

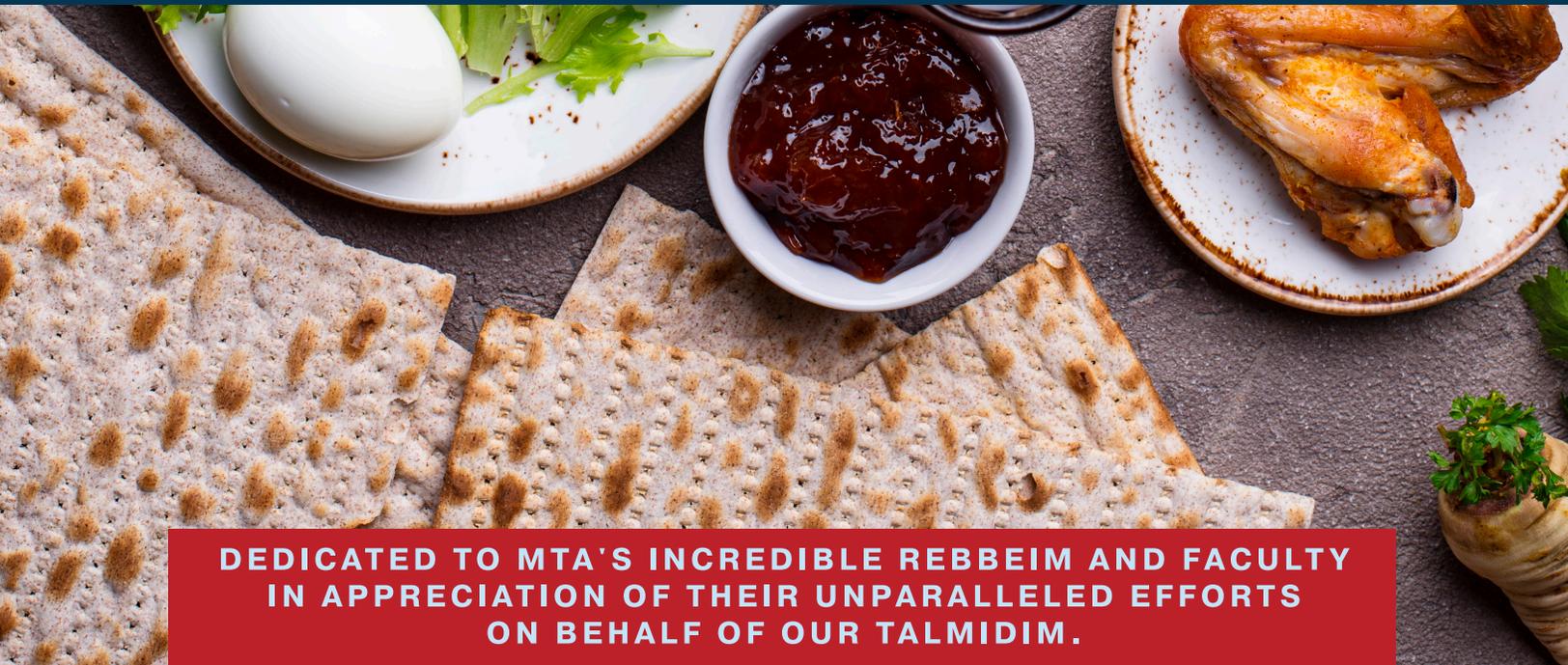


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SHEMA KOLEINU: PESACH 5780

DIVREI TORAH FROM OUR REBBEIM, FACULTY, TALMIDIM, AND ALUMNI



**DEDICATED TO MTA'S INCREDIBLE REBBEIM AND FACULTY
IN APPRECIATION OF THEIR UNPARALLELED EFFORTS
ON BEHALF OF OUR TALMIDIM.**



**RABBI
MICHAEL
TAUBES**

ROSH YESHIVA

FOLLOWING RABBI AKIVA'S LEAD

Towards the beginning of the *Maggid* section of the *Haggadah*, we learn about what was undoubtedly one of the most famous *Seder* nights in history. A handful of the greatest *Talmidei Chachomim* of all time – Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Yehoshua, Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah, Rabbi Akiva, and Rabbi Tarfon – gathered together to observe the *Seder* in Bnei Brak. We all know the story; these *Tannaim* spent the entire night delving into matters relating to *Pesach* until their students came and told them that it was already morning.

One question that may be asked, however, is why they assembled that night specifically in Bnei Brak, as that is not where most of them lived. According to the *Gemara* in *Sanhedrin* (32b), Rabbi Eliezer, for example, lived in Lod, while Rabbi Yehoshua lived in Pekiin and Rabban Gamliel lived in Yavneh. Why, then, did they head to Bnei Brak? One of them, though, did live in Bnei Brak, and that was Rabbi Akiva (one of the main streets in Bnei Brak to this day is called Rehov Rabbi Akiva); apparently the other *Rabbonim* were coming to participate in the *Seder* with Rabbi Akiva. The question is why, especially in light of the fact that Rabbi Akiva was not the leader or the eldest of the group; Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua were in fact among his *Rebbeim* (see *Sanhedrin* 68a).

The *Aruch Hashulchan*, in his *Haggadah* commentary entitled *Leil Shimurim*, offers a fascinating answer, one which perhaps has special significance this year. These great *Rabbonim*, he notes, lived during a very sad and bleak period of Jewish history. It was the era following the destruction of the second *Beis Hamikdash*; the *Bar Kochba* revolt had failed and the Jews of *Eretz Yisrael* were enduring terrible persecutions at the hands of the Romans. Under such unpleasant circumstances, who felt like celebrating *Pesach*? Who could enjoy a *Seder*, speaking about freedom and redemption, while being subjected to such suffering?

These great *Tannaim* understood that if anyone could lead a proper *Seder* at such a dark moment in history, it would be Rabbi Akiva, the great optimist. After all, it was Rabbi Akiva who smiled and was cheerful upon seeing the ruins of the *Beis HaMikdash* while his colleagues wept, as related by the famous *Gemara* in *Makos* (24a), ultimately comforting them because he could see that if the prophecies regarding destruction had come true, so too would the prophecies regarding rebuilding and salvation. Surely Rabbi Akiva will know how to inspire us when we are enveloped by feelings of despair and will thus guide us in the proper observance of the *Leil Haseder*. Hence the visit to Bnei Brak.

This year, 5780, many of us will not be able to enjoy the kind of *Seder* and *Pesach* holiday to which we are accustomed. We will not be *davening* in

our *Shuls*, we are unable to travel to be with friends and relatives over *Yom Tov*, and many of us will not be able to have our *Sedarim* with all the family members who typically join us. It is a most unfortunate situation, and it is easy to become depressed and dejected. It is now therefore our collective responsibility to be the Rabbi Akivas of our generation and to accentuate the positives. We have to prepare for and go into *Pesach* with excitement and celebrate the *Seder* – and indeed the entire *Yom Tov* – with *simcha* and optimism, and strongly encourage and inspire others to do the same. That is our challenge this year; let's try to be up to it!

The *Gemara* in *Rosh Hashanah* (11a) suggests that just as we were redeemed during the month of *Nissan* in the past, we will likewise be redeemed during the month of *Nissan* in the future. May it be this year!



**RABBI
JOSHUA KAHN**
HEAD OF SCHOOL

SEDER NIGHT AND NIGHT SEDER

The Seder Night is also a night *seder*, meaning a night of Torah learning. While the Seder night also encapsulates many other special motifs, the theme of *Talmud Torah* occupies a primary position. As we begin to tell the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, the *Haggadah* makes a bold declaration, ואפילו כולנו חכמים... כולם יודעים את התורה מצוה עלינו לספר ביציאת מצרים. וכל המרבה לספר ביציאת מצרים הרי זה משובח – even if we are all wise... even if we all know the whole Torah, nevertheless there is a *mitzvah* to tell about the Exodus from Egypt. And the more one tells about the Exodus, it is praiseworthy. Why is this introduction so fundamental to the *Pesach Seder* that it opens up the re-telling of our *Yetzias Mitzrayim* story?

Rav Yissocher Frand suggests that it was a thirst for knowledge that started our redemption process. *Moshe Rabbeinu* saw a burning bush. According to the *Midrash*, many other shepherds before him had seen the same exact scene. What differentiated Moshe was that he wanted to understand what he was seeing. As the *passuk* describes, "ויאמר משה – אסורה נא ואראה את המראה הגדול הזה. מדוע לא יבער הסנה – and Moshe said I will go down to see this great sight. Why is the bush not burning." Confronted with something unusual, most shepherds continued on with their regular routine. Moshe was different. He wanted to understand what he was seeing and made an effort to learn. The *Midrash* describes a dispute as to what effort Moshe made. According to Rav Yochanan, Moshe took three steps towards the bush, while *Reish Lakish* says that he simply craned his neck to better see it. While neither description may seem like Moshe invested herculean effort, the initiative he took to better understand Hashem's world earned him the position of leadership and ultimately the title of *Moshe Rabbeinu*, a title that centers around teaching and learning.

The *Mishnah* in *Pirkei Avos* describes, – אין לך בן חורין אלא מי שעוסק בתורה – the greatest freedom is the ability to learn Torah. The freedom we experience at the Seder is a freedom of learning Torah together with our family. Following the leadership of Moshe, investing in learning and discussing Torah ideas together is the way in which we experience our own *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. To emphasize this point, the *Haggadah* provides the guidance to us at the beginning of re-telling the story, that we all need to involve ourselves in learning, regardless of how much we already know.

With this theme in mind, our *Shema Koleinu* is especially valued. It reflects an effort by the *Rebbeim*, Faculty, Alumni, and *Talmidim* of the Marsha Stern Talmudical Academy/Yeshiva University High School for Boys to engage the broader community in a dialogue of *Talmud Torah*. This *Kuntres* reflects the ideas developed in our *Yeshiva* and it is our hope that it enhances your *Pesach* learning. As we embark on an unusual *Pesach* this year, we hope that our *Shema Koleinu* can help us all feel a sense of *achdus* and learning together!

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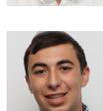
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MEIR MORELL

YUHSB '22

THE KEARAH

There are four different approaches to the placement of the items on the *Kearah*:

1. The *Rama*, Rav Moshe Isserlis, takes a very practical approach. He placed the *Simanim* on his *Kearah* in order of use. The very bottom had the *Karpas* and the salt water, followed by the three *Matzos*, the *Marror* and the *Charoses*, and finished with the *Zeroah* and the *Beitzah*, which are merely for show and are not used.
2. The *Arizal* took a Kabbalistic approach. He placed his *Simanim* in order of the ten *Sefiros*, ten facets of Hashem, which are found in Kabbalistic literature. The *Sefiros* are often represented in a certain shape, where different ones are placed above and below each other to demonstrate the connections between them. The *Arizal's Kearah* reflects this: The *Zeroah* is placed at the top right representing *Chessed*; the *Beitzah* is at the top left representing *Gevurah*; the top middle is the *Marror*, which represents *Tiferes*; the bottom right is the *Charoses*, which represents *Netzach*; the bottom left is the *Karpas*, which represents *Hod*; and the bottom middle is *Chazeres*, which represents *Yesod*. The three *Matzos* are placed on the bottom representing the *Sefiros* of *Chachma*, *Binah*, and *Daas*, which are found as a triangle at the top of the *Sefiros*, and the *Kearah* itself represents *Malchus*, the top *Sefirah* (See the *Avnei Shoham Siman 173*, *Pesachim 114b*, and the *Haggadah* of the *Tavshei Basar*).
3. The *Vilna Gaon* takes an approach based on his personal *Minhagim*. He only took out the *Kearah* after *Karpas*, so he didn't have *Karpas* or salt water on his *Kearah* at all. He placed the *Marror* on the top right, the *Zeroah* on the bottom right, and only two *Matzos* in the middle, as per his *Halachic* opinion. At the top left was the *Charoses* and the bottom left had the *Beitzah*.
4. *Hagaon* Rav Chaim Kanievsky *Shelitah* does not arrange his *Kearah* in any specific order, in order not to waste any time.



KADESH: WHAT IS TRUE AND PURPOSEFUL REDEMPTION?



AKIVA KRA

YUHSB '21

בין הכוסות הללו אם רצה לשתות ישתה בין שלישי לרביעי לא ישתה

During the Pesach Seder, between these cups that one is obligated to drink, e.g., between the first two of the four cups of wine, if one wants to drink he may drink. However, between the third and fourth cups, which are consumed after the meal, one may not drink. (Pesachim 28a)

Why is it that one is only forbidden to drink between the third and fourth cups of wine at the *Seder*, but permitted to do so between the first and second cups? What makes the last two cups different?

The *Talmud Yerushalmi* offers a simple explanation to this question. It says that before and during the meal at the *Seder*, there is no risk that one will become intoxicated by drinking more wine, since the cups are spaced so far apart. However, after the meal, between cups three and four, there is a concern that one will become intoxicated, since the cups are consumed very close together. Since we don't want people to become drunk, we don't allow them to drink between cups three and four.

Perhaps there is a deeper and more profound reason behind this *Halacha*. Rav Shalom Schwadron Z"l points out that each cup corresponds to one of the *Lishonos* of *Geulah*, the words used by the *Pasuk* when describing our redemption from *Mitzrayim*. The first two *Lishonos*, *Vehotzasi* (and I brought out) and *Vehitzalti* (and I saved), are focused on Hashem saving us from the physical suffering we endured in Egypt through the *Makkos*. These are different from the third expression, *Vegealti* (and I redeemed), which refers to the actual redemption when we left Egypt.

This leads to an interesting question asked by the *Sforno*: What is *Velakachti* (and I took), the fourth *Lashon* of *Geulah*, adding; the Jews have already left Egypt? He answers that the *Pasuk* of "ולקחתי אתכם לי לעם" (and I will take them for Me as a nation) refers to *Matan Torah*. Even though we had already left Egypt, true redemption could only come after *Matan Torah*. Redemption is incomplete if it's only physical and not spiritual. Therefore, the last two *Lishonos* of *Geulah* are connected, and like one. This is why one can't drink between the last two cups; we cannot separate between the physical and spiritual redemption from Egypt. Only once we have both is our *Geulah* complete.

We can take this idea a step further. On the second night of *Pesach*, we start counting *Sefiras Haomer*. This seems strange; why are we counting down to *Shavuot* before *Pesach* has even ended? The answer is that *Shavuot* represents *Kabbalas Hatorah*, and by counting down to it on the holiday of our physical redemption, we are reminding ourselves that redemption is pointless without Torah. The only reason Hashem took us out of Egypt was for us to receive the Torah. May we all internalize this message this *Pesach*.



SHUA PARISER

YUHSB '20,
CO-EDITOR IN CHIEF,
SHEMA KOLEINU

URCHATZ - STARTING OFF ON THE RIGHT FOOT

In the time of the *Beis Hamikdash*, when people were very careful not to become impure, people would wash their hands before eating any fruits or vegetables that had been dipped in one of the seven liquids which can transfer *Tumah* (wine, blood, oil, milk, dew, honey, and water). Although today, most people do not do this, we wash before eating the wet vegetable during *Karpas*, so as to do things in the best way possible on the *Seder* night. During the year, it is considered showing off (*Yuhara*) for an average person to follow this stringency and wash before eating wet produce. Why is it that on the *Seder* night we are more careful about this *Halacha*, against our normal practice?

The *Seder* night symbolizes the beginning of our freedom, which we achieved through becoming the nation of Hashem. When one builds a house, it is crucial that the foundation be strong, or else the house will collapse once more trappings are added later in the process. So too, each year as we begin our service of Hashem anew, it is important that our foundation is built solidly, in order to allow us to grow properly over the course of the year. Therefore, on the *Seder* night, we are extra careful in the way we act and perform *Mitzvos*. May we be *Zocheh* to build our *Beis Hamikdash* with a strong foundation this *Pesach*!



RABBI MURRAY SRAGOW

DIRECTOR OF
COLLEGE GUIDANCE

KARPAS - WHY SALTWATER?

The *Minhag* of eating *Karpas* is as old as the *Mishnah*. The third *Mishnah* in *Perek Arvei Pesachim*, in detailing the steps of the *Pesach Seder*, says *הביאו לפניו מטבל בחזרת* - they bring [the vegetables] before him, and he dips the *Chazeres*. The word "*Chazeres*" is defined as the green vegetable that we call *Karpas* today, and the *Mishnah* definitely describes some form of dipping with the word "*Metavel*". However, the *Mishnah* stops short of telling us what the *Karpas* should be dipped into. The *Rambam* (*Hilchos Chametz Umatzah* 8:2) says it should be dipped in *Charoses*, the fruit mixture in which we dip our *Marror* later on in the *Seder*. This runs contrary to our *Minhag*, which is to dip the *Karpas* into salt water. Everyone knows that the reason we do this is because the salt water represents the tears of the Jewish slaves in Egypt, and tears are salty. But where does that answer come from?

The *Baalei Tosfos* on that *Mishnah* (*Pesachim* 114a) quote a custom of *Rabbenu Tam* to dip in vinegar or salt water. This second option seems like a perfect source for what we are looking for. However, *Rabbenu Tam* says something surprising – the reason the *Karpas* is not dipped in *Charoses*, as the *Rambam* suggests, is because unlike the *Marror*, *Karpas* is not in memory of the bitterness of Egypt; the purpose of *Charoses* is to remind us of the mortar the Jews used in *Mitzrayim*, but that is not the goal of the *Karpas*. So, at least according to *Rabbenu Tam*, we find a custom of salt water, but not because of the tears of *Bnei Yisrael* in *Mitzrayim*.

Unfortunately, when this *Minhag* is codified in *Shulchan Aruch*, salt water is ignored entirely, and only vinegar is mentioned. The *Mishnah Berurah*, completed only a little over 100 years ago, offers a ray of hope by saying that this mention of vinegar is not exclusive, but merely an example of a potential dip. But the list of dips the *Mishnah Berurah* presents does not offer us much guidance. Yes, along with wine, he includes salt water as a potential option for dipping the *Karpas*, but he stresses that the most important thing is just not to use *Charoses*. He offers no reason or preference for our *Minhag* of using salt water.

Even worse, there is much more impressive backing for using wine than for salt water. *Rabbenu Manoach*, in his commentary on the *Rambam* cited above, offers a reason for dipping in wine – to remind us of Yosef's *Kesones Pasim*, his multicolored coat, which was dipped in blood in the event that led to Yosef, and eventually his brothers, all coming to live in Egypt. This seems like a very nice custom - why, then, do we not use wine at our *Sedarim*?

Perhaps the reason we do not use wine is for the same reason the *Ta"z* offers in suggesting that we no longer prefer red wine at the *Seder*, because of the blood libel. Many Christians massacred Jewish communities based on the false belief that blood of Christian babies was used in baking *Matzos*. We would rather not give our critics more ammunition to believe that we have blood on our minds.

At any rate, we're still left without any good reason to use salt water and no known source for the common explanation. The answer might be hinted at by a bit of history; namely, the first known instance of dipping vegetables in salt water and vinegar altogether. In truth, salt water and vinegar were the original dressings. In fact, the word "salad" comes from the Latin "*herba salata*," or salted vegetables. That was the common way salad used to be eaten, by adding salt through the medium of salt water.

If this is true, that the salt water had no meaning at all outside of providing flavor for ones vegetables, then why do we have the explanation of the tears? The answer to this is simple; over time, people found other ways to dress their salad and stopped using salt water. Therefore, in the early 20th Century, *Haggadahs* felt the need to explain the custom of the salt water to people who no longer found it familiar. The reason of the tears was suggested and it stuck.

Is that a problem? Should we discontinue salt water and instead dip in vinegar or wine? Perhaps we should; that would certainly please the *Shulchan Aruch* and *Rabbenu Manoach*. Or, instead, perhaps the salt water is teaching us a lesson. Maybe this is part of what we mean when we say *בכל דור ודור חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאילו הוא יצא ממצרים* - in every generation, one is required to view himself as if he left *Mitzrayim*. Maybe this means that in each generation we should find new meaning in the various customs of the *Seder*, all in order to help us place ourselves in the shoes of our ancestors as they experienced redemption. If the salt water helps us imagine the tears of slavery, all the better.



DOV TUCHMAN

YUHSB '18

YACHATZ: THE WHOLE IS GREATER THAN THE SUM OF THE PARTS

Yachatz and the *Afikoman*, breaking the middle *Matzah* in half and eating the remaining half, are among the most iconic parts of the *Seder*. Children all over the world look forward to either hiding the broken piece of *Matzah* at *Yachatz* or being the one to find it at *Tzafun*, when we finally eat the *Afikoman*. But what do these parts of the *Seder* represent? Why are *Yachatz* and *Afikoman* at the beginning and end of the *Seder*, instead of being near or even next to each other, if they seem so intrinsically connected?

In order to properly understand *Yachatz*, the first thing we need to ask is why it is that we break the middle *Matzah* in the first place. The *Passuk* (*Devarim* 16:3) says “*Lo Tochal Alav Chametz, Shivas Yamim Tochal Alav Matzos Lechem Oni*” - “do not eat on it *Chametz*, seven days you shall eat *Matzos, Lechem Oni*”. What does “*Lechem Oni*” mean? The *Gemara* (*Pesachim* 115b) discusses the possible meanings of this phrase. One opinion states that *Lechem Oni* refers to “*Lechem Sheonim Alav Devarim Harbei*” - a bread which we talk over a lot – referring to our discussion of the *Matzah* at *Maggid*, one of the most integral parts of the *Seder*. Another opinion states that the word is derived from the word “*Aniyus*,” meaning poverty. Why is a broken piece of *Matzah* symbolic of poverty? The simple answer is that poor people don’t have enough money to afford a whole loaf of bread, so they have to buy half of a loaf. Others explain that a poor person eats only part of a loaf in a meal rather than eating it all at once, since they need to leave some of the bread for later. Similarly, we break off part of the *Matzah* and hide it away for later.

The *Orchos Chaim* in his *Haggadah* brings another explanation of what *Yachatz* represents. He states that an alternative way to understand the splitting of the *Matzah* is as “a reminder of the splitting of the *Yam Suf*.” This relates to our previous explanation, as a reminder of the Splitting of the Sea also inherently serves as a reminder about the suffering and slavery that occurred beforehand. From this, we can begin to see what *Yachatz* appears to represent. The half loaf, indicative of poverty, broken in half like the sea which reminds us of our past as slaves – it seems clear that *Yachatz* is intended to have us focused on the terrible, awful conditions that we had in Egypt. But to what end? What do we gain by focusing on all the bad, all the horrifying slavery and brutal punishment that we endured in Egypt? Why is this something that belongs in the *Seder*?

The answer can be found by examining the other half of the equation – the finding and subsequent eating of the *Afikoman*. The *Afikoman* itself is a very symbolic thing. It is made of *Matzah*, a simple and plain food, and yet we eat it as our dessert, which is often the highlight of a meal. It represents something that has no intrinsic value as food that one can only eat after they

are full, and as such, it holds tremendous spiritual meaning. Rav Kook, in his *Haggadah*, explains that “the *Afikoman* is eaten...as an end in itself, and not as a necessity. From that...[emerges] the deepest most hidden feelings of the soul.” The act of eating something when you are already full is a way of demonstrating that in this world, you want for nothing.

The *Maharal*, while talking about the *Afikoman*, asks an interesting question: How is it that we are supposed to feel this feeling of earthly detachment as we eat the *Afikoman*, when the very food we are eating is symbolic of poverty? He determines that in fact there is no contradiction; this seeming clashing of ideologies is what makes the *Afikoman* so incredible. The *Afikoman* represents the freedom that can only be earned through affliction. This piece of *Matzah* represents the absolute pinnacle of human satisfaction – a food that you aren’t allowed to eat unless you no longer need it, packed with the spiritual meaning of *Matzah* without the connotations of poverty that it normally invokes.

After examining both *Yachatz* and the *Afikoman*, the balance seems clear. We see an overarching theme throughout the *Seder* of slavery to freedom, squalor to riches, going from the spiritual lows of Egypt to the receiving of the Torah at *Har Sinai*. These pieces seem to line up nicely along that theme. In order to achieve the intense spiritual high of the *Afikoman*, we first have to relive the pain and suffering of Egypt through *Yachatz*. Before we can eat the food of the satiated, we need to break the bread like the poorest of the poor. This year, when we go through *Yachatz*, and we relive the poverty and slavery, may we find ourselves at the beginning of an upwards journey that takes us higher and higher until the coming of *Mashiach*, *Bimeheira Biyameinu*, Amen.



**RABBI
SHIMON
KERNER**

MAGGID SHIUR

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE QUESTIONS

One of the things that jumps out at us on the *Seder* night is the fact that the *Haggadah* insists on a question and answer format. Many things are done to peak the curiosity of the children and prompt them to ask about the uniqueness of this night - כדי שישאלו התינוקות -

are just a few examples. רבן גמליאל, אחד מי יודע

One famous suggestion is that this highlights one of the differences between זכירה וסיפור יציאת מצרים. *Sipur* demands elaboration and detail which can only be arrived at by carefully probing and questioning.

A second suggestion is that this is one of the ways we achieve the idea of personally reexperiencing the Exodus. While a slave must do as he's told without questioning, it is the privilege of בני חורין to be able to ask.

But as important as it is to ask, one must ask the right questions and in the right manner. Interestingly, the 4th son is not the אינו שואל but the אינו יודע לשאול.

The story is told about Rav Tzvi Hirsch Berliner who came from his Eastern European town filled with scholars and pious people to become the Rav in Mannheim, Germany, where the masses were not learned and unobservant. Everyone was expecting a *Drasha* on *Shabbos Hagadol*, but he didn't give one. He explained that the *Drasha* is based on the *Halacha* that states "30 days before the *Chag* שואלין דורשין - people ask *Shailos*, and the Rav addresses them in his *Drasha* - since no one asked me anything, I didn't need to give any *Drashos*!"

The famous difficulty is raised about what distinguishes the wise son from the wicked son. After all, both seem to want to know what it's all about. Perhaps the answer lies not in what they say, but how they ask and when they ask. The wicked son's question is introduced with the words וכי יאמרו אליכם בניכם whereas the wise son's question is introduced with the words כי ישאלך בנך. What a difference there is between asking and saying! The Chofetz Chaim used to say that for the believer there are no questions but for the non-believer there are no answers - because they aren't really seeking truth and are more interested in the question than the answer. The believer asks with a thirst for real answers. Additionally, the wise son asks, but not on the spot. It's כי ישאלך בנך מחר - he has a נעשה ונשמע approach to Judaism.

A third approach to the importance of the questions on the *Seder* night can best be understood if we ask yet another question: How is the answer of עבדים היינו לפרעה an appropriate answer to the four questions raised by the child? He asked about *Matzah* and *Maror*, about dipping and leaning. But

the answer doesn't seem to address his questions. The well known answer is given by the *Abarbanel*, that the child sees contradictory symbols of slavery and freedom, and we answer by saying that indeed this is the night of transitioning from slavery to freedom. So we have symbols of both.

Rav Dovid Gottlieb suggested that we can answer both of our problems (why are questions so important and how does this passage answer the child) with an idea that touches on the essence of the *Seder* and a core principle of Judaism. Many *Mitzvos* relate back to the Exodus - *Tefillin*, *Mezuzah*, *Ribbis*, honesty, *Shabbos*, to name a few. The *Ramban* (end of *Parshas Bo*) famously explains that the story of the Exodus is the foundation of *Emunah* in the existence of Hashem, *Hashgochas Hashem*, *Schar V'onesh*, *Bchiras Yisrael*, and many core principles of Judaism. Thus the name for the *Chag* as *Chag Haemunah*. The fact that we emphasize questioning is to show that questions aren't a threat or the opposite of faith ח"ו but rather key ingredients of *Emunah*. In Judaism, we don't shy away or suppress questions. On the contrary, when asked properly, only people with real faith need to ask. We may not always get answers that are immediately satisfactory, but we never stop asking because asking itself is an act of serving Hashem. Perhaps we follow up the child's questions with something that doesn't immediately address his questions - and that's exactly the point. The value of the question is more in the question than the answer.

Let us ask away, and express our belief that the *Matzah*, which is called "*Lechem Oni*", which besides poor man's bread, is also explained to mean שעונין עליו דברים הרבה, many answers will come from this לחם דמהימנותא commonly also known as the bread of faith, including the complete *Geula* speedily in our days, *Amen*.



**SHIMI
KAUFMAN**

YUHSB '21

HA LACHMA ANYA - FREE TIME

The passage of *Ha Lachma Anya* appears to be constructed of three unrelated sentences. We begin by declaring that the *Matzah* is the bread of affliction, which our forefathers ate while they were in *Mitzrayim*. We then shift to inviting anyone who needs to come eat and make their *Pesach Seder*. Finally, we conclude by saying that while this year we are slaves and in *Galus*, next year we will be free in *Eretz Yisroel*. What is the connection between these three ideas? Additionally, why do we refer to ourselves as slaves on the night of the *Seder*, which is all about celebrating our freedom from the oppression of *Mitzrayim*?

The *Medrash (Shemos Rabbah 16:2)* says that the goal of the *Korban Pesach* was to draw the Jewish people away from *Avodah Zarah*. How was the *Korban Pesach* meant to draw the people away from serving idols?

The *Meforshim* explain that the sin of *Avodah Zarah* is the sin of serving oneself before Hashem. The *Avodah Zarah* which the Jews worshipped in the *Midbar*, and again in the time of *Eliyahu*, was called *Ba'al*, meaning "master". *Ba'al* was worshipped in a grotesque manner; worshippers would pay homage by urinating and defecating on a statue of the deity. Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz explained that the sin of worshipping *Ba'al* is when we become our own master, trying to impose our own will onto the god as opposed to the other way around. This is why *Ba'al* is worshipped in such a disgusting manner; its defining characteristic is that the worshippers dictate what service is best for it.

Pesach is a holiday defined by times. Hashem gave *Beis Din* the power to declare the months of the year whenever we choose, and all the *Yomim Tovim* are placed based on *Beis Din's* decision. However, the one condition is that *Pesach* must always fall out in the springtime. The *Yom Tov* of *Pesach* is the only time in which the Torah explicitly dictates that a *Yom Tov* must fall out in a certain season, and our entire calendar is based around fulfilling this condition. The laws of the holiday itself are also even more time-related than usual; we must bake *Matzah* before 18 minutes, stop eating *Chametz* at the fourth hour, burn it at the sixth, start the *Seder* right after *Tzeis*, and so on. The *Yom Tov* of *Pesach* is about submitting ourselves to Hashem's will and following what He wants, not vice-versa.

This is why the *Korban Pesach* was designed to take the Jews away from *Avodah Zarah*. The service of *Pesach*, with all its time-oriented restrictions, is meant to remind us that our time is not our own. Each of us has a job to do, and it is up to us to utilize all of our strengths to do what Hashem wants of us, not the other way around. Perhaps this is why, when rebuking *Bnei Yisrael* for worshipping *Ba'al*, *Eliyahu HaNavi* said - עַד־מָתִי אַתֶּם פֹּסְחִים עַל־שְׂתֵי הַסַּעֲפִים

until when will you dance between two ideas? *Eliyahu* was asking how long the Jews would continue to ignore this idea of *Pesach* and insist their time was their own. [Incidentally, the Rebbe Reb Bunim once said that this *Passuk* was meant to ask how long the Jews would neglect the two סעפים, chapters, in *Shulchan Aruch*, which talk about all of our intentions being for the sake of heaven].

Many *Meforshim* ask why it is that we invite our guests during *Ha Lachma Anya*, once we have already practically begun the *Pesach Seder*. The commonly given answer is that we are truly inviting ourselves, before we begin *Maggid*, to seize the opportunities of *Pesach* and to grow from the experience.

With these ideas, we can answer our original questions. We begin *Ha Lachma Anya* with a declaration about the *Matzah*, which must be made hastily, stating that it is “the bread of our affliction”. In truth, it is hard to submit ourselves fully to Hashem and we often feel as though the *Mitzvos* are a burden on us, *Chas V'Shalom*. We thus extend the opportunity to ourselves; come see how satisfying and fulfilling a life of *Pesach*, of using our time to serve Hashem, can truly be. We then conclude that we are now slaves, but we will soon be free. A slave is not a master of his own time. He is forced to do his master's bidding whenever the master wants and he therefore resents his master. We, at the time of the *Seder*, are slaves to *Ba'al*, thinking that we should be able to dictate our own lives and fed up with constantly serving Hashem. However, when we eat the *Korban Pesach* and draw ourselves away from the mindset of *Ba'al*, of being our own master, we begin to see that in truth, we are more free than if we were merely slaves to our own desires.

We should be *Zoche* to be able to invite each other to eat the *Korban Pesach* together in *Yerushalayim HaBenuyah, Bimheirah B'Yameinu Amen!*

MAH NISHTANA - WHY NO WINE?



SHUA PARISER

YUHSB '20,
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Little Yankele is about to get up on the chair. He's been working on this for the past 3 months in school. His *Morah* taught him the tune, and the questions, and how to have the exact shyness in order to look very cute. He opens his mouth and he sings in a shy, timid voice, *מה נשתנה הלילה הזה מכל הלילות*. "מה נשתנה הלילה הזה מכל הלילות." He gets through the four questions, and everyone is clapping. The real question is why is there no mention of the *Arba Kosos*? Such a big difference, yet no mention of the *Arba Kosos*.

The *Bircas Hashir* and the *Chassam Sofer* both point out a very simple reason for this: Only one cup has been consumed, and therefore it looks like a regular *Shabbos* or *Yom Tov*. The questions of the *Mah Nishtanah* all refer to things that have already been seen at the *Seder* table (either actually performed, or just set out), unlike the *Arba Kosos*. Having wine on the table indicates nothing out of the ordinary, for even after *Kiddush*, we often drink wine over the course of our meals. As for the premature pouring of the second cup, although this is indeed meant to generate curiosity, it still does not provide a reason for asking about four cups that we drink on this night, since this has yet to occur.

The *Beer Miriam* notes that even if it would be recognized at this time that we will ultimately consume four cups, this would give no cause for question, since we drink on other nights too, especially at festive gatherings.

The *Aruch Hashulchan* reminds us that all the nations celebrate great events with drink, not just Jews. Therefore, even if there is a reason to question the particular nature of our rejoicing on this night, mentioning the *Arba Kosos* along with the other strange things that we do would seem out of place.

The *Abarbanel* feels that such a question does not belong here for a different reason. He claims that drinking wine is not an absolute indication of our liberated status, for even slaves and otherwise oppressed people often revel in drink. Thus, whether we are free or in servitude, there is nothing perplexing about this activity.

The *Maharal's* position is that we only ask about those things which serve, or themselves are *Mitzvos Deoraysa*. *Arba Kosos*, however, are strictly *Miderabanan*. The third and fourth questions might be *Derabanan*, but they serve *Mitzvos Deoraysa*. Leaning is for *Matzah*, while dipping is for *Marror*. May we be *Zoche* that this year we should be able to eat *Marror* at a *Deoraysa* level.

DON'T BREAK THOSE BONES: HOW TO TRULY ENVISION LEAVING MITZRAYIM AT THE SEDER



**BINYAMIN
FOX**

YUHSB '21

The objective of *Leil Haseder*, the *Seder* night, is to tell the *Pesach* story, thereby fulfilling the *Mitzvah* of *Sipur Yetzias Mitzrayim*. Moreover, through the performance of *Mitzvos* at the *Seder* and the recounting of the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, one successfully fulfills the *Haggadah's* mandate: “חייב אדם לראות את עצמו כאילו הוא יצא ממצרים” - Each person is required to view himself at the *Seder* as if he himself left *Mitzrayim* - outlined in *Avadim Hayinu*.

In *Mah Nishtana*, we describe how as opposed to all other nights, at the *Seder* we exclusively eat *Matzah* and *Maror*, dip a vegetable twice, and lean while eating and drinking. There are additional symbolic actions and *Mitzvos* peculiar to the *Seder* night, which are not mentioned in the text of *Mah Nishtana*, such as drinking the four cups of wine. All these special *Mitzvos* of the night certainly help, but is that really enough to fulfill *Sipur Yetzias Mitzrayim* and to envision that we, ourselves, left *Mitzrayim*? How do we actually fulfill this seminal directive of *Liros Es Atzmo*? How do we ensure that when sitting at the *Seder*, we will properly envision and feel as if we left *Mitzrayim*?

A potential answer to this question can be found in the *Sefer Hachinuch's* explanation for why it is prohibited to break the bones of the *Korban Pesach* while eating it (*Mitzvah* 16). The *Sefer Hachinuch* explains that the true goal of the *Mitzvos* and *Halachos* of the *Seder* night, including the *Korban Pesach*, is to help us properly remember *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, thereby fulfilling the *Mitzvah* of *Sipur Yetzias Mitzrayim*. The reasoning behind the prohibition to break the bones of the *Korban Pesach*, says the *Chinuch*, lies in the famous principle of “*Acharei Hapeulos Nimschachos Halevavos*,” - after one's actions, the heart follows. When a person repeats a behavior over and over again, the thoughts which the action provoke become ingrained in his or her psyche. It is possible through self-modeling to arrive at a point where one truly feels and experiences an event.

So what does this have to do with not breaking a bone? The *Sefer Hachinuch* explains that on a yearly basis we commemorate *Yetzias Mitzrayim* by envisioning ourselves as being free, even like a king. In order to truly feel like royalty, we are prompted to act in a way befitting a king. Hence, we are forbidden to break the bones of the *Korban Pesach*, since doing so is undignified, and is akin to the behavior of a dog. This would certainly be antithetical to the etiquette of a king! Thus, through the conscious commandment and action of not breaking the bones of the *Korban Pesach*, the thought that we are free, dignified human beings becomes inculcated within us, and we can full-heartedly pronounce each and every year on *Pesach* that we have left the bondage of *Mitzrayim* to

become free people.

I would like to suggest that this idea developed by the *Sefer Hachinuch* can apply to all of the *Mitzvos* performed at the *Seder* as well. When we perform the different *Mitzvos* of the night, such as eating *Matzah*, drinking the four cups of wine, and telling over the *Pesach* story with true thought and intensity, these actions and efforts stick with us and become ingrained within us, until the point that we emerge from the *Seder* at the end of the night truly feeling, with our whole hearts, that we have fulfilled the *Mitzvah* of “*Liros Es Atzmo.*” By doing so, we can properly imagine that we, ourselves, left *Mitzrayim*.

On a similar note, the *Rambam* famously replaced the word “*Liros*” in the aforementioned phrase with the word “*Liharos*”, meaning to present oneself. Based on this idea, we can suggest that the *Rambam* is teaching that through our actions at the *Seder* (performing the *Mitzvos*, telling the story... etc), we must actively demonstrate to ourselves that we left *Mitzrayim*. The way that we do such is “*Acharei Hapeulos;*” performing *Mitzvah* after *Mitzvah*, delving into the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, until our freedom becomes truly ingrained and inculcated within us, and we truly feel as if we ourselves left *Mitzrayim*.

Ultimately, it is clear that the principle of “*Acharei Hapeulos Nimschachos Halevavos*” is the key to the *Pesach Seder*; it serves as the conduit through which our actions at the *Seder* night, our rendition of the *Pesach* story, and fulfillment of the *Seder*’s special *Mitzvos* enable us to truly experience and imagine the glory of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* happening right before our eyes, at our *Seder* table.

Chag Kasher V'Sameach!

FREEDOM: A SITUATION OR A MINDSET?



**DOV
TUCHMAN**

YUHSB '18

The story of the *Rabbanim* in Bnei Brak is one of the odder stories in the *Haggadah*. Although it makes sense in the immediate context – it’s an example of talking about *Yetzias Mitzrayim* for a long time – the story still raises a lot of questions. One of the more common questions is why were these *Rabbanim* in Bnei Brak in the first place? Or, more specifically, why did the *Haggadah* feel the need to inform us of this? After all, the paragraph is extremely short, only one sentence and 36 words – why was it so important to tell us that they were all in Bnei Brak?

The *Gemara* (*Sanhedrin* 32b) discusses where the different sages in the story lived. The *Gemara* states, “Follow the Sages to their academies – Rabbi Eliezer to Lod, Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai to Beror Chayil, Rabbi Yehoshua to Peki’in, Rabban Gamliel to Yavneh, Rabbi Akiva to Bnei Brak.” It would seem that the significance of Bnei Brak is simply that it was the home of Rabbi Akiva. But why was Rabbi Akiva chosen to host the *Seder* for these *Rabbanim*? It would make much more sense for each of them to have his own *Seder* in his own hometown, or even to go to one of the other *Rabbanim*! After all, Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua were Rabbi Akiva’s teachers; wouldn’t it make much more sense to have the *Seder* at one of them? If they were his teachers, they presumably were more knowledgeable and respected, so why not go to their towns? What was so special about Rabbi Akiva?

The key to this question can be found in the *Mishna* (*Pesachim* 10:6), in which an argument between Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Tarfon is recorded. The *Mishna* states that “One concludes [the *Hallel* at the *Seder*] with redemption. Rabbi Tarfon used to say, ‘Who redeemed us and redeemed our fathers from Egypt’, but he did not conclude with a blessing. Rabbi Akiva used to say, ‘so may the Lord our God and the God of our fathers enable us to reach other seasons and festivals in peace...’ until he ended with ‘blessed are You, who has redeemed Israel.” According to Rabbi Tarfon, the blessing of redemption on *Seder* night deals only with the redemption from Egypt. On the other hand, Rabbi Akiva holds that the blessing deals even with the future redemption, and we therefore express our hopes that we will yet rejoice at the building of Jerusalem and the renewal of the *Beis Hamikdash* Service.

This is very typical of Rabbi Akiva. He was well known among the *Rabbanim* for his never-ending optimism and love of his fellow man. He was the one who famously erected the phrase “*Veahavta Lereicha Kamocho*” - love your friend as yourself (*Vayikra* 19:18) - as a fundamental guiding principle of the Torah. Another famous incident in which Rabbi Akiva displayed his famous optimism is recorded at the end of *Maseches Makkos* (24b). The

Gemara describes that “the sages saw a fox emerging from the Holy of Holies. The sages began to cry, and Rabbi Akiva began to laugh. The sages said to him ‘why do you laugh?’ He responded back to them, ‘Now that Uriah’s prophecy was fulfilled, that Zion will be ploughed as a field, I can be sure that Zechariah’s prophecy of consolation, ‘Old men and women will yet sit in the streets of Jerusalem’ will also be fulfilled. The sages responded to him, ‘Akiva you have consoled us, Akiva you have consoled us.’” This story shows us the kind of person that Rabbi Akiva was - the kind of person who could see the good in any situation. Rabbi Akiva had the power of consolation. He understood that destruction also has a role to play, that the *Churban* is a preparation for the rebuilding of the *Beis Hamikdash*. The same is true of the *Mishna* we saw earlier: Rabbi Akiva understood that even when we are in exile, we must discuss the joy of redemption and of the rebuilt *Beis Hamikdash*.

From this we can see the answer to our original question. The *Rabbanim* specifically chose to have their *Seder* with Rabbi Akiva since in the time in which they lived, there was much religious persecution, and they wanted to be at the home of the one who had the incredible ability to comfort them. The question remains, however, as to why the *Haggadah* chose to tell us that they were there. The answer, when we think about it, is obvious. The *Haggadah* chose to tell us that they were in Bnei Brak specifically to teach us a lesson about our own reactions to life. No matter the circumstances, we should always be like Rabbi Akiva and see the good in every situation, and *Im Yirtzah Hashem* we will be *Zocheh* to see the coming of *Mashiach Bimeheira Biyameinu, Amen*.

BARUCH HAMAKOM BARUCH WHY?



**DOVID
WARTELSKY**

YUHSB '20,
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The *Haggadah* has a paragraph that seems very out-of-place from the rest of *Magid: Baruch Hamakom*. Why is this here? Why are we saying such a random phraseology at this point in the *Seder*?

Rav Schachter, in his *Haggadah*, answers the first two questions in the name of his *Rebbi*, Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik. He says that this statement is a kind of *Birchas Hatorah*, a way of differentiating between the type of *Talmud Torah* we have been doing until now and the type which we are now beginning. The *Gemara* in *Pesachim* 116a explicitly states that the *Mitzvah* of *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim* is exclusively from the paragraph of *Arami Oved Avi*. The Rav, based on that *Gemara*, developed that this *Talmud Torah* of *Leil Haseder* is unique, and, based on the fact that we say a second set of *Birchos Hatorah* upon getting an *Aliya* despite the fact that we already have said them in *Birchos Hashachar*, that we must therefore say a second set of *Birchos Hatorah*. Thus, we must say the paragraph of *Baruch Hamakom*.

However, one could ask the following question: why does *Leil Haseder* require a special type of *Talmud Torah*? Why can't we just read the *Pesukim* from the actual *Parshiyos* of *Shemos*, *Vaeira*, and *Bo*? And, what makes this *Limud* different from all other *Limudim*? There are a few answers to these questions. The first is that the difference between this *Limud* and all others is that in this *Limud*, there is a specific format that is mandated by *Halacha* to learn it: in question-and-answer form. This was pointed out by Rav Chaim Brisker (The Rav's great-grandfather) and is brought down in *Haggadas Shiras Haleviim*, in which it is described as being one of the differences between the *Mitzvah* of *Zechiras Yetzias Mitzrayim* which applies every night and *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim*, which applies only on *Leil Haseder*, and the *Drashos* of *Tzei Ulmad* are, indeed, in question-and-answer format (albeit with unspoken questions).

Another answer is that on *Leil Haseder*, we are supposed to only speak about and recognize Hashem. Thus, Moshe's name is not found in the *Haggadah* (with one exception, in which he is referred to as "*Eved HaShem*" [one of three places in the Torah], and thus inspired the people to fear HaShem and his servant instead of fearing him because of HaShem, which was generally the case in other scenarios), because *Seder* night is about us and HaShem, not the mortal He chose to manifest His plan. Thus, we can't read from the *Parshiyos* of *Shemos*, *Vaeira*, and *Bo*, as everything there is through the servant, not through the Master.

Leil Haseder is not just about connecting to our children and handing them the *Mesora* which we hold so dear, it is also about fostering our relationship, connection, and realization of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* and his manifestations in this world. Thus, next time you sing *Baruch Hamakom*, think about the uniqueness of the *Toras Hashem*, of *Leil Haseder*, and of Hashem himself.



**SHIMI
KAUFMAN**

YUHSB '21

CHACHAM - BEGGING THE QUESTION

חכם מה הוא אומר? מה העדות והחקים והמשפטים אשר צוה ה' אלהינו אתכם? ואף אתה אמר לו כהלכות הפסח: אין מפטירין אחר הפסח אפיקומן

The wise son, what does he say? What is this testament, these laws and ordinances which Hashem our God has commanded to us? And you shall tell him the laws of Pesach: one may not eat anything after the Pesach offering, represented by the Afikomen.

The scene of the four sons is easy enough to imagine. Our *Haggados* as children all had pictures representing the different characters; as Rabbi Joshua Blass once said, the wise son with his *Sefer*, the wicked son with his newspaper, the simple son with his yo-yo, and the *Sheeino Yodea Lishol* with his pacifier. In this generalization, one is tempted to look at the wicked son as the opposite of the wise son. This parallel, however, seems flawed; one would expect the *Haggadah* to draw a contrast to the wicked son with a righteous son. Why does the *Haggadah* call him the wise son? This choice is especially strange, since the wise son's question is a basic *Halachic* inquiry about the basic laws of *Pesach* night. Why would the wise son not have a more intelligent question to ask? Additionally, why does the father answer his son by telling him that he may not eat anything after the *Afikomen*? Why not teach him about something else related to *Magid* or the other *Mitzvos* of the night?

The *Shemen Hatov*, Rav Shmelke of Nikolsburg, points out that the Torah introduces the questions of both the *Chacham* and the *Tam*, with the words "And it will be when your son will ask you tomorrow..." However, the Torah does not use the word "tomorrow" when introducing the question of the *Rasha*. Rav Shmelke explains that even though the *Chacham* and the *Tam* have questions, they are willing to put them aside and experience the night of *Pesach* as intended. They leave their questions for "tomorrow", opting to allow the *Seder* to operate without intruding with challenges. The *Rasha*, on the other hand, takes every opportunity to prod and poke at the father and try to stump him. The *Rasha* refuses to do something if he does not understand it immediately, while the *Chacham* and *Tam* are more inclined to allow the events of the night to unfold.

The *Mishna* (*Avos* 4:1) states: "Who is wise? He who learns from every man". The *Chacham* is not necessarily a genius; he acknowledges that his understanding has serious flaws and is okay with allowing the events of the night to unfold as intended. This makes him the perfect foil to the *Rasha*, who cannot stand to have anything happen which he does not immediately comprehend. This is why we tell the *Rasha* that he would have been left in *Mitzrayim*; the whole redemption from *Mitzrayim* required the Jews to bring the *Korban Pesach*, one of the most illogical and convoluted laws in the

Torah. The *Rasha*, with his mindset, would have refused to participate, and thus would have been left behind.

This presents us with two questions. Rav Menachem Mendel Schneerson, The Lubavitcher Rebbe, asks (*Likutei Sichos* Vol. 1 pg. 247) why the four sons are arranged in the order that they are. They are not in order of piety, since the wicked son is second, and it is not the order in which they appear in the Torah, since there the *Sheeino Yodea Lishol* is first. Rather, answers Rav Schneerson, the *Haggadah* arranges the four sons in order of their intellectual capabilities; first the wise son, then the wicked son, followed by the simple son and the one who lacks the ability to ask. However, according to the *Shemen Hatov*, it would seem that the *Tam* should be placed before the *Rasha*, as his question is viewed more positively. In truth, what is the difference between the *Tam* and the *Chacham*?

The answer to this question lies in the specificity of each one's question. The *Tam* asks, "what is this?" He is a passive learner, and cannot be bothered to form a more detailed and pointed question. In truth, his willingness to leave his question until later is not out of respect, but out of laziness; at the end of the day, the *Tam* does not care if he receives an answer to his question, and he will continue to go with the current of things no matter what happens. The *Chacham* and *Rasha*, on the other hand, both ask specific questions about the rituals and practices done; the difference is that the *Rasha* asks to challenge, while the *Chacham* asks to learn. Thus, the *Rasha* does indeed ask a more intelligent question than the *Tam*, but it is asked for the wrong reasons.

This is why we answer the *Chacham* with the *Halacha* not to eat anything after the *Afikomen*. We tell the wise son to continue with his current mindset and to take in the whole *Pesach* experience, from beginning to end, all the way until the *Afikomen*, the pinnacle of the night's absurdity and the thing the *Rasha* could not handle. Once he does that, he can begin to analyze his experience in the proper manner. It is first important for him to see and observe how *Pesach* is meant to be done.

If we want to grow in our religious experience, we must be like the *Chacham*. We cannot be satisfied with any aspect of Judaism at face value, like the *Tam*, and must constantly prod and poke to find the deeper meaning behind everything. However, our questions cannot come from a place of haughtiness or a need to challenge, as the *Rasha's* question does. We must be willing to take everything in its entirety; only then we can begin to ask our questions.



**DOVI
GOLDBERG**

YUHSB '23

NEVER GIVE UP

The *Rasha* is perhaps one of the least thought about of the four sons. Our understanding of him is surface level and has a very bad guy-good guy feel. Surely *Chazal* and the Torah were trying to teach us something deeper. The *Nesivos Shalom Zatzal* wrote about this at length in his *Sefer on Pesach*. He wrote that the *Rasha* is an observant Jew, just like you and me. However, he has one distinguishing factor. The *Nesivos Shalom* writes that the *Rasha's* problem is that he gives up. Every time he slips up, a lot or a little, he falls into a state of desperation. His question is not a question, but a statement he unfortunately believes. “מה העבודה הזאת, לכם”, “what is this service? It is a job for you.” He feels like he has dug his grave, and he doesn't think he can get out. I can't do this, this is for you, the worthy Jew. With a proper understanding of the *Rasha's* predicament, we can properly understand the response given. We, the worthy and good guys in his eyes, tell him of our struggle in Egypt. However, we did not give up like he did, therefore it would have been us who would have been saved, as opposed to him. Then we knock out his teeth. We cannot have someone who believes that there is no *Teshuva*, that one cannot improve, as that is an essential part of Judaism. I believe that this is the real essence of *Pesach* and the *Seder*. In Egypt we were on the last level of *Tumah*, the 49th. We did not see this as the end, (as the *Rasha* would) we saw it as just the beginning. We should live every day remembering that we were freed from Egypt, from the 49th level of *Tumah*. No one will ever sink so low, and the worst thing you can do is give up.



**NOAM
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YUHSB '19

THE DIALOGUE OF THE TORAH'S TAM

One of the most well-known parts of the *Seder* is the section of the four prototypical children. The answers the *Haggadah* relates to each child are quite famous, but how many of us have actually looked at the *Pesukim* that the *Haggadah* copies and pastes from?

The *Tam's* question of “*Mah Zos*” or “what is this” seems to be a simple question of what the *Seder* is, but when one looks at the *Pesukim*, one realizes that the question is not really about the *Seder* night at all, the *Haggadah* just copies it. The actual question is so much more.

In *Shemos Perek 23*, the Torah describes the *Mitzvah* of *Kedushas Habechor* by animals and then *Pidyon Chamor* (redeeming the donkey through exchange), or the other option of breaking its neck. It is this strange practice about which the *Tam* asks, “What on earth is this?”

The answer is profound. The Torah instructs the parent to explain that when we left *Mitzrayim*, Hashem killed all of the Egyptian *Bechoros*, so therefore, as *Hakaras Hatov*, we bring our firstborn animals as *Korbanos*.

When we read the *Haggadah* and we reach the question of the *Tam*, we should think about the actual question and answer in the Torah that it is taken from, and the message of *Hakaras Hatov* that is being taught there. As we continue throughout the night and experience the feeling of freedom, let's also remember the debt of gratitude we owe to Hashem for taking us out of *Mitzrayim*.

BAAVUR WHAT?



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The fourth of the sons is the *She'eino Yodea Lishol*, the one who does not know how to ask. The *Passuk* that is used to talk to him is, "והגדת לבנך ביום" "ההוא לאמר, בעבור זה עשה ה' לי בצאתי ממצרים" "And you should tell your son on that day saying, It is because of this that Hashem did so to me when I left Egypt." What is the word לאמר coming to add?

The *Malbim* in his *Haggadah* states that it means that you should convey the story of the redemption in a way that will cause you to have to "say" more, i.e., the child should be stimulated to come up with the questions concerning the practices of *Pesach*.

The *Sh'lah Hakadosh* in his *Haggadah* claims the words refer to the child, not you. He says it means that one should elaborate on *Yetzias Mitzrayim* to the point where the child himself is sufficiently knowledgeable to answer the wicked son's question on his own, "It is because of this that Hashem did this to me when taking me out of *Mitzrayim*."

What is "because of this", "בעבור זה", "because of this"? To what is the "this" referring? *Rashi* and *Ibn Ezra*, in their *Peirushim* on *Chumash*, both interpret this *Passuk* (*Shemos* 13:8) to mean that we merited the miraculous redemption brought about by Hashem in anticipation of our future observance of the *Mitzvos* of *Pesach*. So "this" refers to the *Seder* that we are conducting at that moment, and we are saying that this very *Seder* is the reason Hashem took us out. The *Ramban* however, feels that the *Passuk* should be understood as follows: "It is because of the thing that Hashem did for me when I went out of *Mitzrayim*." I carry out the *Mitzvos* of *Pesach* because of what Hashem did. So the intent is actually reversed. *Im Yirtzeh Hashem* we should be able to fulfill all the *Mitzvos* of *Pesach* including the *Korban Pesach*, *Bimheirah Beyameinu*.



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YUHSB '22

YACHOL MEROSH CHODESH - SHOW, DON'T TELL

The paragraph of *Yachol Merosh Chodesh* establishes the proper setting required in order to fulfill the *Mitzvah* of *Vehigadeta Levincha* in the best way. After bringing up the possibility that the *Mitzvah* to tell the *Pesach* story could even exist from the beginning of *Nissan*, the *Haggadah* concludes that the special *Mitzvah* of *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim*, telling the story of our redemption from Egypt, must be done where the *Matzah* and *Maror* are visibly present. What is so beneficial about having visual aids? Are they in fact a prerequisite necessary for one to fulfill his obligation to tell the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* properly? Is one unable to tell this story without props? Additionally, why is the paragraph of *Yachol Merosh Chodesh* placed here, right after the *Arba Banim* specifically? Why not put it before?

Rav Baruch Epstein, in his *Sefer Baruch Sheamar* on the *Haggadah*, suggests that having a special night for *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim* where we require visual aids is necessary because attitudes are best represented in concrete actions. Rav Epstein points to a *Gemara* in *Shabbos* (69b) that says if a person is lost in the desert and he loses track of when *Shabbos* is, he should set aside a day of the week and make that day *Shabbos*. How, Rav Epstein asks, can a person make that day into *Shabbos*? He explains that through the concrete actions of *Kiddush* and *Havdalah*, the lost traveller establishes the *Kedusha* of *Shabbos* on that day, even if it is not actually *Shabbos*. Similarly, the *Matzah* and *Maror* represent concrete *Mitzvos* that are done on *Pesach*. These *Mitzvos*, represented by the presence of these foods, establish certain attitudes that are integral to the appropriate *Pesach* experience; specifically, the *Maror* represents the slavery, and the *Matzah* represents the freedom.

Rav Shmshon Rafael Hirsch, in his *Haggadah*, explains that the requirement for visual aids can teach us a lesson about *Chinuch*. He explains that children must be taught not only through lectures, but through seeing actual performance of *Mitzvos*, to allow them to experience the *Simcha* which a *Mitzvah* can bring. Children learn from action, not just from speech. What is it about seeing something be done that can have such an impact on the viewer?

We can suggest that the impact of an action is that it brings something from the theoretical to the real. When a child sees a teacher or parent actually involved in the performance of a *Mitzvah*, the child understands that it is possible to take Torah and make it real in one's everyday life. The visual aids of *Pesach* are integral to the *Mitzvah* of *Vehigadeta Levincha*, for they represent concrete *Mitzvah* actions, and thereby give forth a unique and impactful understanding of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* to the child.

With this understanding of the significance of *Matzah* and *Maror* and why

visual aids like them are so important, we can now understand the placement of this requirement in the *Haggadah*. This is the paragraph before the real beginning of the telling of the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. One can suggest that the reason that this was put at the end of the *Arba Banim* is to tell all of us, no matter what type of child is asking and no matter what answer you give them, that the actions of the rest of the *Seder* will set the mood and provide the experience which you want everyone, child or adult, to take away from the *Seder*. The *Haggadah* is almost telling us, ‘the *Matzah* and the *Marror* in front of you and the other *Mitzvos* that will be performed are the real way to convey the themes of the *Seder*’; as Rav Epstein explains, our attitudes follow our actions.

This theme, of setting the tone through our actions, is a constant throughout the *Seder* night. For example, we lean at the *Seder* in order to create a feeling of royalty and freedom. There are many other examples, but the most poignant example, is the famous phrase לראות את אדם באילו הוא יצא ממצרים” - in every generation, each person is required to see themselves as if they left Egypt.” The *Ritva* in his *Haggadah* has a slightly different version of this phrase; instead of the word לראות, he has the word להראות, which means to present oneself. This slight difference in text leads to a very different view of this *Chiyuv*. According to the *Ritva*, the *Chiyuv* is “to present oneself”, to actually do things that make it feel as if you just left Egypt. It is very possible that this idea is what was at the core of the *Ritva*’s version of this phrase. It is not enough to just view oneself as if he left Egypt; rather one’s actions must reflect and show that he truly feels he is leaving Egypt.

METCHILAH: THE HIDDEN KEY TO THE MESSAGE OF PESACH NIGHT

We begin the main portion of *Magid* by declaring that our ancestors were idol worshippers, but now we are servants of Hashem. What is the role of this paragraph in the *Haggadah*? What importance does the fact that our forefathers were sinners have to us at the *Seder* table?

The most common answer given, the seemingly obvious one, is that to fully appreciate the freedom that Hashem gave us for the purpose of serving Him, we need to recognize where it all started, with us being spiritually lost. If this is the case, however, then the *Haggadah* is seemingly out of order; the paragraph of *Metchilah* should precede *Avadim Hayinu*, since that is how things happened chronologically. The order makes no sense. With that said, we are back to our original question: what is the role of *Metchilah*, recognizing the idol worship of our forefathers and our transition to the service of Hashem, on the *Seder* night, a night about the exodus from the slavery of Egypt?

I’ve often wondered about this, and the following thought, from Rav Mendel



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Blachman, *RaM at Yeshiva Kerem B'Yavneh*, sheds some light on this issue. The *Rambam* in *Sefer Hamitzvos* (*Mitzvah* 157) quotes the following *Mechilta Dirashbi*:

ולשון מכילתא [דרשב"י במדרש הגדול] מכלל שנאמר כי ישאלך בנך יכול אם ישאלך אתה מגיד לו ואם לאו אין אתה מגיד לו תלמוד לומר והגדת לבנך אף על פי שאינו שואל

"The Mechilta Dirashbi writes that one may have thought, from the verse which states "when your son will ask you tomorrow" (Devarim 6:20) , that one is only required to tell over the story of Mitzrayim if his son actually asks him. To preempt this understanding, the Passuk says "and you shall tell your son" (Shemos 13:8), implying that one should tell over the story of Yetzias Mitzrayim even if his son does not ask."

This *Drasha* seems to make a lot of sense, but there is a glaring issue; the comparison of the two *Pesukim* seems to assume that they are both telling you what to do on *Seder* night. However, this is not the case; the *Passuk* in *Devarim* of *Ki Yishalcha* is taken from Moshe's speech to the people as he neared the end of his life, and has absolutely nothing to do with the *Seder* night specifically. How can the *Mechilta* say that one would think to only answer his son on the *Seder* night if he asks - this *Passuk* has nothing to do with the *Seder* night! Additionally, what exactly are these *Pesukim* instructing us to tell our children on the *Seder* night?

It must be that the *Mechilta* is not comparing the *Pesukim* because they speak about the same time, but rather about the same concept. One might think, based on the *Passuk* in *Devarim*, that the only requirement is to teach these concepts to his children if the child asks the question on any night of the year. The *Passuk* of *Vihigadeta* comes to teach that on the night of the *Seder* specifically, we have a special *Mitzvah* to teach this concept even without being prompted. But the question still remains - what idea is so vital that it is the central piece of the *Seder* night?

We can answer this by taking a look at the *Pesukim*. Moshe tells parents what to answer their sons when asked why we serve Hashem:

ואמרת לבנך עבדים היינו לפרעה במצרים ויוציאנו ה' ממצרים ביד חזקה: ויתן ה' אותות ומופתים גדולים ורעים במצרים בפרעה ובכל ביתו לעינינו: ואותנו הוציא משם למען הביא אותנו לתת לנו את הארץ אשר נשבע לאבותינו: ויצונו ה' לעשות את כל החקים האלה ליראה את ה' אלוהינו לטוב לנו כל הימים לחיותנו כהיום הזה: וצדקה תהיה לנו כי נשמר לעשות את כל המצוה הזאת לפני ה' אלוהינו כאשר ציונו

"Tell your child: we were slaves to Pharaoh in Mitzrayim, and Hashem took us out with a strong hand. Hashem gave great and terrible signs and wonders to Mitzrayim and to Pharaoh and his household. As for us, He took us out from there, in order to bring us to the land which He swore to our fathers. Hashem took us out in order to perform these laws and to fear Hashem our God, to be good for us and to sustain us to this day. When we guard and perform these commandments before Hashem as he commanded, it is good for us."

Rashbi is teaching us in this *Mechilta* that this answer is the goal of the *Seder* night. The Jews were in a terrible place. As described in *Yechezkel* (*Perek* 20), the Jews were so far from Hashem that they rejected His offer of salvation in return for abandoning idol worship, choosing instead to remain as slaves with their idols. Instead, Hashem had to intervene at the last moment for the sake of His own name. The *Rambam* (*Hilchos Avodah Zarah* 1:3) describes the change that took place on the night of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. He describes that originally, our forefathers had found Hashem, but we had lost Him in *Mitzrayim*. Thus, when Hashem took us out of Egypt, it was against our will; Hashem had to redeem us both physically and spiritually. He taught us how to serve Him properly, and showed us that it was the right thing to do. *Rashbi* is teaching that the purpose of the *Seder* night, of *Vihigadeta Levincha*, is to tell our children this very idea even if they don't ask. We must teach our children about our return to religion, the monotheistic service of Hashem, even if they do not want to hear. In short, our job is a theological one; an explanation of why we are religious and how *Yetzias Mitzrayim* prompted it. That is supposed to be the focus of the *Seder* night.

With this in mind, the answer to our original question becomes crystal clear. We mention the idol worship of our forefathers at the *Seder* because there is a second, more important, underlying theme of the night in addition to that of the newfound freedom. As the *Rambam* says (*Hilchos Chametz Umatzah* 7:4), we begin the night of the *Seder* with shame, since we speak about how our forefathers served idols, and we end with praise of Hashem that he brought us close to Him and separated us from the nations of the world. The *Rambam* seemingly means to say that not only do we focus on our freedom, but there is a second theme which we begin with. However, the *Rambam* in his *Haggadah* does not begin with this theme; he has the paragraph of *Avadim Hayinu* first! Rather, it must be that when the *Rambam* said that our having been idol worshippers must come first, he meant must be our primary focus. This very theme of our return to Hashem, our new understanding of the importance of living in fear and awe of His oneness and that *Mitzvos* are the way to accomplish that, is the goal and essence of the *Seder*.

VEHI SHEAMDA - THE WINE OF OUR SALVATION

The *Mah Nishtana* has been asked, the *Rasha's* teeth have been knocked out, and we are now up to one of the most memorable parts of the *Seder*, *Vehi Sheamdah*. We raise our cups, stand up, and recite loudly how our enemies have failed to destroy us over the generations. One thing is strange about this ceremony - why do we raise our cups?

The *Maharal*, in his *Haggadah*, explains that since there are four cups and four *Leshonos* of *Geulah*, the second cup of wine corresponds to the word "*Vehitzalti*" (and I will rescue you), which the Torah uses to describe Hashem's role in *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. The second cup thus represents the characteristic of Hashem's protective embrace, which not only saved us from destructive forces in the past, but continues to shield us from the many evils which rise up against us to this day. This paragraph highlights the constant protection which Hashem had afforded us throughout the ages. Whether it was Lavan, Haman, or Hitler, Hashem is always here to protect us. It is therefore appropriate that we raise our cups, in the spirit of the *Passuk* (*Tehillim* 116:13) "*Kos Yeshuos Esa*" - I shall raise a glass of my salvation - in order to commemorate the protective hand of Hashem symbolized by this cup. The *Aruch Hashulchan*, also citing this *Passuk*, says that wherever we recall Hashem's salvation, we do so with wine in hand. Wine, he explains, is the primary medium for the expression and celebration of great joy, as the *Passuk* in *Tehillim* (104:15) states, "*Yayin Yismach Levav Enosh*" - for wine gladdens a man's heart.

The *Yalkut Shimoni* offers a homiletic interpretation. Our sages, he notes, prohibited the consumption of non-Jewish wine to prevent socialization with non-Jews and, ultimately, intermarriage and assimilation. Thus, we lift up our cup of wine and say, "It is this" - the decree of our sages forbidding non-Jewish wine - "that has stood by our fathers and us" - preventing our destruction through assimilation.



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THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING *SHALEM*

The main portion of *Magid* begins with the story of Lavan, with the *Haggadah* telling us that while Pharaoh only tried to kill the male babies, Lavan tried to destroy all of *Klal Yisroel*. The night of the *Seder* is about recalling the oppression imposed on us by Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Why would we downplay Pharaoh's wickedness at the outset by contrasting him with Lavan?

Rav Chaim Soloveitchik answers that this comparison does not make Pharaoh look better; as a matter of fact, it shows just how terrible and destructive the *Galus* of *Mitzrayim* was. Lavan planned to wipe out Yaakov and all of his children, effectively ending the progeny of Avraham forever. In truth, this was never a threat, as Hashem had already promised Avraham at the *Bris Bein Habesarim* that *Klal Yisroel* would never be totally wiped out. Lavan's plan, while certainly evil, was ultimately never a threat, as we had assurance from Hashem that *Bnei Yisroel* would never totally be destroyed.

Pharaoh, however, was entirely different. Pharaoh declared "*Hava Nischakma Lo*," "let us be wise in dealing with them." Pharaoh understood that the Jews could never be physically wiped out. Instead, Pharaoh determined to have all the Jewish boys killed. Without the men, the Jewish women would be forced to marry Egyptians. The children would be Jewish, to be sure, but without fathers who were torchbearers of the *Mesorah*, those children were certain to abandon their heritage and lose sight of Judaism entirely. Hashem never swore against this kind of destruction! Thus, this comparison highlights Pharaoh's wicked nature; while Lavan sought to do the impossible by physically eradicating *Klal Yisrael*, Pharaoh posed a serious *Hashkafic* threat to the framework of the nation.

The *Haggadah* tells us that *Klal Yisrael* were distinct from the Egyptians in three areas: in their dress, in their names, and in their language. The *Roshei Teivos* of these words in Hebrew (*Malbush, Shem, and Lashon*) spell *Shalem* - complete. Maintaining these three things about their national identity allowed the Jews to remain whole and not splinter off into the fabric of Egyptian society. However, for many of us, we do not maintain these three things ourselves! We speak English, our clothes resemble those of our non-Jewish neighbors, and many of us have names which are American in nature! How are we able to do all this and still not be overwhelmed by the tide of secular culture? The answer is that after *Matan Torah*, these things were no longer necessary - the Torah itself distinguishes us from the nations of the world. While the Jews in Egypt needed to maintain aspects of their national identity in order to prevent assimilation, as long as we hold firm to the Torah, we can rest assured that we will not be swallowed up by the nations of the world.

However, this only works if the Torah shows through us. We need to be recognizably affected by the Torah to the point where it makes us noticeably distinct and unique from the rest of the world. In order to reverse Pharaoh's plan to destroy the Jews by assimilating them, we must take time on the night of the *Seder* to strengthen our commitment to Torah observance, to ensure that our *Mesorah* will never be lost.

TZE ULMAD - THE UNIQUENESS OF LAVAN

“שפרעה לא גזר אלא על הזכרים ולבן ביקש לעקור את הכל” When the *Haggadah* describes the evil plans of our enemies Pharaoh and Lavan, it uses two different verbs. Why, regarding Lavan, does the *Haggadah* say *Bikeish*, that he wanted to kill Yaakov, but regarding Pharaoh it says *Gazar*, that he decreed to kill all the Jews?

The *Chasam Sofer* explains that Lavan only wanted to destroy the Jews, but did not act. He lived with them for years and didn't kill them. Pharaoh, on the other hand, made a *Gezeirah* and did something to try and destroy them. That is why the language used from the *Haggadah* is changed from *Bikeish* to *Gazar*.

If Pharaoh acted against all the Jews, why does the *Haggadah* say he only wanted to kill the males, but here we say that Lavan wanted to kill everyone?

Harav Chaim Kanievsky Shlita answers that it is clear that Pharaoh wanted to kill all the Jews, based on the *Passuk* in *Az Yashir* which says “תמלאמו נפשי. אריק חרבי. תורישמו ידי” “my desire will be filled from them; I will draw my sword, my hand will impoverish them.” Rather, the reason that the author of the *Haggadah* mentioned Lavan's desire to destroy all the Jews is in order to stress the wickedness of Lavan.

But why do we start our telling of Jewish history with Lavan and not with the story of Yaakov and Esav?

The *Maharal* answers that we are bringing up the history of the Jews that is relevant to the topic of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. Esav hated Yaakov for a reason, namely that Yaakov took the *Brachos* which Esav believed to be his birthright. However, the hate which Lavan had for Yaakov, much like the hate of the Egyptians for *Bnei Yisrael*, was a baseless and nonsensical hate; even though the Jews actually helped Lavan and the Egyptians, they hated us for no good reason. That is why we start our telling of Jewish history with Lavan, to stress this baseless hate.



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LESSONS OF THE MAKOS

The *Malbim* points out a pattern in the *Makos*. He describes how the ten *Makos* can be broken down into three sets of three, with a grand finale of *Makas Bechoros*. In each set, there are two witnesses, two *Makos* which were meant to teach a lesson to *Mitzrayim*. When the Egyptians did not learn the lesson, they received a third *Makah* as a punishment. This is why every third *Makah* has no warning proceeding it - those *Makos* were given as punishment to the Egyptians for failing to repent.

The first three *Makos* declare Hashem's existence to Pharaoh and to all of *Mitzrayim*. In the introduction to the *Makos*, when Hashem is instructing Moshe and Aaron on how to commence with *Makas Dam*, He tells them to say to Pharaoh that "by this you shall know that I am Hashem." (*Shemos* 7:17). *Mitzrayim*, a pagan society, would not even recognize Hashem's existence to begin with. Indeed, when Moshe and Aaron had first approached Pharaoh earlier and demanded in the name of Hashem that he let *Bnei Yisrael* go, Pharaoh said: "Who is this Hashem that I should listen to His voice to release *Yisrael*? I do not know this Hashem and *Yisrael* I will not release" (*Shemos* 5:2). In Ancient Egypt, the Pharaoh was worshipped as a god. Pharaoh rejected the possibility that there was a higher power than him, and declared that Hashem could not possibly be King of Kings and have authority over him. Thus, Hashem sent the first set of *Makos* to teach *Mitzrayim* that there is an all-powerful God in the world. Hashem turned the Nile River, the lifeblood of Egypt which was even viewed as some sort of divine being, into actual blood, broadcasting to *Mitzrayim* that their beliefs had been conquered. Similarly, the second *Makah* brings forth *Tzefardeim*, frogs, from the 'great' Nile, demonstrating how there is no other power aside from Hashem.

The second lesson, which Hashem meant to teach the Egyptians through the second group of *Makos*, can be found in Hashem's instruction and explanation of *Makas Arov* to Moshe. Hashem tells Moshe to tell Pharaoh the *Arov* will come "So that you may know that I am Hashem in the midst of the land" (*Shemos* 8:18). The lesson here is that Hashem is actively involved in His creation; there is *Schar Vaonesh*, reward and punishment, which is actively doled out by Hashem. Following this, regarding *Makas Dever*, Hashem warns Pharaoh that He, "Will make a distinction between the livestock of *Yisrael* and the livestock of *Mitzrayim*, and not a thing shall die from *Yisrael*" (*Shemos* 9:4). In this set of *Makos*, the text of the *Chumash* makes a clear distinction between *Bnei Yisrael* and the people of *Mitzrayim*, stressing that *Bnei Yisrael* remained unpunished by these *Makos*. This is to teach that Hashem deals justly with those who are deserving, and punishes those who are wicked.

The final set of *Makos* testifies to Hashem's uniqueness and omnipotence. Hashem tells Moshe to tell Pharaoh that the coming *Makah* will be more incredible than anything that came before, "So that you will know that there is none like Me in all of the world" (*Shemos* 9:14).

This idea is explicitly reflected in these last *Makos* and the language used to describe them. The *Pesukim* about the *Barad* say, "There was none like it in *Mitzrayim* from the day it was founded until now" (*Shemos* 9:18). And by the *Arbeh*, the *Passuk* says "before there had never been locusts such as these and afterward there would not be" (*Shemos* 10:14). This group of *Makos* clearly demonstrates Hashem's incomparable power over all facets of creation. Again, this distinct language is not found in the two earlier sets of *Makos*, as they were not meant specifically to teach this lesson.

Makas Bechoros builds on the foundations set by all the previous *Makos*, and in this culmination, Pharaoh finally relents and sets *Bnei Yisrael* free from centuries of bondage.

In this *Makah*, Hashem sums up all the themes expressed in the previous sets of *Makos*. Hashem first says, "I will go" (*Shemos* 11:4), calling back the first lesson that Hashem truly exists, despite the beliefs of *Mitzrayim*. Hashem then says that *Bnei Yisrael* will remain completely unharmed from this *Makah*, as the *Passuk* says, "So you [*Mitzrayim*] will know that Hashem distinguishes between *Mitzrayim* and *Yisrael*" (*Shemos* 11:7). This serves as a reminder of the second lesson of *Schar Vaonesh*, that Hashem makes a separation between the righteous and the wicked in the universe which He created and in which He is eternally involved.

And finally, Hashem declares how unprecedented the *Makah* would be, as the *Passuk* says, "and there shall be a great cry in all of the land of *Mitzrayim* the likes of which there never was and as such would not be any more" (*Shemos* 11:6). This incredibly striking *Makah*, unique to this moment and this moment alone, teaches the third lesson, that Hashem has the power to perform unprecedented wonders. And so, with these lessons having been expressed, *Bnei Yisrael* were able to finally leave *Mitzrayim* behind. We should be able to see a time where everyone knows Hashem and crowns Him as King!



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DAYENU - HASHEM ALWAYS PAYS

On its face, the paragraph of *Dayenu* seems to present an exhaustive list of individual miracles, each of them inherently great in their own right, for which we need to be thankful and express our overwhelming joy and gratitude to Hashem.

However, in his *Haggadah*, Rav Shimshon Dovid Pincus z'tl offers a unique interpretation that sheds light on the meaning and purpose of *Dayenu*.

He explains that each independent phrase is intended to be read immediately following the opening stanza of the paragraph, *Ilu Hotzianu Mimitzrayim*. The purpose of this is to connect each miracle to the underlying event that the paragraph begins with, namely, Hashem taking us out of Egypt. The enumerated events are not to be viewed merely as individual, albeit inherently great, miracles in their own right. Rather, the *Haggadah* seeks to connect them with the story of *Pesach* and identify them as being part and parcel of the *Geula*.

The importance of this is twofold. First, this is meant to help us understand the great “lengths” that Hashem went to in order to fully punish the Egyptians and exact retribution on our behalf. This provided a certain sense of closure to the Jewish people, that was pivotal, if not necessary, in helping them transition from centuries of slavery into becoming the “chosen people.” Furthermore, this connection also helps highlight how Hashem “repaid” the Jewish people for all the suffering they experienced while in *Galus Mitzrayim*. For every measure of pain, there was another miracle that Hashem blessed us with in the aftermath. For all the suffering we experienced, we received additional blessing when it was all said and done.

This delivers a powerful message of hope and faith which has been undoubtedly harnessed by Jews throughout history. Imagine the strength this concept could, and perhaps did, provide Jews during the Holocaust, for example. While suffering at the hands of the Nazis, *Yemach Shemam*, a Jew could rest assured that not only would Hashem come to his aid, but He would surely exact retribution on his torturers and repay him with blessing, at the right time.

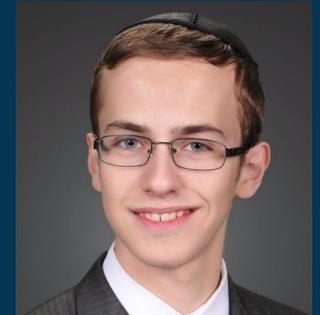
We are seeing this come to fruition *Bizman Hazeh*. We are flourishing as a nation, largely due to the sacrifice of those who preceded us. And in that vein, we must appreciate that the unprecedented growth that we experience in contemporary times, both spiritual and physical, is the result of tremendous *Bracha* owed by Hashem to previous generations who paved the way for our success.

Even at a time when we are experiencing a difficult *Eis Tzara*, we must

strengthen ourselves to remember Hashem’s kindness and have faith in His ultimate plan. It is through hope that we persevere and with the strength of Hashem that we always flourish in the end.

Hopefully, by internalizing this message we can live inspired lives, despite the trying times we currently find ourselves in, and bring a definitive end to this final *Galus* by meriting the ultimate *Geula*, quickly in our days.

DAYENU: A GUIDE TO AHAVAS HASHEM



**DAVID
TANNER**

YUHSB '18

Everyone is familiar with *Dayenu*, one of the highlights of the *Seder*. Whether you sing it or say it, everyone has likely considered the obvious question it raises: is it really true? There are many beautiful, well-known *Divrei Torah* explaining the significance of each stage of our *Geula* mentioned in *Dayenu*—but would any one of those stages, without the progressive steps in our redemption, really be “enough”? For example, the fifth stanza states “had Hashem given us the Egyptians’ wealth and not split the Sea - it would have been enough.” How could it have been? We would still be slaves to Pharaoh!

A *Mashal* is in order. Imagine a child born to a loving family. His grandfather, overjoyed at the birth of his new grandson, takes it upon himself that his grandson will never be lacking anything. He orders a full wardrobe of onesies, bibs, and pacifiers — not to mention the finest quality baby food. When the child grows older, his Zeide is sure to order a state-of-the-art stroller and carseat, cushioned for maximum comfort. As the child begins to start school, his Zeide consistently checks in with his *Morahs*, *Rebbeim*, and teachers, making sure he is succeeding academically. Before long, our protagonist is finishing high school; at graduation, Zeide wipes away a joyous tear of *Nachas* and whispers in his beloved grandson’s ear, “whichever *Yeshiva* in *Eretz Yisrael* you want to attend, whether you want to stay one year or more — it’s all prepaid.”

What does the grandson do at this moment? Does he say, “Thanks, Zeide — I’ll call you from Israel”? If the grandson has any sense of *Hakaras Hatov*, he will be overcome with emotion. “Zeide, thank you for sponsoring my year(s) in Israel. Thank you for always being there for me when I had trouble in high school and elementary school. Thank you for making sure I was taken care of in infancy. Thank you for providing me with never-ending support and goodness throughout my life.”

The *Nimshal* is obvious. Perhaps we should translate *Dayenu* differently (as some *Haggadahs* do). “Had Hashem given us the Egyptians’ wealth and not split the Sea - it would have been sufficient reason to thank Him.” When retrospectively evaluating the goodness with which Hashem has treated us, we must take into account each and every step, however minor it may

seem. To fail to do so would be a deficiency in our *Hakaras Hatov*.

Moreover, recognition of Hashem's abundant goodness is essential to our *Emunah*. In the eighth chapter of *Mesillas Yesharim*, the *Ramchal* says that the way to acquire the *Middah* of *Zerizus* (often translated as "alacrity," this is defined in the sixth chapter as the prerequisite for performing *Mitzvos*) is by

observing all the good that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* does for man every moment, and the great wonders that He does for him from the time of birth until the day he dies. The more one observes and contemplates these manners, the more will he recognize his great debt to his benefactor, God....Although he certainly cannot repay Him for His goodness, he [will begin to realize that he] should at least extol His name and fulfill His *Mitzvos*. (Feldheim translation, p. 46)

Hakaras Hatov is the key to understanding our relationship with Hashem. Only by properly recognizing all of Hashem's kindnesses, as we do in *Dayenu*, can we truly recognize our obligations to the *Borei Olam*.

There is another obvious benefit to recognizing Hashem's kindnesses: it will lead one to *Ahavas Hashem*. When one realizes that Hashem owes us nothing and yet gives us everything, the natural reaction is one of love. We must emphasize that this love is not because of any specific thing. As the *Mishnah* (*Avos* 5:16) says, only love which is *Einah Taluyah Bidavar*, not dependent on any specific thing, is ultimately lasting. But recognizing Hashem's eternal, unceasing kindnesses can accentuate and develop pre-existing *Ahavas Hashem*. Ultimately, the highest level of *Avodas Hashem* we aspire to, as the *Rambam* (*Hilchos Teshuva* 10:2) describes, is out of pure *Ahavah*; "not because of any particular thing... rather to do good, for He is good." As a side note, the *Rambam* cryptically writes (10:3) that *Shir Hashirim*, which we read on *Pesach*, is a *Mashal* to the intense love we should feel for Hashem. May we merit to use *Dayenu* and continuous *Hakaras Hatov* to enhance our *Ahavas Hashem*.



3 SPECIAL STEPS: THE OVERARCHING THEMES OF LEIL HASEDER VIA RABAN GAMLIEL

We are nearing the end of *Magid*. Everyone's stomach is beginning to rumble, and *Hallel* is nearly in sight. It is time to fulfill one of the most important parts of the *Seder*: the statement of Raban Gamliel. But doesn't that seem a bit strange? Why do we feel the need to mention Raban Gamliel's statement with such an emphasis? Why isn't it treated like any of the other *Mishnayos* in the *Seder*, such as the story of Raban Elazar Ben Azarya or the story of Rabbi Akiva and his colleagues? What sets Raban Gamliel's statement apart to the degree that one would not be *Yotzei* the *Mitzvah* of *Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim* if one didn't say it? Additionally, we know that nowadays, only the *Mitzvah* of *Achilas Matzah* is a *Mitzvah Deoraysa*, but the

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Chachamim decreed that one should also eat *Maror*. We might have expected a similar *Din Dirabanan* to be set up for the *Korban Pesach*, to allow us to fulfill all three *Mitzvos* which Raban Gamliel mentions. But this is not the case; in fact, it is *Asur* to eat roasted meat at the *Seder*, lest someone even think we are eating a *Korban Pesach*! What is the reason for this?

Rav Herschel Reichman answered these questions as follows: The three items of *Pesach*, *Matzah*, and *Maror* do not only represent their respective *Mitzvos*, but rather represent three themes of the *Seder*: *Galus*, *Emunah*, and *Geula*. The theme of *Galus* is obviously represented by the *Maror*, as it represents the bitterness of *Galus Mitzrayim* and the bitterness of the current *Galus*. But, if that is the case, why is it only a *Mitzvah Dirabanan*? The answer to that is that since we are currently living in *Galus*, we don't really need the *Maror* to remind us of the pain, as would be necessary in a state of *Geula*, such as the time of the *Beis Hamikdash*. However, there is still a *Mitzvah Dirabanan* to eat *Maror*, in order to ensure that we don't get too comfortable in our *Galus*.

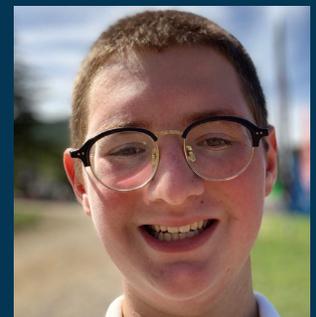
The second theme, *Emunah*, is represented by the *Matzah*. The *Zohar* calls the *Matzah* "*Nahama Dimyemenusa*", the bread of *Emunah*, and that *Mitzvah* never wavers in its *Deoraysa* status. We must always be aware that *Emunah* is a necessary ingredient to everything that Jews do.

The third theme, *Geula*, is represented by the *Korban Pesach*. We say this phrase with a longing for *Geula* as if we ourselves remember a time when there was a *Beis Hamikdash*, as Raban Gamliel did. This is why it was a *Mitzvah* during the times of the *Beis Hamikdash*, but is no longer a *Mitzvah* at all; the same way that the institution of *Maror* contributes to the pain we feel, the absence of the *Korban Pesach* does so as well.

This is why Raban Gamliel's statements are so important; Raban Gamliel is showing us the essential themes of the *Seder* through its *Mitzvos*. Therefore, if one doesn't say, focus, and meditate on these *Mitzvos* and the themes they represent, he missed the whole point of *Pesach*, to learn from the past and present, and await what is sure to be the imminent *Geula*.

MATZAH AND MAROR - WHICH ONE FIRST?

The *Rambam*, the *Rif*, and the *Rosh*, when discussing the teaching of Raban Gamliel requiring us to discuss *Pesach*, *Matzah*, and *Maror* at the *Seder*, state the order as *Pesach*, *Maror*, and *Matzah*. This change is strange, since it goes against the order used in the *Mishnah* (*Pesachim* 116) and by the *Baal Haggadah*. Even the *Rambam* himself, in his text of the *Haggadah*, uses the order of the *Mishnah*. Why do these *Rishonim* change the order in their commentaries?



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The *Maharil* explains that the *Rambam* was discussing the times of the *Beis Hamikdash*; during that time, the *Maror* was eaten as part of the *Mitzvah* of the *Korban Pesach*, and the *Matzah* was part of a different *Mitzvah*. For this reason, the *Rambam* there mentions *Pesach* and *Maror* together, followed by *Matzah*. However, in our times, the *Mitzvah* of *Maror* is only a *Dirabanan*, so it is listed after *Matzah*.

However, the question remains: why do we have the order which we do?

The *Tzlach* and the *Birchas Shir* suggest that the reason for this anomaly is because the slavery our people endured, while painful, also served as our preparation for *Geulah* and *Kabalas Hatorah*. The *Maror* represents the slavery, and the *Matzah* and *Korban Pesach* were aspects of the process of *Geulah*. Before we thank Hashem for the slavery, which helped bring the *Geulah*, we must first thank Him for the ultimate goal, which was the *Geulah* itself. For this reason, the *Matzah* precedes the *Maror* in our *Haggados*.

The *Shelah* answers that in order for the Jews to get the Torah, they needed to have the same amount of people as letters in the Torah (six hundred thousand). In this way, the bitterness of *Mitzrayim* was essential to our receiving the Torah. This is why we are thanking Hashem for the *Maror*, since it led us to *Har Sinai*. Therefore, we first mention the *Matzah*, to recall the *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, and then the *Maror*, which led to our later acceptance of the Torah.

The *Maaseh Nissim* says that if we were to mention the *Maror* first, we would be making the *Avodah* which we did in *Mitzrayim* into the main thing, when it is really secondary. Therefore, we mention the *Matzah* first, to make that the main thing.

And finally, the *Maaseh Yedei Yotzer* says that the *Matzah* symbolizes freedom, and the *Maror* symbolizes bitter slavery. We mention the *Matzah* first in order to recall that Hashem sends the cure before sending the punishment. In other words, Hashem prepared the *Geulah*, through Moshe's birth, before the truly difficult slavery began. For this reason, we mention *Matzah* before *Maror*.



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THEREFORE, WHAT?

We have reached the end of *Maggid*. We are about to wash for *Matzah* and then eat *Maror*, have the *Seuda* and finish the *Seder*. We have a few more paragraphs to say; "*Lefichach*," part of *Hallel*, and a *Bracha*. Why is "*Lefichach*" said at this point?

The *Rashbam* considers this paragraph to be a transitional step. Having just declared our recognition of the fact that we consider it as if we ourselves have

actually left *Mitzrayim*, we proclaim that it is our duty to sing *Shira* to Hashem just as our ancestors did - and we proceed to recite *Hallel*.

The *Kol Bo* quotes an opinion that considers this paragraph as being in place of the *Bracha* normally said before *Hallel*. He rejects this idea, however, because we find no other blessing which resembles this paragraph. In order to be considered a “*Bracha*,” a prayer must state the praises of Hashem, not just say it is our duty to praise Him.

Why is *Hallel* at this part of the *Seder*? Rabbi Taubes once gave a *Shiur* in the MTA/Zysman *Beis Medrash*, and he said that the *Hallel* of the *Seder* is because one was freed, so when something good happens to you, you break into *Shira* (which is also the reason that you do not need to stand up). Why isn't the whole *Hallel* recited here? Why is it split?

The *Avudraham* says that it is to embellish the second cup of wine with some words of praise. The rest of the recitation of *Maggid* would be merely “storytelling” if not for the inclusion of at least part of *Hallel*.

The *Maharal* suggests that the division of *Hallel* was originally intended to precede and follow the eating of the *Korban Pesach* with *Hallel*, to make it clear that *Hallel* was being said in honor of the *Korban*. If all of *Hallel* were said before or after the meal, this point would not have been sufficiently highlighted. Today this practice is continued, because the *Matzah* we eat as *Afikoman* takes the place of the *Korban Pesach*. May we be *Zoche* that this year, we will recite the *Hallel* around the *Korban*, and we shouldn't have to see ourselves as if we are free, but rather as truly free.

ZECHER LEMIKDASH KEHILLEL - A RESHUS OR A CHOVAH?

Korech is by far one of the strangest parts of the *Seder*. After already performing the *Mitzvos* of *Matzah* and *Maror*, we eat them together in a sandwich, declaring that it is ‘*Zecher Limikdash Kehillel*’ - a remembrance of the *Mikdash*, like Hillel’. What do we mean when we say *Zecher Limikdash Kehillel*? What exactly is *Korech* supposed to represent? Why do we eat yet another *Kezayis* of *Matzah* together with *Maror*, after having performed both *Mitzvos* two seconds before? Why do some have the practice to remain silent from *Hamotzi* through the end of *Korech*? What deeper reality are we missing?

The *Gemara* (*Pesachim* 115a), in discussing the practice of *Korech*, says the following:

אמר רבינא: אמר לי רב משרשיא בריה דרב נתן, הכי אמר [רבין] הלל משמיה דגמרא: לא ניכרוך ניכרוך איניש מצה ומרור בהדי הדדי וניכול, משום דסבירא לן: מצה בזמן הזה דאורייתא, מצה בזמן הזה דאורייתא, ומרור דרבנן, ואתי מרור דרבנן ומבטל ליה למצה דאורייתא - ואפילו למאן דאמר מצוות אין מבטלות זו את זו - הני מילי דאורייתא בדאורייתא, או דרבנן בדרבנן,



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Ravina says, one should not wrap Matzah and Maror together nowadays, because the Maror, which is only Dirabanan after the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash, will nullify the Matzah, which is Deoraysa. Even the one who says Mitzvos don't annul each other would agree, because they would only say that when the two Mitzvos have the same status (ie. both Deoraysa or both Derabanan), but if they don't, like in our case, one would be Mevatel the other.

The continuation of the *Gemara* makes clear that Hillel believes the wrapping to be a *Chiyuv*, based on the *Passuk* of "על מצות ומרורים יאכלוהו" - on the *Matzos* and *Maror* you shall eat it. Hillel learns this *Passuk* to teach that the *Matzah* and *Maror* must be eaten together, while the *Chachamim* believe that each one can be eaten alone.

In the final piece of the *Gemara*, the *Gemara* states that since the *Halacha* has not been decided like either position, we eat *Matzah* with a *Bracha*, then the *Maror* with a *Bracha*, and afterwards the *Korech* sandwich without a *Bracha*, "*Zecher Lemikdash Kehillel*" - as a remembrance to Hillel's position in the times of the *Beis Hamikdash*.

It is clear from the *Gemara* that Hillel used to wrap his *Korban Pesach* with *Matzah* and *Maror* to fulfill his *Mitzvah Deoraysa Bizman Hamikdash* based on the *Passuk* which he cited. However, why does the conclusion of the *Gemara* entertain the notion of continuing this practice today? One can understand wrapping the *Matzah* and *Maror* in the times of the *Mikdash*, since at that point, both *Mitzvos* were *Mideoraysa*, so there was no problem of them annulling each other. Nowadays, however, *Matzah* is *Deoraysa* and *Maror* is *Derabanan*, and the *Gemara* said that *Mitzvos* of different levels annul each other according to everyone. How could the *Gemara* say that the *Halacha* has not been definitively decided; how could we possibly entertain the possibility that we would hold like Hillel nowadays, when the *Beis Hamikdash* has been destroyed?

Tosfos' comment on this *Gemara* is even more puzzling. *Tosfos* explains that if we were to theoretically perform the *Mitzvah* like Hillel, we would eat *Matzah* first with a *Bracha*, and then do *Korech* immediately. Since there is a *Mitzvah Miderabanan* of *Korech*, we would be wrapping a *Derabanan* with a *Derabanan*, since having fulfilled the main *Chiyuv* of *Matzah*, the *Matzah* in the sandwich would not have the status of a *Deoraysa* obligation. The *Matzah* would thereby not annul the *Maror*, and both *Mitzvos* would be fulfilled.

What does this mean? If one eats the *Matzah* first, then the *Matzah* in the *Korech* sandwich would not have the status of a *Derabanan* obligation, but rather a *Reshus*, something which is encouraged but not required. A *Reshus* is an even lower level of *Mitzvah* than a *Derabanan*; whereas one is still obligated to fulfill *Dirabanan*s, one is by definition under no obligation to fulfill a *Reshus*. Therefore, the *Korech* sandwich would be composed of the *Maror*, which would have the status of a *Derabanan*, and the *Matzah*, which would be a *Reshus*. Seemingly, these two *Mitzvos* should cancel out even if we fulfill the *Chiyuv* of *Matzah* first!

The last line therefore seems to suggest that *Tosfos* believes that if we held like Hillel, the new *Mitzvah* of *Korech* would generate another *Derabanan* obligation to eat *Matzah* as part of the sandwich, in addition to the *Deoraysa* obligation which we normally have. Why? If we already ate *Matzah* and fulfilled our *Mitzvah*, why would there be an additional *Mitzvah* to eat *Matzah* again as part of *Korech*? What are we missing here?

We can suggest an answer based on the *Gemara* (*Pesachim* 120a), where the *Gemara* explains that nowadays, *Maror* is only a *Derabanan*, since we only eat it as a remembrance of the *Mitzvah*

Deoraysa to eat the *Maror* with the *Korban Pesach*, inferred from the *Passuk* “על מצות ומרורים יאכלוהו.” (*Matzah* remains a *Mitzvah Mideoraysa* nowadays because of another *Passuk*, “בערב תאכלו מצות” - at night you shall eat *Matzos* - which gives a *Chiyuv* to eat *Matzah* even without the *Korban Pesach*).

We can suggest that perhaps *Tosfos* is saying that according to everyone, there is a *Mitzvah Miderabanan Bazman Haze* to remember the *Korban Pesach*. According to the *Chachamim*, that only entails eating the *Maror* which was eaten with the *Korban Pesach*. However, according to Hillel, the *Zecher Lemikdash* is more than just eating *Maror*; rather, there is a special *Mitzvah Miderabanan* to eat the *Maror* in the same way it was eaten *Bizman Hamikdash*, which would entail wrapping the *Maror* in the *Matzah*. This would include another *Mitzvah Miderabanan* of eating *Matzah* in the *Korech* sandwich along with the *Maror*, in addition to the general *Deoraysa* obligation to eat a *Kezayis* of *Matzah*. Now, with *Tosfos* in mind, we can understand why the *Gemara* entertains the possibility that we may hold like Hillel – since the *Matzah* and *Maror* in the *Korech* sandwich are both eaten as a *Mitzvah Miderabanan* to remember the *Korban Pesach*, the two foods have the same status, and do not annul each other. If this is truly the case, then as we eat the *Matzah* in the *Korech* sandwich this year, we should have in mind to fulfill our *Mitzvah Miderabanan* of *Korech* through both the *Matzah* and the *Maror*, as a *Zecher* to the *Korban Pesach*, done in the same way it used to be eaten. *Biezas Hashem*, next year, we will be *Zocheh* to eat the *Korech* as a *Mitzvah Deoraysa* in the *Beis Hamikdash*!

BARECH: PARTNERS WITH HASHEM

Following our delicious meal, we instinctively turn to the familiar text of *Birchas Hamazon*, the standard formula for “*benching*” that we use both during the year and on *Pesach*. If one were to take a step back and look at the overall range of blessings recited to thank Hashem for providing us with food, there seems to be a strange formula. Ready-to-eat items like fruits and vegetables require us to thank Hashem with the fairly short blessing of “*Borei Nefashos*.” On the other hand, bread and *Matzah*, which require a significant amount of preparation and production by man, are paired with the much longer “*Birchas Hamazon*.”

Rav Soloveitchik notes that it should actually be the opposite. Shouldn't we be thanking Hashem with more significant *Tefilos* for fruits and vegetables, where He took care of so much of the heavy lifting? And shouldn't we reserve our shorter prayers for bread and *Matzah*, since after all, we were the ones who worked so hard to bring the item to our table, while Hashem just provided us with the raw materials?

The Rav explains that Hashem's calculations are in fact quite different.



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Bread and *Matzah* are considered much more significant foodstuffs because they require man to actively partner with Hashem. This is how G-d intentionally created the world, as “an uncompleted creation, whereby G-d deliberately made the world imperfect in order to leave room for human creativity. Man’s charge is to finish it and act as a co-creator with G-d” (*The Night that Unites Haggadah*, p.206).

Yes, there are so many things that Hashem provides us with that are easy and ready to use immediately. But the items that He truly *cherishes*, *kivayachol*, are the things that require us to join Him in completing this world. *Birchas Hamazon* requires a longer conversation with G-d, because it reflects the highest level of purpose for our existence, namely that we join Him in perfecting the world.

Rav Soloveitchik explained Hashem’s directive to Avraham (*Bereishis* 17:1) to “walk with Me, and be wholehearted,” as really telling Avraham to join Him, to “make whole.” Hashem’s mission for Avraham, and for all of us, is to partner with Him and perfect the world.

As we near the end of the *Seder* night, the words of *Barech* can serve to remind us of this charge. When we are engaged in the hard work of spiritual growth, when we sweat and strain to make this world a better place, we are fulfilling the purpose of creation. We become partners with our Father in heaven.

SHFOCH CHAMASCHA - THE JEWISH APPROACH TO WAR

Shfoch Chamascha is placed after *Bentching* in the *Barech* step of the *Seder*. There is a common misconception that when we open the door for *Shfoch Chamascha*, we open the door for *Eliyahu Hanavi*. This is incorrect; the reason we open the door is to show we aren’t afraid of danger, since Hashem will protect us. So, if the myth of opening the door for *Eliyahu Hanavi* is wrong, what exactly is *Shfoch Chamascha* about?

First, a bit of Jewish History. In 17th century Europe, priests would go into their respective churches and give fiery, anti-semitic sermons against the non-believers, or the Jews. After being inspired and riled up by their priests, Churchgoers would burst out of the Church and chase after any Jews they could find, most of the time killing many. This wasn’t an abnormal occurrence either; it usually happened every week, particularly with the infamous Blood Libels around *Pesach* time, where the Priests would kidnap a Christian child, kill him, put his blood in containers, and then put his body along with the blood in a Jew’s basement. The Priests would then go back to their Churches and inform the Churchgoers about the horrible act that the Jews committed in order to put the blood in their *Pesach Matzah*, after which they would go on a killing spree.



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Now, back to *Shfoch Chamascha*. If we look at the wording, the first phrase reads:

“שפוך חמתך אל הגויים אשר לא ידעוך ועל הממלכות אשר בשמך לא קראו. כי אכל את יעקב ואת נוהו השמר” - “pour out your wrath unto the nations of the world that don’t know You and on the kingdoms that don’t proclaim Your name for they have devoured Yaakov and laid his name to waste”. We are asking Hashem to smite all the nations of the world! How is this any different than what the Christian Priests did in 17th century Europe?

The answer to this question is very simple. While the Christians took the action themselves, in our case, we are praying to the Supreme God of the universe. If people do something, it is not necessarily a just thing to do; the Christians took their law into their own hands and killed Jews unjustly. On the other hand, the supreme deity, G-d, is just in everything He does; the Jews *Daven* to Hashem to smite the non-believers, and if (and when) He does, we will know it is just, by definition.

The next phrase reads, “שפוך עליהם זעמך וחרון אפך ישיגם” - “pour out Your anger and overtake them”. Again, this varies from the Christian approach. Whereas the Christians poured out their anger on the Jews on their own accord, *Bnei Yisrael* consulted with Hashem first.

This concept of asking Hashem before going to war isn’t new. In the times of the *Tanach*, before *Bnei Yisrael* went to war, they had a ceremony led by the *Kohen Mashuach Milchama*, the Priest who was designated for war. As part of that ceremony, the *Kohen* reassured them that Hashem was on their side and that they shouldn’t be afraid, “כי ה’ אלקיכם ההלך עמכם להלחם לכם עם אויביכם, להרושיע אתכם” (Devarim, 20:4), or “Because Hashem your God, that walks with you to fight for you against your enemies, will save you”. In other words, in Jewish wars, the people aren’t fighting, but rather Hashem is. That is why the Jewish army fasts on the day it goes to war (*Shmuel I* 14:24), to show that their physical strength would not affect the outcome of the battle.

The final phrase reads, “תרדף העם ותשמידם מתחת שמי ה’” - “chase them with anger and destroy the people that are beneath the heavens of G-d”. Once again, we find another difference between the Jewish War Ethic and that of the nations of the world. The Jewish army doesn’t choose to go to war on their own, instead deciding purely based on Hashem’s decision. If Hashem wanted the Jews to pursue the desired target, He would give the word and *Bnei Yisrael* would immediately spring into action. The non-Jews, on the other hand, attacked those who their clergy determined to be “non-believers”; there was no Divine input, and therefore no restraint.

The lesson that can be learned is that Judaism is a religion of action sparked by faith, not faith sparked by action. As can be seen by the paragraph of *Shfoch Chamascha* and the essence of Jewish war, we are a religion that bases our agenda on G-d instead of G-d being placed in convenient circumstances to fit our agenda.

Have a *Chag Kasher Vesameach!*



**YONATAN
CHUDNOFF**

YUHSB '19

NIRT-ZZZ...

After a long night, we've finally made it to the last part of the *Seder*. We already drank the four cups of wine, asked the questions, told over the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, ate, *Benched*, and praised Hashem in *Hallel*, and now everyone is either asleep or cleaning up the table. For all appearances, it looks as though the night is over. What are we still supposed to be doing here?

The *Shelah* explains that the *Piyutim* we say at the end of the *Seder* are a request for Hashem to accept our *Avodah* of the *Seder*. If we look at *Nirtzah* in that light, we find a very strong correlation between *Nirtzah* and the *Tefillah* of *Retzeh* in *Shemoneh Esrei*; both speak about our longing for the *Beis HaMikdash*, and both come from the root word "*Ratzah*" - want. The question then arises: is the entire *Seder* just a standard *Tefillah*, similar to those we say every day?

The *Peer Yashar* comments that it's hard to label the *Seder* as a specific type of *Tefillah*, but we can find a deeper understanding of what *Nirtzah* is by returning to the *Pesukim* of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. The climax of the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* can be found in *Devarim* 26:7: "and they cried out to Hashem and Hashem heard their voices, and he saw their affliction and their burden". In the depths of exile, *Bnei Yisrael* cries out to Hashem, and Hashem listens. This *Tefillah* to Hashem was the turning point of our story, because without the cries of the Jews there would have not been a *Yetzias Mitzrayim*.

Throughout the entire *Seder*, we relive the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, eat in remembrance of the *Korban Pesach*, and reaffirm our belief in Hashem. *Nirtzah* demonstrates our understanding of what *Pesach* means and how central it is to our identity. We declare "*Chasal Siddur Pesach*" - we have done all the steps, recalled our history, and reaffirmed our purpose. Now we ask Hashem, with this in mind, to please allow us to put this into practice. We ask Hashem to allow us to experience the final *Geula* in our lives, to let us merit to eat the *Korban Pesach* in the *Beis Hamikdash*. We express that the same way Hashem listened to *Bnei Yisrael* in times of hardship in the past, He should please listen to our screams and prayer now.

It is important to not let this powerful part of the *Seder* slip away. After building up so much momentum throughout the *Seder*, in *Nirtzah* we have the opportunity to call out to Hashem and ask Him to accept our *Avodah* and build the *Beis Hamikdash*. *B'ezras Hashem*, our prayers and calling out to Hashem this year during *Nirtzah* will help in the bringing of *Mashiach* and the building of the Third *Beis Hamikdash*, returning all the Jews to the fully rebuilt *Yerushalayim* for the final *Geula*, *Bimheira Biyameinu, Amen!*

**THIS BOOKLET CONTAINS TORAH CONTENT.
PLEASE TREAT IT WITH THE APPROPRIATE RESPECT.**



EST. 1916

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