

# Introduction

While the Pesach Seder as a whole focuses on the notion of redemption, the Haggada divides into two thematic parts.

The first is the pre-meal section of the Haggada. In it, we tell the story of Israel's slavery and eventual redemption from Egypt. We express the story both verbally, by reading and discussing text and narrative, and experientially, by consuming symbolic foodstuff—matza, wine, maror and charoset. These activities simultaneously emphasize the hardship and transformation that we underwent in our emergence from Egypt as a nation moving towards its promising destiny.

The true purpose of Pesach is to remove the chametz found in our heart and soul; the obstacles, the barriers, the stagnation that hinders our engagement with a purposeful lifestyle.

There is a second—critical—section of the Haggada that is often ignored: the portion of the Haggada recited



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after the meal. This section represents the second theme of Pesach night. It focuses not on the past salvation, but on the future redemption of our people and of society.

The post-meal section of the Haggada begins as we pour a cup of wine reserved for Eliyahu—the figure who is to usher Mashiach into our world. We open the door to welcome Eliyahu and recite *Shefokh Chamatkha*, in which we call on Hashem to destroy evil nations that have persecuted the Jewish people throughout the diaspora experience.

In the pre-meal Maggid section of the Haggada, we only recite the first two chapters of Hallel. This is because these psalms focus on the Egyptian saga. The third and the remaining chapters of Hallel are recited in the post-meal section of the Haggada as these psalms focus on the Messianic era (see *Pesachim* 118a). Following these, we read poems and prayers that, through allegory and symbolism, focus on the future—an era of peace and prosperity for our people and society at large.

The Kabbalists remind us that the true purpose of Pesach is to remove the chametz found in our heart and soul; the obstacles, the barriers, the stagnation that hinders

our engagement with a purposeful lifestyle. The Seder begins with reflections of the past as a means to inspire us to help shape a vision for a future enabling redemption to become a reality. And it ends with foresights of that redeemed future, giving us a glimpse of what we strive for in our lives.

We hope that the learning found in this edition of *Benjamin and Rose Berger Torah To-Go* gives us pause as individuals, families, and communities finding new ways to realize the dream: “Next Year in a completely safe and rebuilt Yerushalayim.”

