), Blessed is His Name, that taught us the Mishnah and the Torah"

My aunt clearly remembers the last phrase to be "ויהיב לן אורייתא", "and that He gave us the Torah" and that the phrase before it was not "דמרא לן". As they are both equally confident they sing the song exactly the way their father did, we must invoke the Gemara in Eruvin 13B which teaches us, "These and these are the living word of Hashem".

My brother was very confident that the words are the following:

"תנו (תנו) רבנן, מתניתא ואורייתא, בריך שמיה דסוריך ליה ויהיב לן אורייתא"

According to him, the word דסוריך is an expression of pulling or dragging, and thus the second half of the chorus is interpreted as meaning, "Blessed is His Name that pulled it (The Torah) out of its place and gave it to him (Moshe), and then he (Moshe) gave us the Torah. While this is a creative suggestion, I am skeptical. First of all, it superimposes Moshe into the words of the song unnecessarily. In addition, while he is confident the gemara uses the term סרך, to mean pull, it is actually used multiple times to mean the opposite - to cling or hold on to. (See for example גיטין סח where the gemara states "שוטה לומר דבר אחד אינו נדבק בחדא מילתא לא סריך" and Rashi on the spot explains, "של שטות כל הימים").

Both I and my father remember the words to be something along the lines of:

"תנו (תנו) רבנן, מתניתא ואורייתא, בריך שמיה ותוריך ליה ויהיב לן אורייתא"

Yet the term ותוריך ליה puzzles us. My father told me that he always meant to ask my Zaida but never did. The fact that Zaida would sing the words, "בריך שמיה", (instead of בריך הוא found in the the standard version) reminds me of the well known passage from the Zohar (Introduction to Sefer Vayikra), which is traditionally recited before taking out the Torah to be read. In this paragraph, which begins with the very same phrase, בריך שמיה, there is a line which states:

" וְהָא רַעֲוָא קֳדָמָךְ דְּתוּרִיךְ לָן חַיִּין בְּטִיבוּ "

*"May it be Your Will, that **You lengthen** our days with kindness".*

Accordingly, the second half should be

"בריך שמיה דתוריך לן ויהיב לן אורייתא"

"Blessed is His Name, that lengthened (our days) and gave us the Torah."

This interpretation would fit nicely with the aforementioned practice of the Yeshiva students to sing this song during hakafot on Simchat Torah night, in celebration of completion of the Torah, in appreciation for Hashem giving us that Torah, right before they would take out that Torah to be read.

Alternatively, one could understand the word to be based on the very opening line of בריך שמיה:

"בְּרִיךְ שְׁמֵהּ דְּמָארֵי עָלְמָא בְּרִיךְ כְּתָרָךְ וְאַתְרָךְ"

"Blessed is His Name, Master of the Universe, Blessed is Your Crown and Your Place"

This part of the song would thus go as follows:

"בריך שמיה ואתריה ויהיב לן אורייתא"

"Blessed is His Name, and His Place, and He gives us the Torah".

While this suggestion also has merit, as that entire clause would be a continued description of Hashem and a paraphrase of this opening sentence, it is unlikely that my Zaida was saying this.

A third option, in my opinion, could be that it is not a reference to the paragraph of בריך שמיה at all, but rather the words in question simply mean, "and your Torah is His". In other words, the message being portrayed by the song warns the singer to remain humble. Despite the rabbis being the teachers of the Torah; being masters of it by even being able to recall the Mishnayot by number reference, don't forget that your Torah (the ones singing the song,) belongs to Him (Hashem), since He is the one that gave us the Torah. This gives very different meaning to the song which would thus be as follows:

> "תנו (תנו) רבנן, מתניתא ואורייתא, בריך שמיה, דתוריך ליה, דיהיב לן אורייתא"
>
> "Rabbis teach us the Mishnah and the Torah, Blessed is His Name, for your Torah belongs to Him, for it is He that gives us the Torah"

We will never know what my Zaida actually sang. This will go down in the annals of Levene Lore as an unsolved mystery. While I hope this tale of broken telephone was both enlightening and entertaining, there is an important lesson to be learned. Take this night, one that is centered around children asking questions, and make sure to capitalize on the opportunity to ask your questions to your parents and grandparents. For one day, you won't be able to, and you will be filled with regret about those lost opportunities.

Below you will find the text of the song with the sources for each Mishnah. For those that enjoy a fun song at the end of the Seder, I have included an original recording (by me) of the song which you can learn in preparation for the Seder and sing with your family and friends. For those that the Nirtzah section of the Haggadah doesn't really speak to them, you have the sources - *tzei ulmad ad shehigiah haZeman shel kriat shema*!

"תנו תנו רבנן, מתניתא ואורייתא,
בריך שמיה, דתוריך ליה,
ויהיב לן אורייתא"

1. אֶחָד הַחוֹפֵר בּוֹר, שִׁיחַ וּמְעָרָה[13] (בבא קמא, ה:ה)
2. שְׁנַיִם אוֹחֲזִין בְּטַלִּית (בבא מציעא, א:א)
3. שְׁלֹשָׁה שֶׁאָכְלוּ כְּאֶחָד (ברכות, ז:ד)
4. אַרְבָּעָה אָבוֹת נְזִיקִין (בבא קמא, א:א)
5. חֲמִשָּׁה תַּמִּין וַחֲמִשָּׁה מוּעָדִין (בבא קמא, א:ד)
6. שִׁשׁ עֲרֵיוֹת חֲמוּרוֹת מֵאֵלּוּ, (יבמות א:ג)
7. בְּשִׁבְעָה דְרָכִים בּוֹדְקִין אֶת הַזָּב (זבים ב:ב)
8. שְׁמֹנָה שְׂרָצִים הָאֲמוּרִים בַּתּוֹרָה (שבת י"ד:א)
9. תֵּשַׁע נְעָרוֹת, נִדְרֵיהֶן קַיָּמִין (נדרים יא:י)
10. עֲשָׂרָה יוֹחֲסִין עָלוּ מִבָּבֶל (קידושין ד:א)

Scan to learn the song!

[13]We always sang as follows - בורות שיחין ומערות. It seems that the quote was mixed up from another quote in which the gemara states ,"לא כך שאלתי אלא גשמי בורות שיחין ומערות" which is part of the story of חוני המעגל - see תענית ח. Since Zaida and the entire family sang the word בורות with great gusto for many years, making it a highlight of the song, I do not see this being corrected. Furthermore, this is a quote from the middle of a Mishnah, so it would be better to start the song with a Mishnah such as שקלים א:א which goes: בְּאֶחָד בַּאֲדָר מַשְׁמִיעִין עַל הַשְּׁקָלִים

Chad Gadya

Chad Gadya as Avraham's Argument for G-d

Nadav Weiss ~ Madrich; Memphis, TN

If you're still up by Chad Gadya, then good job! You've almost completed the whole Haggadah. So, being the last thing to recite, this song must be of ultimate significance, right? Surely this will sum up all that we've discussed at the Seder and really bring the story of *Yetziat Mitzrayim* home for us. Alas, it would seem, at least superficially, that this is not the case. Chad Gadya is a somewhat strange and esoteric story of the circle of life. Told from the perspective of a son or daughter whose father buys a young goat for two shekels, the song goes through a list of animals, objects, humans, and even angels, all interacting negatively with the next, before the song ends at God, who stands at the top, undefeated. What is the purpose and meaning of this song? And why would it be placed at the end of the Seder, as if it is our conclusion and our intellectual afikomen before we all go to sleep?

There are many interpretations out there about what this story means. The most common seems to be that each character in the story represents a different nation who tried to wipe out the Jews, but was eventually destroyed, making way for new nations, who would then be destroyed, but the Jewish people would live on. Another interpretation, found in Rabbi Yaakov Emden's Haggadah, is that the story is an allegory of the spiritual challenges a person will face in their life. However, I want to offer a new approach. With it, I will show that this story is actually a component of the obligation to continue telling the story of *Yetziat Mitzrayim* well into the night, just as our ancient rabbis advocated we do.

The Midrash (Bereishit Rabbah 38:6) tells us the famous story of Avraham as a little boy, and how he discovered the truth about monotheism. Terach, Avraham's father, owned an idol shop, and Avraham would often be there and tend to the customers. One time, a woman entered the store with an extensive flour offering she wanted to leave for the idols. After she left, Avraham picked up a stick,

smashed all of the idols in the store except for the largest one, and placed the stick in the hands of this idol. Terach returned to the store to find all of his wares destroyed. He asked Avraham who caused all the damage. Avraham explained that a woman brought an offering into the store, and each idol wanted to be the first to partake. The giant idol, however, took a stick and smashed all of the other idols so that he would be the one to eat the offering. Terach was upset with this response. "How can you be so cruel to me? Do you think the idols can talk, move, or understand?" Avraham responded, "Don't you hear what you are saying about these idols!"

Terach, who was not happy with this disobedience, took Avraham to the great King Nimrod. Nimrod said to Avraham, "If you do not worship these idols, then you should worship fire." Avraham responded that he should worship water, as water extinguishes fire. Nimrod then told Avraham to worship water. Avraham answered that clouds are water drawn into the heavens, so he should worship clouds. Nimrod told Avraham to worship clouds. Avraham replied that he should worship the air because the air has the power to move clouds via the wind. Nimrod then instructed Avraham to worship the air. Avraham pointed out that man can retain air, and although he is full of holes, he should be the object of worship. At this point, Nimrod was no longer amused by all the responses. He told Avraham, "You are speaking empty and meaningless words. I worship only fire, and I will therefore cast you into the fire, and let the G-d who you worship save you." Avraham was then cast into the fiery furnace and miraculously saved by Hashem.

The conversation Avraham has with Nimrod is eerily similar to the song we sing at Chad Gadya. Just as Avraham proved no particular element, whether it be air, water, or fire, can outlast the others, Chad Gadya is the same. There is a hierarchy here. Every character can be defeated by the next. None of them have any real power. A cat beats the goat. A dog beats the cat. And so on and so forth. Even the slaughterer is defeated by the Angel of Death, and Death itself is defeated by the King of All Kings, G-d.

If so, perhaps to the author of Chad Gadya, all of these things represent different powers that were believed by the ancients to be gods and divine powers. And we prove through this song that none of them have any power really, just like Avraham proved so long ago.

Think about it. The very beginning of Maggid is all about "begin with their disgrace and conclude with their glory." The

Haggadah explicitly ties this to Avraham's family being idol worshippers before Avraham found monotheism. If Chad Gadya really is making the same argument that Avraham did, then we are fulfilling our obligation to talk about this story as it continues into the present day.

I'll start with the first character, the kid that dad bought for two shekels, and I leave it to you to look into the rest with your family or friends at the table.

I believe the kid is a reference to the Pesach offering in Egypt, which we are told could either come from a lamb but also from a kid (Shemot 12:5). The Tur (OH 430), in explaining why the Shabbat before Pesach is called Shabbat HaGadol, explains how the lamb and kid were Egyptian gods, and the Egyptians felt forced to let the Israelites slaughter their gods. It was cheap, like dad buying it for two shekels. What a miracle! Their god could be easily defeated by the cutest cat, another god in Egyptian mythology. And so on and so forth.

On this night of protection, we conclude our Seder with a dialogue similar to that which Avraham had with Nimrod. We start with the little kid, the object of worship in Egypt. But as the song goes, a cat can eat a kid, a dog can beat a cat, a stick can smite a dog, etc. Each of these items, representing objects that people have worshiped, has a superior. The song's conclusion, and the Seder's conclusion, is a conclusion that we all know and sing with great thanks: G-d is supreme, and He is the One that is our protector. This is the true story of the Exodus, and it's one worthy of being the capstone to our Haggadah experience.

Leshanah Haba

L'shanah Haba: Ending Exile

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Throughout our history, the Jewish people have endured persecution and have been attacked by numerous foreign powers, resulting in exile to distant and unfamiliar lands. These adversities rendered Jewish life a formidable challenge, with much of Jewish existence marked by dispersion and displacement. Yet, amidst this tumultuous narrative, one event stands as an unparalleled beacon of hope: Pesach. The holiday of Pesach tells us that even when we are at our bleakest, God will save us. A slave nation will not only go free, but with great miracles and enormous wealth.

The Jews languished in the oppressive grip of Egyptian slavery for hundreds of years, their cries for freedom going up to the heavens. Then, in a dramatic turn of events, God orchestrated a miraculous redemption, leading His chosen people out of bondage and into the wilderness of Sinai. But the story does not end there. Alongside their physical liberation, the Jewish people were bestowed with a divine gift of unbelievable significance: the Torah itself. This important moment in Jewish history marked not only freedom from tyranny but also the covenantal relationship between God and His people. So profound is its significance that we are commanded to perform *sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim* from generation to generation, perpetuating its memory through the ritual of the Seder.

Yet, in this celebration, a question arises: Why do we insert the phrase "*L'shana Haba'ah*" at the end of the Seder? If the focus of the Seder is the story of Egypt, what is the point of talking about the future? I believe it is because the story of *Yetziat Mitzrayim* is not just in the past. It gives us hope for the future as well. The purpose of reading the story over and over again is to remind ourselves that even when the times are tough, even when antisemitism is on the rise, even when we are most scared, we can be saved and delivered from our troubles. It happened then, and it can happen now.

"*L'shana Haba'ah*" has another meaning as well. Yes, we have just gone through the entire Seder. It may feel like our story is over. The end. Close the book. But it's not so. Our story has just begun! We are asked here to remember the need for the *Beit HaMikdash*. Without it, we cannot truly be free. Without it, we cannot see the end of the story yet.

Thus, it serves as a reminder of the incomplete nature of our redemption. We may be physically free. But we still need to strive for a future where the Jewish people can fully realize our spiritual potential in our homeland, *Eretz Yisrael*. Placed at the conclusion of the Seder, this phrase serves as an acknowledgment that while we celebrate our deliverance from Egypt, our journey towards redemption is far from complete.

Through it, we hope and pray that Mashiach will come speedily in our time.