



## PERSPECTIVES ON THE HAGGADA

### Hallel of Redemption

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According to the Talmud Bavli (*Taanit* 28b and *Arakhin* 10a), Hallel is recited (in Israel) eighteen days each year: the first day of Pesach, on Shavuot, and eight days each of Sukkot and Chanukah. The same statement in the Tosefta *Sukkah* 3, Yerushalmi *Sukkah* 4;5 and *Masekhet Sofrim* 20;9, adds, “and one night.” The recital of Hallel at the Pesach Seder is included. This omission in the Bavli is an indication that the Bavli differentiates between this recital of Hallel and all the others.

There are additional considerations that lead to saying Hallel, but what is under consideration is a requirement to say Hallel on a specific calendar-day each year everywhere. The Hallel said while bringing the Korban Pesach, which is restricted to the Mikdash, is

part of the Temple service. According to most commentators, it is sung by the Leviim.

Tosafot, in *Sukkah* 38a, posit a halakhic difference. Hallel is an example of a positive commandment determined by time, and women are not obligated. However, the Hallel said at the Seder is connected to drinking the four cups of wine, each of which is tied to a separate mitzvah. The four cups of wine are a classic illustration of the principle that women are included in the miracle and are therefore obligated.

An obvious difference is the splitting of the recital of Hallel into two parts. The Mishnah, in *Pesachim* 116b, quotes a dispute between Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai about how much of the Hallel is said before the blessing marking the end of the Haggadah. All agree that the remainder is recited after completing the meal and saying Birkhat Hamazon. The lengthy gap creates a question about combining

the portions. The custom (done by some) of reciting Hallel after the evening service is a response to this issue.

Rav Hai Gaon suggests that the Hallel at the Seder is an expression of song, and as such, the recital of the full text is unnecessary. Why this particular recital should be in a different category requires explanation.

A discussion of the similarities and differences between Pesach Rishon and Pesach Sheni in Mishnah *Pesachim* 95 will create clarity. The korban Pesach is unique in that those who are unable to bring the sacrifice at the proper time are given a second chance. The rules for how and when the Korban is to be eaten — it has to be roasted; it has to be eaten with matzoh and maror; one cannot break any bones — on Pesach and at the make-up a month later are the same. But the laws of Pesach as a holiday don’t exist for Pesach Sheni. Hallel is recited while bringing the korban

during the day both on Pesach Rishon and Pesach Sheni. But there is no Seder on Pesach Sheni; only in the evening of Pesach Rishon — when there is a Seder — is Hallel said.

The Talmud 85b, in the name of Rabbi Yohanan in the name of Rabbi Shimon Ben Yehotzadak (the same names as in the statement about Hallel in *Taanit* and *Arakhin*), quotes a verse in Yeshayahu 30:29: “You will have a song like the night when a holiday is sanctified.” Only on a night that has been made into a chag will you sing Hallel. Pesach is the holiday of Jewish redemption. Pesach Sheni is not that holiday; it only grants permission to bring the Korban a month later.

Saying Hallel at night is associated with redemption. After the splitting of the sea, when the Israelites were fully free from the Egyptians, they responded in song. Not only the men, but the women led by Miriam, joined in the song. While at the time of Yeshayahu, King Hizkiyahu failed to respond to Hashem’s saving Yerushalayim with song, at the time of the ultimate redemption we will respond properly.

Pesach was the time of the original redemption and it will be the time of the final redemption. The two-part recital of Hallel becomes clear. The first part relates to our being redeemed from Egypt; that part concludes the Haggadah. After the meal begins the anticipation. We recite the Hallel of the future of the ultimate redemption. The long interruption represents our lengthy wait. The Hallel of this night is not like any other Hallel in our history. It is a song, sung by men and women alike, to be completed by the final redemption.

## Yetzias Mitzrayim and Everyday Miracles

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The Haggadah constitutes a fulfillment of the mitzvah of *sippur yetzias Mitzrayim*, entailing a broad and detailed accounting of all the events surrounding the geula from Mitzrayim. Consequently, the Haggadah teaches us about the descent of Klal Yisrael into slavery, the suffering that they endured, and the unfolding of the geula as Hashem revealed Himself and redeemed His people.

However, Rav Soloveitchik noted that this description only captures the first part of the Haggadah, concluding with the second of the four *kosos*. This section of the Haggadah concludes with the first two paragraphs of Hallel, (*Hallelu Avdei Hashem* and *Bi'tzeis Yisrael Mi'mitzrayim*), in which we express the elation of the redemption as if we were experiencing it ourselves. After matzah, maror, korech, the seudah, afikomen, and birchas hamazon, we take the Haggadah in hand once again, but with a different focus. The praise in the remainder of Hallel, in contrast with the first two paragraphs, does not relate specifically to yetzias Mitzrayim, but rather to the multifaceted ways in which we see Hashem’s Providence. We then say *Hallel Hagadol* (Tehillim 136), in which we thank Hashem for a wide range of kindnesses, encompassing both a historical perspective as well as an appreciation for everyday *hashgachah* (providence). This section of the Haggadah is brought to a

dramatic culmination with the tefilla of *Nishmas*, in which we give voice to our realization that we owe Hashem unending gratitude for life itself, including the wondrous functioning of the limbs and organs of the human body. *Nishmas kol chai tevareich es shimcha Hashem Elokeinu* — we join together with all living beings in thanking our Creator for our very existence.

In contrast with the first part of the Haggadah, this latter segment has little to do with yetzias Mitzrayim. At first glance, this seems to be out of place, as the theme of the evening is geulas Mitzrayim.

Rav Soloveitchik<sup>1</sup> referenced a ruling of the Rosh, codified in the *Shulchan Aruch* (O.C. 218:5), regarding the beracha one must say when arriving at the place where he experienced a miracle. The Rosh asserts that someone who has experienced numerous miracles and arrives in a place where one of them occurred must also make mention of the other miracles and incorporate them into the same beracha. The individual who experiences special *hashgachah* is compelled to reflect upon all of the instances that Hashem intervened to save him from danger, and include them in his expression of gratitude.

Applying this principle to the night of the Seder, we are to recognize that thanking Hashem for the miracles of geulas Mitzrayim must inevitably lead us to a broader appreciation for Hashem’s constant kindness and Providence. The recounting and experience of yetzias Mitzrayim brings us to contemplate the many salvations that we have experienced throughout history, and the ongoing daily miracles that comprise life itself.<sup>2</sup>

This interpretation of Rav



Soloveitchik is rooted in a famous formulation of the Ramban, in discussing the tenet that routine life is filled with ongoing concealed miracles, occurring solely through Hashem's will but experienced as natural incidences. He writes (Shemos 13:16):

ומן הנסים הגדולים המפורסמים אדם מודה  
בנסים הנסתרים שהם יסוד התורה כולה.

*From the great and famous miracles,  
a person will come to acknowledge  
concealed miracles, which are the  
foundation of the entire Torah.*

The Ramban presents clearly and succinctly the idea, formulated by Rav Soloveitchik, that revealed miracles constitute a wakeup call that must inspire us to a heightened awareness and appreciation for the everyday miracles that we experience.

This theme is reflected in the concept of *semichas geula li'tefilla*, the obligation to commence Shemoneh Esrai immediately after relating geulas Mitzrayim. The Gemara (*Berachos* 4b,9b) attributes great significance to this halacha. Rabbenu Yonah<sup>3</sup> cites a Midrash which states that upon seeing the supernatural miracles of Mitzrayim, klal Yisrael attained and embraced a broader and more encompassing trust in Hashem. This also elucidates the pasuk (Shemos 14:31):

וַיֵּרָא יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת הַיָּד הַגְּדֹלָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה  
ה' בְּמִצְרַיִם וַיֵּרְאוּ הָעָם אֶת ה' וַיֹּאמְרוּ בְּה'  
וּבְמִשְׁפַּחַת עֲבָדָיו.

*And when Israel saw the wondrous  
power which G-d had wielded against  
the Egyptians, the people feared G-d;  
they had faith in G-d and in G-d's  
servant Moses.*

Rabbenu Yonah explains that upon seeing the supernatural miracles in Mitzrayim, klal Yisrael attained

emunah, faith in Hashem and reliance upon Him, that permeates every aspect of life.

With this, Rabbenu Yonah illuminates the meaning of *semichas geula li'tefilla*. When elaborating on and contemplating geulas Mitzrayim, the individual attains a deeper understanding of the ongoing *hashgachah* that we experience from moment to moment. Envisioning the care that Hashem demonstrated for the plight of Bnei Yisrael in Mitzrayim and reflecting upon the impact of the tefillos that precipitated the geula, we discover a newfound recognition of Hashem's ongoing concern for us and the potency of our own tefilla. With this perception and outlook, we approach Hashem. Our tefilla is now framed with the profound perspectives that life itself is comprised of ongoing *hashgachah* and concealed miracles, that we are completely reliant on Hashem for every aspect of our existence, and that Hashem cares about us and is attentive to our needs. Such a tefilla, emerging from this internalization of the profound lessons of yetzias Mitzrayim, is elevated to a lofty level.<sup>4</sup>

Chazal<sup>5</sup> gave dramatic expression to the relationship between the wondrous miracles of yetzias Mitzrayim and the hidden miracles that accompany us throughout our seemingly ordinary lives. The Midrash comments on the apparently incongruous juxtaposition in Tehillim 136 of thanking Hashem for saving us from our enemies (וַיִּפְרְקֵנוּ מִצְרֵינוּ) and providing daily sustenance (נָתַן לָחֶם לְכָל בָּשָׂר כִּי לֹעֲזֵם). The Midrash declares that this demonstrates that Hashem providing for our daily needs is no less wondrous than rescuing us from our foes; in fact,

says the Midrash, "*geula b'chol yom*," we are redeemed every day.

The Seder night provides us with an opportunity to reexperience the extraordinary miracles of yetzias Mitzrayim, as Hashem revealed Himself in a demonstration of love for His chosen nation. This transformative experience, however, does not expire when the Seder concludes. We emerge with a penetrating vision of our lives and the world, in which the hand of Hashem is discerned in every context and circumstance, with Hashem "watching from the windows and peering from the lattices" (*Shir Hashirim* 2:9).

## Endnotes

1. *Haggada Siach Ha'grid*, pp. 93ff.

2. For an additional source where Rav Soloveitchik elaborates on this theme, see *Harerei Kedem*, vol. 1, p. 304, s.v. *ba'zman ha'zeh*.

3. מפני שכשמוכיר גאולה מצרים ומתפלל מיד הוא "מראה שבוטח בה' בתפלה כיון שמבקש ממנו צרכיו שמי שאינו בוטח בו לא יבקש ממנו כלום וכן נראה באלה שמות רבה בפרשת בא אל פרעה שאומר לשם שכשראו ישראל הנסים והנפלאות שהיה עושה עמהם הבורא שלא כטבעו של עולם בטחו בו ועל זה נאמר וירא ישראל את היד הגדולה אשר עשה ה' במצרים וייראו העם את ה' ויאמינו בה' וגו' וכיון שמוכיר עכשיו אותה הגאולה שבטחו אבותינו בה' והצילם ומתפלל מיד נמצא שגם הוא בוטח בו שיענה אותו כמו שענה לישראל בעבור שבטחו בו ומפני זה מוכיר אותה הגאולה ומתפלל מיד והבטחון הוא עיקר היראה "והאמונה ולפיכך זוכה בסיתתו לחיי עולם הבא

4. This may shed light on the concept of the status of *hashkiveinu* as *geula arichta*, which explains why it is not a *hefsek* between the theme of geula and the commencement of the tefilla. *Hashkiveinu*, which expresses our *bitachon* in Hashem to protect us from ever-present dangers, represents the expansion of the appreciation of Hashem's *hashgachah* which follows from contemplating yetzias Mitzrayim.

Of course, much of this idea can be connected with the Ramban's understanding of yetzias Mitzrayim as the foundation for our emunah

in Hashem (see his commentary e.g. on Shemos 13:16, s.v. *Ve'atah Omar*, and Shemos 20:2-3). As well, it can shed light on the mitzvah of zechiras yetzias Mitzrayim, the obligation to mention yetzias Mitzrayim daily.

5. *Bereishis Rabbah* (20:9): הקיש גאולה לפרנסה, ופרנסה לגאולה, שנאמר (תהלים קלו) ויפרקנו מצרינו וסמיך ליה (שם) נותן לחם לכל בשוה, מה גאולה פלאים אף פרנסה פלאים, מה פרנסה בכל יום אף גאולה בכל יום. See similarly *Tannah D'bei Elyahu* (Parsha 2) אמר דוד המלך אני אניד צדקותיו וחסדיו: (Parsha 2) של הקדוש ברוך הוא, שהוא עושה עם ישראל בכל שעה ושעה ובכל יום ויום, בכל יום אדם נמכר ובכל יום נפדה, בכל יום רוחו של אדם ניטלת הימנו וניתנת לבעל הפקדון, ולבקר מחזירין אותה עליו, שנאמר בידך אפקיד רוחי (תהלים ל"א ו'), בכל יום עושין לו ניסים כיוצאי מצרים, בכל יום עושין לו גאולה כיוצאי מצרים.

## The Long Shorter Way: A Strategy for Geulah

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Over the years, my wife and I have had the zechus to lead Sedarim for diverse audiences in a variety of locations. For some of those years, we ran communal Sedarim here in Washington Heights under the auspices of the local Jewish Community Council for over 100 mostly elderly Jews who otherwise may not have had a Seder to go to. Often, they were constrained by the time that their aide was able to be by their side before bringing them home. In an effort to accelerate the pace of our Seder, I consulted with Rav Hershel Schachter regarding which parts I could skip. He recommended following the Rambam's Haggadah at the end of *Hilchos Chametz u'Matzah* and leaving out anything that does not appear in the Rambam's edition. At the Seder that year, when we arrived at Dayenu, I shared that since it doesn't

appear in the Rambam's Haggadah we would be skipping it to save time. Needless to say, this wasn't very popular among participants, many of whom had sung Dayenu at their Seder for more than four score and seven years, and they proceeded to sing it with gusto.

אמר רבי יהושע בן חנניה מימי לא נצחני אדם חוץ מ ... תינוק ... פעם אחת הייתי מהלך בדרך וראיתי תינוק יושב על פרשת דרכים ואמרתי לו באיזה דרך נלך לעיר אמר לי זו קצרה וארוכה וזו ארוכה וקצרה והלכתי בקצרה וארוכה כיון שהגעתי לעיר מצאתי שמקיפין אותה גנות ופרדיסין חזרתי לאחורי אמרתי לו בני הלא אמרת לי קצרה אמר לי ולא אמרתי לך ארוכה.

*Said Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananiah:*

*"Once a child got the better of me." ...*

*"I was traveling, and I met with a child at a crossroads. I asked him, 'which way to the city?' and he answered: 'This way is short and long, and this way is long and short.' I took the 'short and long' way. I soon reached the city but found my approach obstructed by gardens and orchards. So, I retraced my steps and said to the child: 'My son, did you not tell me that this is the short way?' Answered the child: 'Did I not tell you that it is also long?'"*

### Talmud, Eruvin 53b

We all love shortcuts. Project creep, slipping deadlines, and a to-do list that seems to get longer each day — these experiences are all too common in both life and work. An ever-growing array of “life hacks” aim to help us save time and money and/or achieve our goals and dreams faster. New acronyms and movements have arisen in our lexicon such as FIRE: Financial Independence, Retire Early. And, especially on the heels of a pandemic, whether in our professional or personal lives, many of us feel even more pressure to optimize our time,

productivity, and relationships.

The Seder presents us with an alternative. Making haste certainly has its time and place, as the matzah clearly reminds us. Yet, despite the presence of this core symbol, a different message seems to take center stage on Seder night. Before we even start the Haggadah, many families and communities frequently sing together the steps of the Seder: Kadesh, Urchatz, etc. Matzah will have its turn at our Seder, but it's part of a broader narrative. As we each become the evening's MC announcing the “order” of proceedings and outlining the exact steps that are ahead of us, the implication is clear: No shortcuts. No omissions.

Almost as soon as we begin the Haggadah, we go even further. On this night at least, not only are we not going to be taking any shortcuts, but (to use the Rambam's version), “*v'chol hama'arich beyetzias Mitzrayim harei zeh meshubach*” — we are encouraged to tell the story at great length. This is reinforced by another dominant symbol of Seder night, the *arba kosos*, the four cups of wine, representative of four expressions or stages of unfolding redemption. Emerging from our narrow places and ideologies is a multi-step process that takes time.

In fact, it is Hashem, *bichvodo u'veatzmo*, who teaches us this lesson in the opening verse of Parshas B'shalach: *v'lo nacham elokim, derech eretz p'lishtim ki karov hu ...* Hashem did not lead us via the land of the Plishtim because it was (too) near. The quicker path may have had disastrous consequences.

In the drive for profits, companies unsurprisingly have a proclivity to the short longer way. For example, many want to hire “multitaskers” capable of

completing multiple tasks *b'chipazon* so that productivity appears to be high. Maybe you have experienced working in an environment like this, where there is constant pressure to juggle and excel in multiple priorities. In the short term, profits may have increased and targets exceeded. But in the long term, might the pressure to perform impact and corrupt the quality of the work or the quality of relationships with team members?

As an advisor in the Shevet Glaubach Center for Career Strategy and Professional Development at Yeshiva University, I coach students and alumni on evaluating job descriptions, clarifying and upholding their values, and navigating company culture. We encourage developing a personalized multi-stage strategy. They become the captains of their fate, adept at taking the long shorter way. Rather than shortcutting the process, they engage each step of the journey, building and cultivating a great LinkedIn network, attending networking and educational events, identifying areas for professional development, and building relevant industry experience.

As for me, despite the Rambam's omission of Dayenu, I will continue to include it in my Seder. Each stanza is an important and intrinsically valuable step in the unfolding march to freedom. Our Seder shows us how articulating, delineating, and following each step helps us define, refine and achieve our goals. This is the long shorter way.

## The Conflicting Themes of the Exodus: The Two Answers to the One Question

### Rabbi Shmuel Ismach

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The Seder experience is akin to a multimedia classroom, with an emphasis on audio (songs), visual props (the Seder plate), the experiential (different tastes, leaning, etc.), and, of course, questions and answers. All these elements point to an experience that is both meant to have a child wondering “Why is this night different?” and to provide the tools for a parent to capably answer that question.

So why indeed is this night different? What is the all-important answer that we are so committed to memorably provide, and why does it seem so important for us to care? I believe that the sophisticated lesson plan of the Haggadah means to point us toward two separate answers to this one important question.

That the Exodus is of critical importance to the Jewish story is obvious. So much of the Torah's narrative describes the descent into Egypt and the subsequent redemption. We were commanded to observe countless mitzvot as a reminder to remember that we were taken out of Egypt. Again and again (over 80 times!), the Torah

reiterates that the Exodus is the underlying reason why this or that mitzvah should be performed.

Why is this story so critical to mitzvah observance? Through the ten plagues and the splitting of the sea, it became clear to the Jewish people that there existed a Creator who was the master of the natural world. Moreover, it displayed how this Creator still involved Himself with the goings-on of the world, and with the subsequent giving of the Torah, it was apparent that G-d provided a purpose for our existence. The theological misconceptions that existed until that point in history were debunked by the events of the Exodus.

So, explains the Ramban, yetziat Mizrayim would forever be the fundamental reason behind many of the ritual Mitzvot. Why perform mitzvot that are *bein adam l'makom* (between man and G-d)? Who and what is the nature of this G-d who commands us? Simple: He took us out of Egypt. Through this experience, we “met” Him, understood Him, and began our relationship and covenantal responsibilities with Him.

So on the one hand, yetziat Mizrayim leaves us with very important theological lessons.

But there is another type of mitzvah, the sort that exists between man and his fellow man, where this phrase is also mentioned. How are these interpersonal allusions to Egypt explained?



Perhaps these references point to the other important lesson of Egypt, the ethical lesson. The Jews were to forever remember their experience in Egypt because it was to remind them in every generation to protect the vulnerable and to be kind to the stranger. Why? Because we are meant to remember what it was like to be a stranger in Egypt, what it was like to be vulnerable. This night is the basis for mitzvot that are *bein adam l'chaveiro*.

It results that our ethical and theological underpinnings result from our experiences in Egypt and our Exodus from it. It is these two great themes that are so important to impart.

On the Seder night, we act as slaves (*matzah*, *maror*) and as free men (*wine*, *leaning*). We don't only do these in sequence, to imply that on this night we began as slaves and became free, rather we mix the metaphors, alternating from messages of slavery to freedom and back. Perhaps we emphasize both of these experiences to express that they each have something to teach. Slavery reminds us of our basic ethical responsibilities, while the Exodus instructs us toward appropriate theology and a proper understanding of G-d in our world.

These two themes might explain a famous argument found in the Gemara, *Pesachim* 116a, between Rav and Shmuel. They argue over a statement in the Mishna that describes the answer to the son's "*Mah Nishtana*," the child's quest to make sense of the significance

of the night. The Mishnah states "*Matchil b'gnut umisayem b'shvach*," that we should answer the questions with history, beginning with the lowest point of the narrative and culminating with the highest.

The Amoraim Rav and Shmuel argue about which episode in Jewish history this refers to. Shmuel says that the "lowest point" refers to "*avadim hayinu l'Pharaoh b'Mitzrayim*," the reference to when we were slaves. To him, the "highest point" would refer to when we were redeemed from that bondage.

Rav says that the "lowest point" refers to "*Mitchila ovdei avodah zara hayu avoteinu*," the reference to how originally, our forefathers were idol worshippers and were far removed from any relationship with G-d. The "high point" refers to the events of the Exodus and the Jews being brought close to G-d. What is behind this debate?

Perhaps Rav and Shmuel argue about which of the two themes is the greater theme of the evening. To Rav, the story of the evening is about theology and the Jewish people's journey from being idol worshippers to a people who discovered the correct and direct understanding of what G-d and His world are about. To Rav, the possibility of the relationship we seek through mitzvot is only possible through the introduction we received at the Exodus.

According to Shmuel, the evening is about recounting the fact we were once slaves and ended up

as free men. We are to remember the abuse of slavery and to remind ourselves of that experience, and to reject and decry mistreatment of the vulnerable in any form. His lesson is one of ethics.

Rav's night is about theology. Shmuel's is about ethics. They argue about which is the main theme, but of course, they are both correct. Both of their opinions, and memorial tidbits for both freedom and slavery, are embedded in the rituals of the Seder night. The symbols vacillate between these themes so that we are consistently reminded of the importance of both of these critically important lessons.

Theology and ethics are two inseparable parts of Judaism. They manifest themselves in *mitzvot bein adam l'Makom*, mitzvot between man and G-d, and in *mitzvot bein adam l'chaveiro*, mitzvot between man and man. Each takes up its own Tablet of the Ten Commandments, implying the balance of power between them.

So, why is this night different from all other nights? What lesson is so important that we keep our children awake and use whatever educational tools we can muster to teach? The answer is obvious. On this night, Judaism learned of its fundamentals of theology and ethics. The two poles of Jewish behavior are charged by the experience of this powerful evening and are expressed in its dual themes. On the Seder night, we attempt to impart these ideas to our children, and more important, to ourselves.

# End The Lockdown: Opening the Door at the Seder

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For our family, one of the most anticipated parts of the Haggadah takes place after the meal and *after* much of the Haggadah has been recited. Most of us are quite tired by then, since we just completed bentching and the drinking of the third cup, and drowsiness has certainly begun to set in. At that moment, usually around midnight, there is a sudden rush of excitement, and the enthusiasm of the Seder is rekindled upon filling the fourth cup and the special Kos Shel Eliyahu, Elijah's Cup. We quickly, urgently, leave our dining area, open the door wide and go stand outside, reciting the "*Shefoch Chamasecha*" paragraph, as the cool, outside air reinvigorates us further.

How many of us grew up watching the table and the door so carefully, eagerly awaiting Eliyahu HaNavi, Elijah the Prophet, to stealthily enter our house and drink a little of our Seder wine? Most smiling parents make that time even more magical by surreptitiously shaking the table, watching the wine in the cup move as we imagine Eliyahu taking a sip. For those of us blessed to have Holocaust survivors at our table, or older grandparents who went through persecutions at the hands of our oppressors, we poignantly realize the gravity of the moment and what we are saying: Pour out your wrath on those that have destroyed the Jewish people and our homes.

This strange and wonderful part of the Seder is a combination of so many

thoughts and ideas, yet it takes just a short time to perform. The Seder night is known as the *leil shimurim*, a night of protection. Indeed, we have been saved countless times in our history from our enemies and tormentors on this Seder night.

But what does *leil shimurim* mean? What role does Eliyahu play? And why open the door?

## **Leil Shimurim**

Rabbi Moshe Isserles, the Rama, (in *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 480:1), cites that the mid-fifteenth century commentator, Rabbi Israel of Bruna, the Mahari Bruna, based upon the practice of the Ohr Zarua, mentioned opening the door to remind us that tonight is the night of protection. The *Aruch Hashulchan* (480:1) adds we stand up and invite Eliyahu in by saying *boruch haba* (welcome!). The Chofetz Chaim, in the *Mishna Berura* (seif kattan 10), explains that we are to have no fear of anything on this night and hence we open our doors. Indeed, the *Sefer Hamanhig* (Hilchos Pesach, Siman 2) and the *Ohr Zarua* (Chelek 2 Siman 234) say we leave all the doors of the house unlocked and open to demonstrate that real safety can come only from Hashem, and not barriers or bolts. Others (*Chok Yaakov* 480:6 and *Shulchan Aruch HaRav* 480:5) point out that if you live in a really bad neighborhood, you cannot rely on a miracle and you must lock the doors. However, even there, we at least symbolically demonstrate our commitment and confidence in Hashem as our Divine Protector by opening the doors to recite this paragraph.

This idea, that Pesach Seder night is a "*leil shimurim*," has halachic

ramifications. As a night of protection, we do not need to recite the entire "*Krias Shema al Hamitah*" prayers that are usually said before going to sleep as a method to invoke G-d's protection. We need only read the paragraphs of Shema and "*Birchas Hamapil*" because on this night we enjoy special protection from G-d (Rama, *Orach Chaim* 481:2).

The Ibn Ezra states that "guarding" means wakefulness and we should ideally refrain from sleep and stay awake all night to praise Hashem. While this is difficult to do after a meaningful but long Seder, many righteous individuals do try and stay up until slumber overtakes them while they are learning. A word to the wise — it might not be prudent to publicize this to those overstimulated and overtired children who do *not* want to go to sleep.

## **Future Redemption**

Opening the door and greeting Eliyahu *also* signals the future redemption is near. Shimurim is a plural word, and it is used twice in the following pasuk:

לֵיל שְׁמֹרִים הוּא לָהּ לְהוֹצִיאָם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם הוּא הַלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה לָהּ שְׁמֹרִים לְכֹל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְדוֹרָתָם.  
*There was a night of vigil for God, to bring them out of Egypt. This night remains for The Israelites a vigil to God for all generations.*

### **Shemos 12:42**

We often emphasize a particularly desired and strong idea by reiterating the words. Furthermore, it is a night that is guarded for *all* Israel for *all* generations.

*Darchei Moshe* (*Orach Chaim* 480) quotes the *Ohr Zarua*, who says in the name of Rav Nissim Gaon that this demonstrates our total belief that Hashem will save us in the future.

*Sefas Emes* (Pesach 5652) adds that we open the door because the future *geulah* (redemption) will be open for all (especially us!) to see the downfall of our enemies. This is the opposite of what occurred in Egypt, where klal Yisroel was specifically told (Shemos 12:22) not to leave the house until the morning. The “morning” homiletically refers to the *geulah* — only when the *geulah* comes will we merit seeing the open miracle of redemption.

The Ramchal, Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto, in his epic *Mesilas Yeshtarim* (7th Perek), points out that external actions help stimulate internal thoughts. The *Mishnah Brura* (480:10) states that the opening of the door and the filling of Kos Eliyahu are connected — just like we were redeemed in Mitzrayim, so too will Eliyahu herald the redemption in the future. Likewise, the *Pesach Meuvin* (Siman 361) and the *Mateh Moshe* (Siman 655) say we open the door to demonstrate our true belief that Moshiach is coming imminently. What better way to demonstrate that than to open our doors to welcome in Eliyahu, his forebearer. When Eliyahu comes, he will find the door wide open as we anxiously await his arrival. This action is a *zechus* that will indeed hasten his arrival. They both bring a Yerushalmi (*Kesubos*, 12th Perek, halacha 3) that Rabbi Yirmiyah told his family to bury him in the finest clothing, wearing shoes and with his staff, so when Moshiach comes he would be immediately ready to welcome him. We demonstrate that same alacrity of spirit by opening our doors Seder night, truly hoping and expecting to really see Eliyahu on the other side! The *Korban Eidah* and *Pnei Moshe* on that Yerushalmi add that this was to strengthen the people's belief in Moshiach as a real entity, not just a

mythical fable.

We all eagerly look forward to our own personal *yetzias Mitzrayim* as we fervently pray for the end of the difficult COVID-19 pandemic, and that we can emerge from the bondage of repeated lockdowns and quarantine. Many of us spent the first Pesach relatively alone, huddled together in small nuclear family units while we waited anxiously for Hashem to protect us from the plague of COVID. Told to lock down and stay inside, we felt safe indoors. Each of us can recall the effect the pandemic has had on our *yomim tovim* — the uncertainties and challenges.

Yet this year, as we iy”H open our doors in every sense and as we hopefully can welcome in other family, friends and guests again, we can experience a true *leil shimurim*, highlighted iy”H by us heralding into our homes and the collective Jewish people the ultimate guest, Eliyahu Hanavi, signaling the coming of Mashiach *Tzidkeinu* and final *geulah*.

*Special appreciation to my husband, Rabbi Aaron Glatt, for assisting in research and source materials.*

## Tail-Recursion in the Haggadah: A Computer Science Perspective

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During my teenage years and into early adulthood, I attended various “Pesach programs” at Upstate New York hotels, first as a guest with my family, and subsequently working

as a *mashgiach*. A few decades later, I still vividly recall the scene that would repeat itself each year toward the end of the Sedarim: a large table of several dozen older singles would energetically and enthusiastically sing, “Who knows one? I know one! One is Hashem ... in the heavens and the earth.” A prominent outreach rabbi would leave his seat in the back of the dining room, where he too was vacationing with his family, to join the group at the front of the dining room, encouraging them along to sing even more energetically and enthusiastically.

This song — known in Hebrew as *Echad Mi Yodea* — is part of a series of *piyutim* (liturgical poems) that are appended to the halakhically mandated text of the Haggadah. Rabbi Tzidkiyah b. Avraham Anav (Rome, 13th century) records in his magnum opus *Shibbolei Haleket*, that it is “customary to say *piyutim* arranged with praise and thanksgiving, and so it is worthy to increase.” Various Medieval authorities identified specific *piyutim* that should be recited, ultimately culminating in a list of seven that were accepted as normative in Ashkenaz: *Chasal Siddur Pesach*, *Az Rov Nissim*, *Ometz Gevurotekha*, *Ki Lo Na’eh*, *Adir Hu*, *Echad Mi Yodea*, and *Chad Gadya*.<sup>1</sup> While these *piyutim* weren't necessarily customary in Sefardic lands, nonetheless, Rabbi Chaim Yosef David Azulai (“Chida,” 18th century) famously came to the defense of *Chad Gadya*, and the critique of an individual who disparaged it, noting that a “*gaon* distinguished in his generation” formulated more than ten “sweet and lovely” commentaries on *Chad Gadya*, and further attests to the “authority of the greatness of the *piyutim* of Ashkenaz.”<sup>2</sup>

Two of these *piyutim* — *Echad Mi*



*Yodea* and *Chad Gadya* — exhibit a structure known in the vernacular as "recursive songs," songs that with each stanza not only introduce some new element, but also repeat all the previous elements, either before or after that new element. Thus, for example, when singing "Who knows two?" in *Echad Mi Yodea*, we not only respond to that rhetorical question, but also review the answer to "Who knows one?" Similarly, in *Chad Gadya*, when talking about the dog (*kalba*), we not only mention that it bit the cat (*shunra*), but also repeat that the cat ate the goat (*gadya*), and so on.

"Recursion" is also a computational technique included in introductory programming courses as a means to calculate mathematical formulae such as factorial [ $\text{fact}(n) = n \times \text{fact}(n-1)$ ] and the Fibonacci sequence [ $\text{fib}(n) = \text{fib}(n-1) + \text{fib}(n-2)$ ] and solving logical problems such as the "Towers of Hanoi." Higher-order terms are calculated from lower-order terms. Somewhere subsequently in the Computer Science curriculum, however, students learn that recursion can sometimes be "dangerous", leading to exponential growth in the amount of work that needs to be performed, and rendering such an approach "intractable." An alternative, bottom-up methodology known as "Dynamic Programming" is taught, as well as a hybrid procedure called "Memoization," both of which seek to eliminate the repetition that can easily arise in some recursive algorithms.

It is self-evident that the authors of *Echad Mi Yodea* and *Chad Gadya* deliberately designed their respective *piyutim* to be recursive. Presumably, the repetitive style, even as it roughly squares the time required to sing each *piyut* at a point in the Seder when people are understandably

exhausted, also breeds an increasing familiarity with the text, which in turn enables and encourages participants to progressively sing even more energetically and enthusiastically. There is an additional consideration, however, which takes us back to *Maggid*, where we assert that, "in every generation (*be-khol dor va-dor*) there are those who stand up [seeking to] annihilate us, but Hakadosh Barukh Hu saves us from their hands." Rather than simply state it as a matter of fact, we immediately produce Lavan as an example of this phenomenon (*tze u-lemad ma bikesh Lavan ha-Arami*). Yet, it is at the end of the Seder in *Chad Gadya*, that we expand on this theme and allude to the cycle of nations who have risen up against us, only to meet their demise at the hands of another force.

The famous story of Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah concludes that even in Messianic times, we will continue to remember *yetziat Mitzrayim* — the Exodus from Egypt — even as a greater salvation will have since occurred.<sup>3</sup> *Chad Gadya* reminds us that all the trials and tribulations along the way are also worthy of our mention and attention. Similarly, *Echad Mi Yodea* not only correlates the numbers one through thirteen with various entities in Jewish tradition, but reinforces them through repetition and reiteration.

In the Talmud (*Sukkah* 27a), a *gezera shava* is drawn between Pesach and Sukkot, each of which occur on the fifteen of their respective months Nissan and Tishrei. This equation has halakhic implications, such as the obligation for an individual to eat in the sukkah on the first (and second) nights, just as he must eat matza at the Seder on the first (and second) nights. The first night of Pesach is

also connected to the night of Tisha B'Av. Some attribute this to a general obligation to remember the exile from Israel, and the destruction of Jerusalem and the Beit Hamikdash, in our times of joy and jubilation. More specifically, there is a calendaric link (known "*ATBaSh*"<sup>4</sup>), which observes that Tisha B'Av always falls on the same day of the week as the first day of Pesach. Either way, there are many manifestations of *zekher la-mikdash* (remembering the Holy Temple) in the sense of mourning and commemorating.<sup>5</sup> In terms of the present discussion, it is significant that on Tisha B'Av, we mourn not only the destruction of both Batei Mikdash which were destroyed on that ominous day, but also, in the context of Kinot, lament our long history of persecution and suffering. Like *Chad Gadya*, it is not enough to focus on the present proceeding; we must revisit and re-engage with our long history.

## Endnotes

1. See Rabbi Menachem Mendel Kasher, *Haggadah Shelemah* (Hebrew), Jerusalem 5727, Ch. 36.
2. For more on the last section of the Haggadah, see *Torah To-Go*, Pesach 5779, and especially the articles on *Echad Mi Yodea* and *Chad Gadya* by Rabbi Meir Goldwicht and Rabbi Zvi Romm respectively, available at <https://www.yutorah.org/togo/pesach/>
3. Cf. Talmud, *Berakhot* 13a, which notes that at least instinctively, one is inclined to forget an earlier salvation when superseded by a subsequent one.
4. See *Shulchan Arukh*, *Orach Chayim* 428:3.
5. For a discussion of this theme, see Rabbi Mayer Twersky, "Zeicher le-Mikdash," *Torah To-Go*, Pesach 5769.