

# Twelve Questions On Hallel On Leil HaSeder

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A close examination of the Hallel recited on the seder night reveals many unique qualities that distinguish it from the Hallel recited on other festivals. There are twelve questions one can ask regarding Hallel on the seder night.

1) The prayer of Hallel is usually preceded by a Beracha, for the halachah mandates the recitation of a Beracha before performing any mitzvah under the category of Bein Adam le-Makom (Rambam, Hilchot Berachot 11:2). Why then can no such Beracha be found in our Haggadah?

2) The Mishnah in Megillah 20b, which discusses the appropriate time to fulfill various mitzvot, includes the mitzvah of Hallel among those mitzvot that should be performed during the day. How then are we permitted to recite Hallel during the seder, which takes place at night?

3) Another characteristic unique to the Hallel on the seder night is that it is recited while sitting. This custom seems contrary to the general requirement to stand during the Hallel recitation, a requirement explicit in the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 422:4).

4) An additionally troubling source is the Gemara in Ta'anit 25b-26a, which mentions that in order to recite Hallel, one must be fully satiated. Considering this mandate, it seems odd that the beginning of Hallel would be placed at the end of Maggid, directly preceding the meal, when it will certainly be recited in a state of hunger and therefore lack this prerequisite.

5) There is an even more basic question that can be posed when considering the arrangement of the Hallel in the Haggadah. We find that the first half of the Hallel is recited before the meal, while the other half is not recited until after the completion of the meal. How are we allowed to inter-

rupt the recitation of Hallel with a lavish meal at the seder?

6) The need to associate the Hallel of the seder with cups of wine, namely the second and fourth cup, is yet another unique quality of this Hallel that demands an explanation.

7) Why is it that women are obligated to participate in this Hallel (See Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 472:14), if they are generally exempt from positive commandments that are governed by time?

8) The decision to include the entire Hallel in the Haggadah, as opposed to a half Hallel seems puzzling when one reflects upon the distinctions that exist between the two versions of the prayer. For example, it is customary to recite only a half Hallel on the seventh day of Pesach because as the Gemara Megillah 10b says, "Ma'asei yadai tovim ba-yam ve-atem omrim shirah - My creations are drowning in the sea, and you are saying praise!?" The creations of Hashem, albeit the depraved Egyptians, were drowning following the miraculous splitting of the sea, and the Malachei ha-Shareit - Angels serving God were not allowed to sing the expected praise regarding the salvation of the Jewish people. It would therefore seem appropriate that we should similarly recite only a half Hallel at the seder in recognition of the Egyptians who were killed during the final plague, that of the First Born, and drowning in the sea. We clearly recognize the loss of Egyptian life, as the Abarbanel notes, through the removal of a drop of wine during the mention of each plague to indicate that the joy of our redemption is not complete due the affliction of the Egyptians. Why, then, is it the custom to recite the entire Hallel when commemorating this great miracle which involved the death of so many of God's creations?

9) It is well understood that the eating of the Afikoman should be completed before chatzot, for it commemorates the Pesach offering, which itself had to be finished before that time. There is a dispute between Tosafot and the Ran (Pesachim 27b Dapei Harif s.v. Garsinan) whether Hallel must also be completed before chatzot. They both agree that the recitation of Hallel is a rabbinic obligation. However, while the Ran assumes that the rabbis instituted chatzot as the final time to recite Hallel, Tosafot are of the opinion that it may be recited after chatzot. The Rambam, Sefer Hamitzvot, Aseh no. 157, implies that there is a Torah obligation to recite Hallel. Accordingly there should be a Torah mandated obligation to finish Hallel by chatzot. The Rama Orach Chaim 477:1, rules that it should be completed by chatzot. He gives no indication as to whether the obligation to complete Hallel before chatzot is a Torah obligation or a rabbinic ordinance, but based on the Rambam it is possible that he assumes it to be a Torah obligation. Assuming that there is a Torah obligation to recite Hallel before chatzot, one can ask: why should this particular requirement from the Pesach offering be extended to the Hallel recitation? What Biblical concept obligates the recitation of Hallel before chatzot?

10) The beginning of Hallel is preceded by a peculiar introduction, *Lefikach anachnu chayavim le-hodot le-hallel...* - Therefore, we are obligated to thank and praise Hashem. "Therefore" always serves as a bridge from one idea to its subsequent continuation. What is the continuation within the context of the Haggadah - between Maggid and Hallel?

11) An often overlooked obligation is that one must leave the matzah on the table for the completion of the Hallel. What is the need for such an obligation?

12) Finally, considering all of these unique characteristics of the Hallel of seder night, it would seem appropriate to include some reference to this unusual Hallel during the four questions, which are intended to bring our attention to the various unique qualities of the seder. Why do we find no mention of this unusual Hallel recitation in this part of the Haggadah?

There are two basic but very distinct approaches to resolve this series of intriguing questions. Each

approach can be used in its own right to answer many of the issues attached to the peculiar existence of Hallel within the Haggadah. However, it is only possible to answer all of these questions through the combination of these very different approaches.

The first of these approaches can be seen from Pesachim 36a, which explains *Lechem Oni* - the bread of affliction - as a reference to the matzah upon which we say many things. Rashi explains that these "many things" refer to the recital of Maggid and the full recitation of Hallel. Therefore, we should leave the matzah on the table for Hallel even after the completion of the meal. This indicates that Hallel is a component of the mitzvah to eat matzah on the night of the seder. [Rav Soloveitchik, zt"l noted that Ramban, *Milchamot Hashem*, Berachot 2b, is of the opinion that failure to mention pesach, matzah or maror, is a violation of the specific mitzvah that was neglected. Accordingly, if one did not mention matzah while reciting the Haggadah, he has not fulfilled the mitzvah of matzah properly. Rav Soloveitchik noted that based on the comments of the Ramban, the recitation of the Haggadah is a fulfillment of the mitzvah of matzah.] If this is in fact the case, it becomes apparent that the Hallel recited at the seder may not be subject to the technical conditions normally associated with standard Hallel recitation. For example, this particular Hallel recitation need not be preceded by a Beracha because the more general mitzvah of matzah is introduced by its own Beracha. Furthermore, the reason that Hallel must be recited at night now becomes clear; *Ba-erev tochlu matzot* - during the evening you shall eat matzot, for that is the appropriate time to fulfill the more general mitzvah of matzah of which Hallel is a part of. This similarly explains why this particular Hallel is recited while sitting, for that is the proper way to fulfill the broader mitzvah of matzah; *mesubim* - leaning comfortably.

Additionally, the apparent problem of interrupting the Hallel recitation with the meal can easily be explained if the Hallel is understood to be part of the mitzvah of matzah, and Hallel is subject to the guidelines and constraints of the established Pesach seder which continue throughout the meal. The guidelines of the seder include the presence of the four cups of wine, and, consequently, the Hallel must conform and combine

with this specific directive. The previously perplexing application of the deadline of the Afikoman to Hallel by the Rama, fits in beautifully with this approach that directly relates the Hallel to the matzah. Hallel must be finished before chatzot just like the matzah. It is therefore logical that if there is a Torah obligation to finish the Korban before chatzot, there is also a Torah obligation to finish Hallel before chatzot. Finally, it makes perfect sense that women should participate in the Hallel of the seder if it is indeed a component of the matzah. Women are certainly obligated to fulfill the mitzvah of matzah based on the Gemara in Pesachim 43b, Kol she-yeshno be-val tochal chametz yeshno be-achilat matzah - all who are obligated in the prohibition against eating chametz are obligated in the obligation of eating matzah. This also explains why we don't ask a separate question in the Mah Nishtana of "Why is this Hallel different from all other Hallel," because this Hallel is subsumed in the mitzvah of matzah which is already the subject of one of the four questions.

The second approach is based on Rav Hai Gaon, quoted by the Ran in Pesachim (26a Dapei ha-Rif s.v. Aval Rabbeinu Hai Gaon), who explains that there are actually three different types of Hallel. The first is the ritual recitation of the Hallel known as the Mitzvat Kriah which, according to the Ramban, Sefer haMitzvot, Shoresh no. 1, is our fulfillment of the obligation of Simchat Yom Tov. The second type of Hallel is Hallel recited on the commemoration of a miracle, such as the Hallel recited on Chanukah. The third type of Hallel is a spontaneous outburst of joyous and thankful song, Shirah. The Mishnah in Pesachim 116b explains, "Chayav adam lirot et atzmo ke-ilu hu yatza me-mitzraim -one is obligated to see himself as if he left Egypt." The Rambam has a slightly different version reading, "Chayav adam le-harot et atzmo ke-ilu hu yatza me-mitzraim - one is obligated to show himself as if he left Egypt." Because we are obligated on the night of the seder to view ourselves as if we are actually participating in the grand and miraculous Exodus, the Hallel of the seder, unlike the Hallel recited on other festivals, must fall into the latter of these categories. We can now begin to understand why this Hallel is so different than the one we are accustomed to and possesses so many unique qualities.

Rav Soloveitchik, zt"l, explained that the general reason that we recite Birchos ha-Mitzvot is to establish the proper frame of mind with which we must approach the fulfillment of God's commandments. In fact, the Beracha allows us to perform the mitzvah (see Rambam Hilchot Berachot 1:3). It follows, therefore, that this type of Hallel should not require a Beracha, for it is actually the sincerity of our mindset that initially motivated us to recite this spontaneous prayer. This also explains why this Hallel may be recited at night, for this emotional outburst is not limited to the technical time constraints normally associated with the ritual recitation of Hallel, but must be expressed at whatever time we become emotionally motivated. The Birkei Yosef ruled for this reason that although the Mishnah limits the time of Hallel to the daytime, a group of Jews who were saved from death while aboard a boat at sea were obligated to say Hallel immediately when they were saved, even though it was nighttime. Women would therefore also be obligated to sing this praise of Hashem if they too were saved directly by the miracle. Finally, with this new understanding of the Hallel of seder night, we can resolve the problem of reciting a full Hallel on a night that commemorates the destruction of God's creations. The principle of limiting our rejoicing while God's creations are being destroyed only applies when those rejoicing are not directly involved in the miracle, the sideline figures. For this reason, on the seventh day of Pesach, we only recite a half Hallel. However, on the seder night we are expected to feel as if we ourselves are personally being saved by the awesome plagues and miracles displayed during the process of our exodus from Egypt. Therefore, it would not be a violation but, on the contrary, an obligation to recite a full Hallel on that night, despite the fact that the Egyptians were being killed.

The Hallel that we recite on seder night is therefore categorically different than the Hallel that is normally recited. We are expected to not simply commemorate a great act of God which was performed in the past, but to allow ourselves to become enraptured in the seder so that we actually feel God's strong hand saving us in the present. The Ba'al ha-Maor writes that Hallel is intended to be said with a full stomach, and the Netziv writes that the real Hallel is the part following the meal, when one has been fully satiated. This Hal-

lel is that of Shirah and can only be recited after one has eaten. The two paragraphs recited prior to the meal function to establish the meal as a feast of Hoda'ah, thanking Hashem and giving recognition for taking us out of Egypt. The recitation of Hallel is performed after the meal.

This also explains the meaning of Lefikach anu chayavim le-hodot u-le-hallel. The Rambam connects the mitzvah of Sippur Yitziat Mitzraim with that of the recital of Hallel through the same word, "Lefikach" (Hilchot Chametz u-Matzah 8:4-5). The Netziv is of the opinion that Hallel re-

cited to commemorate a miracle such as Chanukah is only a rabbinic requirement. The Chatam Sofer holds that it is a Torah obligation to commemorate such a miracle. However, on the seder night we relive the experience, and, therefore, it is Hallel al ha-neis be-sha'at ha-neis -Hallel over a miracle during the occurrence of the miracle. The Netziv himself states that Hallel on the seder night is a Torah mandated obligation according to all halachic opinions. This is the meaning of Lefikach - because we relive this experience there is a Torah obligation to recite Hallel.