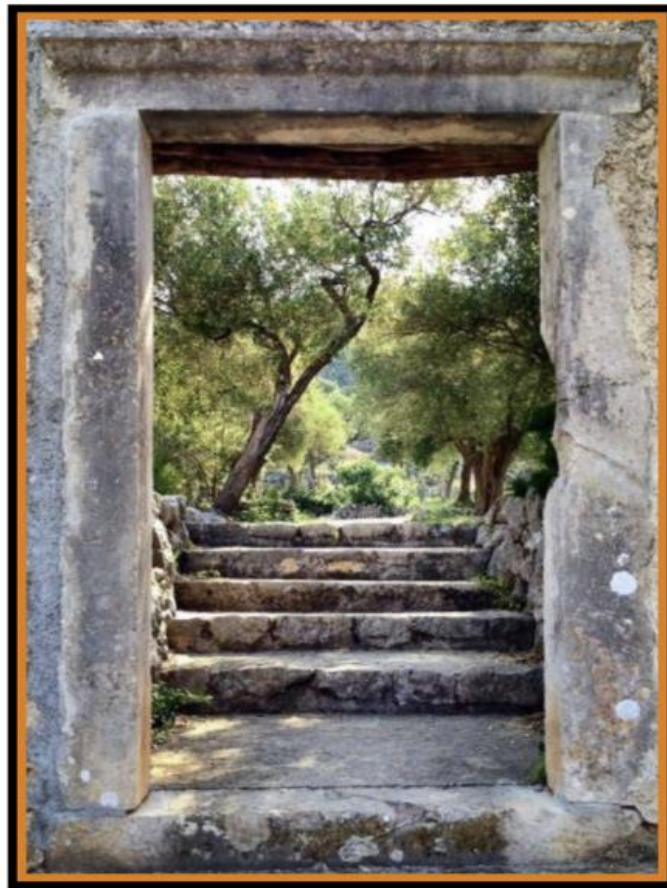


Yeshivat Migdal HaTorah
Haggadah Supplement 5781

עַל מִשְׁקוֹף הַמִּגְדָּל



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With *hakarat hatov* to the yeshiva for giving
the *talmidim* a great year in spite of the challenging times

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Introduction

HaRav Dr. Dvir Ginsberg

Rosh HaYeshiva

“Whoever is hungry, let him come and eat; whoever is in need, let him come and conduct the Paschal lamb (Korban Pesach)”

We begin our Seder with this well-known invitation found in the passage of *Ha Lachma Anya*. Rashi, in his commentary on the Haggadah, notes how the first invitation is a call to one’s family to prepare to fulfill the mitzvah of matzah, while the second points to the importance of someone avoiding a solitary experience of consuming the *Korban Pesach*. Why focus on matzah so early in the Seder when it will not be eaten until much later? Rashi is clueing us into the importance of matza serving as a vehicle to the mitzvah of *sippur yetziat mitzrayim*, a significant leap beyond its technical performance.

The second invitation stresses one of the unique aspects of the mitzvah of *Korban Pesach*. While the mitzvah is incumbent on the individual, its performance is done within a *chaburah*. In truth, the mitzvah is national in nature, embodied in the familial aspect of its implementation. The *Korban Pesach* captures the idea of unification, and each individual thereby should reflect on his or her relationship to the nation as the *Korban Pesach* is eaten.

When looking at this year’s cohort of Migdal students, terms like courage and perseverance stand out. They came into a year in Israel unlike any other, knowing full well that what others in previous years took for granted, they may never have. And how did they react? They rose to the challenge. They expressed an unquenchable thirst for Torah learning and growth. Beyond this, the entire yeshiva united in such a profound way. The individuals who came this year came together with all the *rebbeim* to form a family, emulating the very ideals set forth in the *Korban Pesach*.

I hope you enjoy the *divrei Torah* from the Migdal family at your Seder!

Zmanim - What Are Those?

Rami Levin

Migdal Student 5781; Teaneck NJ

Kiddush on the Seder night is pretty standard: We make a blessing on the wine, mention the general concept of Chag, and then end with the blessing of “Who sanctifies Israel and the Holidays.”

Except, that translation is blatantly wrong. “*Hazemanim*” does not mean “the Holidays,” it means “the times”! Why did the rabbis compose it this way? What message were they trying to get across with the idea of Israel and the times?

To be clear, “the times” doesn't directly refer to the Chag itself. If you think about it, “*Hazemanim*” is actually a reference to Rosh Chodesh, which is what is sanctified by *Beit Din* at the start of the month. That is actually what establishes “time” in terms of when the holidays fall out, and when the months end. If so, this blessing really commemorates an event that happened two weeks ago, the holidays are merely a result of this previous sanctification. Thus, we now have a blessing that effectively means, “He Who sanctifies us, the Jews, and we sanctify Rosh Chodesh.” That's an odd way to start the Seder!

We can use a discussion from Masechet Beitzah 17a to gain an understanding of this connection. There, the rabbis debate the order of the terms mentioned in Kiddush when Passover falls on Sabbath. One opinion states that the order should go as follows: Israel, Sabbath, and then Times. This opinion is rejected by Ravina, because according to him, that would imply that “Israel” is sanctifying the “Sabbath,” when, in fact, it is God who sanctifies the Sabbath. Instead, Ravina opines that the order should be Sabbath, Israel, and Times. Apparently, Ravina did not have a problem implying that the Jewish people establish and sanctify the “Times” - meaning, he believes it is true that the Jewish people sanctify the “Times.” If so, this is what we mean when we say “Who sanctifies Israel and the Times,” meaning, “Who sanctifies Israel, who *in turn* sanctify the Times.” We see from this debate the emphasis of our human control over the outcome of the holidays in contrast to Sabbath, as a direct result of our actions, as expressed by the text of this *beracha*.

The very first mitzvah given to the Jewish people is the sanctification of the new moon. The commentators ask, why of all mitzvot is this particular command chosen as the first? The Seforno (Shemot 12:1) gives a powerful answer: to teach the Jewish

people that they are now masters of their own time and their own destiny. Before the actual commands of preparation for the very first Seder and the very first *Korban Pesach*, they introduce those activities with the Rosh Chodesh mitzvah demonstrating to the Egyptians and more importantly to themselves, that they are no longer slaves to another man. They are free and in control of their destiny. They establish the times.

And that's the very mindset for the Seder we need to start our reenactment of that fateful night.

Karpas: From Where & Why?

Eli Boord

Migdal Shana Aleph Student 5781, West Hempstead NY

Karpas is definitely one of the more unusual parts of the Seder. We casually dip a small portion of a vegetable into salted water to eat, yet nothing of the sort is mentioned in the Torah. This stands in great contrast to the other highlights of the night such as the obligation of Matzah and Maror. What is the significance of this practice and where does it stem from?

There is a Mishnah in Pesachim (114a) that simply states, *“They brought before him. He dips lettuce before he reaches the course that is secondary to the Matzah.”* Reish Lakish derives from this Mishnah that mitzvot require intent, since we eat lettuce twice (once for Karpas and once for Maror). If you are to say that mitzvot don’t require intent, then one should be *yotzei* his obligation for Maror while eating the Karpas and we wouldn’t need more than one dipping. The gemara snaps back, saying that perhaps mitzvot don’t require intent, and the only reason for having more than one dipping is “so the children will ask.”

However, why do many people use other vegetables for Karpas nowadays? In the Gemara, there is a dispute about how a person should recite the blessings of Karpas and Maror when lettuce is being used to fulfill both Mitzvos. Rav Huna says that the first makes the blessing for Karpas, and then after he eats the Matzah, he makes the blessing for the Maror. Rav Chisda says that he makes the blessing for both Karpas and Maror prior to eating the Karpas, and then after eating the Matzah and prior to the Maror, he would say no blessing. In order to extricate himself from this dispute, Rav Acha would simply search for other vegetables to fulfill his obligation of Karpas.

In the times of the Talmud, a small appetizer would be the introduction of a nice meal. This appetizer would also often be dipped in something. By eating the Karpas, we are reenacting the lavish lifestyle of royalty since we are free from enslavement. However, we also dip the Karpas in salt water to remember the pain and tears that were brought upon us with the torment of said enslavement.

This year when the children will ask, why is Karpas being eaten, why are we dipping it? You will be prepared with an answer!

Haseba

Adam Speiser

Migdal Shana Aleph Student 5781; West Hempstead NY

We lean at the Seder as an expression of freedom. But does it always make sense to lean? Pesachim 108a gives a few seemingly similar cases in which one is either obligated to or exempt from leaning. Some examples include: 1) a woman in front of her husband is exempt from leaning unless she's an important woman; 2) a *talmid* in front of his *rebbe* is exempt from leaning; 3) a son in front of his father is obligated to lean; 4) an apprentice in front of his instructor is obligated to lean.

How can we understand the differences between each of these cases? Why are some people exempt when in the presence of authorities, while others remain obligated? Additionally, the Mishna (99b) states that even the poorest of the poor must recline as a sign of freedom. How, then, can this obligation be exempted for anyone?

Surprisingly, the gemara itself doesn't explicitly tell us. However, from the way the gemara delineated the cases, we can draw some conclusions. The gemara (108a) says that an apprentice is obligated to lean in front of his instructor, while a *talmid* before his *rebbe* is exempt, because the apprentice doesn't have the same level of fear that a *talmid* would have in front of his *rebbe*. From this, there is reason to believe that the cases of exemption are about fear. The feeling of fear comes about with the presence of a power greater than oneself, and one does not lean in front of those people. In the gemara's view, the *rebbe* is of a greater power than the student, and at least in that society, the husband is of a greater power than the wife. This explains why the gemara obligates an important woman to lean, given that she does not have this sense of fear in the family hierarchy. (See the Mordechai, *Tosefet Me'Arvei Pesachim* 611, who says that all of today's women are considered important. Additionally, see Mishnah Berurah OH 472:4 and Aruch HaShulchan OH 472:6 for a discussion on whether women should still be exempt from leaning despite this.)

There remains one standout in this discussion. If leaning is only a requirement when one isn't overpowered by another person, what about the son with his father? The father surely has power over him! Why, then, is a son still obligated to lean in front of his father? The Rashbam explains in unusual brevity that the son is "not so submissive" to

his father. But this doesn't fully explain his exception to the rule. It is an obligation in the Torah to love and fear one's father. How is this relationship any different than, say, a *talmid* and his *rebbe*?

Perhaps we're looking at this from the wrong angle. The position of power isn't just that. It's there to serve a purpose. The *rebbe* and the father have very similar positions: Both are required to teach and train their pupils/children in the ways of the Torah. They differ, however, in that they teach separate aspects of G-d. While the *rebbe* trains his pupils to fear and respect G-d in His infinite wisdom by instilling a certain level of dominance. The father, on the other hand, teaches his son to love G-d and that He is loving. He does this by loving his son and encouraging him to do His mitzvot.

Therefore, it is inappropriate to lean in front of one's *rebbe* without his permission (see Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Chametz U'Matzah 7:8). There needs to be a sense of dominance and reverence. However, one must lean in front of his father, for this is an action that is the opposite of disrespect: an action causing pride (Meiri on Pesachim, 108a). When a father sees his son eager to perform the mitzvot as they are ideally done, and expresses his freedom through leaning in the appropriate manner, it is not taken as a slight, but the very application of his teachings in action.

Ha Lachma Anya: The Introductory Prompt

Rav Aryeh Wasserman

Director of Student Life; Ra"m

“Ha lachma anya di achalu avhatana b’ara dimztrayim. Kol dichfin Yete v’yechul kol d’tzrich yete v’yifsach...” ,

“This is the bread of our affliction that our forefathers ate in Egypt. All who are hungry come and eat, all who need come join in the Pesach sacrifice...”

This paragraph is how we begin the section of Maggid. While today it seems like a beautiful way to start the Seder, opening up one's home to anyone who requires a place to discuss the story of Pesach, it poses a very difficult halachic challenge. One of the unique aspects of the *Korban Pesach* is that only those that have signed up in advance can partake in it as the Torah states, “...on the tenth of this month they shall take a sheep one per household. And if the household is too small for the sheep, they shall invite the friends and neighbors based on the number of people, shall you be registered on the sheep.” (Shemot 12:3-4) The Mishna in Zevachim states this rule very clearly, “It (the *Korban Pesach*) is only eaten by those who are *lemnuyav*, registered to it.” (Zevachim 5:8) How, then, do we open the Maggid with such a halachically problematic declaration?

Interestingly, Rabbi Avi Grossman, in his Haggadah, which he designed for use at a Seder that includes the *Korban Pesach* as the featured dish (may we be able to do this soon), takes out this section of the Maggid for this very reason. He simply leaves the first line of the paragraph, “*Ha lachma anya di achalu avhatana b’ara dimztrayim*” and then moves on to the *Ma Nishtana*. For us, though, if this is to be symbolic and present in our current Seder reality, how can we justify making such a statement?

The second oddity of this statement, and the entire paragraph for that matter, is the language in which it is stated. The entire Maggid is written in Hebrew. Yet this opening paragraph is recited in Aramaic. Why?

The Rishonim discuss both of these questions at length. Regarding the latter, Rashi, in *Sefer HaPardes*, writes that the *mazikim*, the destructive forces that cause harm to man, should not hear of this call to gathering and be tempted to strike. In a similar vein, the Ritva quotes the idea from the Talmud that Aramaic is not understood by the angels, and we are trying to prevent them from becoming “jealous” of our

boasting of G-d's protection and thus becoming provoked. The most reasonable answer, though, is that Aramaic was the spoken language that all recognized and knew, including the uneducated. So since the practice was established and "codified" in that language, the *minhag* was continued - true to the way in which it was established. (Cited by the Encyclopedia Talmudit Haggadah)

In regards to the specific phrase of "*kol d'tzrich yete v'yifsach*," "all who need, come join in the Pesach sacrifice" - many of the Rishonim actually deny its legitimacy. The *Shibolei Haleket*, quoting *Sefer Hamanhig* and Rabbeinu Yishayah, states that one should not say this line due to the fact that we don't have the *Korban Pesach* and due to our aforementioned question. The Raavan, while he agrees there was no such institution to say this, justifies the *minhag* by saying it refers to the afikoman, which symbolically replaces the *korban*, yet doesn't have the strict rule of "*einu neechal ela l'mnuyav*." An alternative approach, from Rabbeinu Binyamin, the brother of the *Shibolei Haleket*, is that in the times of the Beit Hamikdash, they did indeed say this, but it was declared before Pesach, before they slaughtered the *korban*, which is perfectly acceptable and encouraged. (These points are cited by the Encyclopedia Talmudit Haggadah.) In Rav Grossman's aforementioned Haggadah, he points out that it is at this point of the Seder that we should present the *Korban Pesach* and bring it to the table, beginning the conversation of what this night is all about. So we can suggest that in order to commemorate that lost aspect, we recite this declaration instead.

With all respect to the aforementioned *chachamim*, I would like to humbly suggest a novel solution to justify this minhag by focusing our attention on arguably the most famous and discussed section of the Maggid other than the *Ma Nishtana*. The focus of the Seder, as we know, is to provoke the children to ask, and thus fulfill the mitzvah of *sippur yetziat mitzrayim*. We do many things during the Seder to accomplish this. We also, of course, highlight the fact that there are four different types of children to address, and they must be handled individually and uniquely. Let us look at the responses the *Baal Haggadah* records for each of the sons:

To the Chacham we respond by, "We discuss with him some of the laws regarding Pesach sacrifice, specifically that, "We may not eat an afikoman [a dessert or other foods eaten after the meal] after [we are finished eating] the Pesach sacrifice (Mishnah Pesachim 10:8)."

To the Rasha we respond by, "You will blunt his teeth and say to him, "'For the sake of this, did the Lord do [this] for me in my going out of Egypt' (Exodus 13:8)." 'For me' and not 'for him.' If he had been there, he would not have been saved.

To the *Tam* we respond by saying, "With the strength of [His] hand did the Lord take us out from Egypt, from the house of slaves' (Exodus 13:14)."

To the *She'eno Yodea Lish'ol*, "You will open [the conversation] for him. As it is stated (Exodus 13:8), "And you will speak to your son on that day saying, for the sake of this, did the Lord do [this] for me in my going out of Egypt."

One question often discussed is regarding the bizarre answer supplied to the *Chacham*. He asks, What are all these laws? In response, we give him a seemingly simplistic answer regarding the simple rule of no dessert after the *Korban Pesach*. Surely there are a plethora of more complex halachot that would capture his attention and rapture that would be more appropriate to highlight to him! Why would the *Baal Haggadah* single out this specific rule in response to him? Does it not seem intellectually insufficient for someone of his academic and halachic caliber?

If we are right, however, that *Maggid* is designed for these children and their questions, then presumably, all the lead up to their introduction in the *Maggid* should be designed to provoke each and every one of these children into their questions. Perhaps then, we could argue, the *Ha Lachma Anya* section functions in this way as well, as an introductory prompt - as the beginning of this process.

The *She'eno Yodea Lish'ol* will not ask anything, either because he or she is not sophisticated enough (whether due to age or lack of education) to realize what is normal and what is not. They should be able to recognize, though, the switch in language and be aware they have no idea what is being stated. As such, perhaps the language switch (although not initially intended for this - as we pointed out above) was left in specifically to accomplish this reverse task. The strange language will perk their attention that there is something going on here that requires their focus.

The *Tam* is given a very basic history of the events: Hashem took us out of Egypt. The *Tam* is aware enough to ask about the item that is indeed on the table, the *Matzah*, and asks "What is this?" As such, we highlight the *Matzah*, by stating this is the bread of affliction that we ate in Egypt. This declaration follows the step of *Yachatz*, where we highlight this in action, by pointing out the *Matzah* and then removing it from the table - a counterintuitive event - normally eaten at this point and also not normally flat bread. In other words, the highlighting of the *Matzah* both in action and in word - provokes the *Tam* to his simple question of "*Mah Zot?*" (Read as one word.)

The *Rasha* we know is exclusive in nature. We respond to this exclusiveness by challenging his perspective and giving him the blunt truth about where he would be if he

had been there. He believes that this antiquated practice is irrelevant; he lives a worry free life. We challenge him out of his silence by emphasizing, “This year we are here (in exile) but next year we will be in *Yerushalayim*; this year we are slaves, but next year we will be free.” This statement is very troublesome for the *Rasha*; “I am where I belong, how dare you call me a slave?!” In doing so, the *Rasha*’s question is prompted.

Finally, the *Chacham* requires attention. He knows the significance of the story - the Matzah *shtick* is uninteresting for his educated presence, sophisticated mind, and halachic commitment. So that is exactly how we get him to ask; by creating a moment of conceptual dissonance that only he has the knowledge and the passion to pick up on. We state something specifically halachically incorrect to prompt him into discourse. When we say everyone should join the *Korban Pesach*, he rightfully pipes up with our opening question!

What is our response? We address his concerns regarding the laws of the Pesach sacrifice, and we focus specifically about the *korban* relationship with the afikoman - the very thing that symbolically takes its place at the Seder! We highlight the difference between the symbolic shell of the true practice of yore, and we encourage discussion about what will once again be, when we are *zoche* to bring the *Korban Pesach* once again.

Ma Nishtana

Yitzchak Galimidi

Migdal Shana Bet Student 5780; Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel

Children often ask good questions about the world around them, things adults don't even notice anymore. It's usually children who ask, "Why are plants green?" or, "Why is the sky blue?" The answers to these types of questions can involve some complicated science. Many adults can't even answer these questions on a basic level, and fewer can answer them well.

The same is true about the "Mah Nishtana." A child experiences the world of the Seder, and, like the science-based questions, the 4 questions of the Mah Nishtana are grounded in curiosity, this time Torah-inspired. Like the science questions, there are simple answers to these questions. For example, you could also say that we eat matzah to remember leaving Egypt. But better answers are more complicated. For example, regarding matzah, there are several basic parts connected to Pesach: the mitzvah to "eat matzah," its origins in how we didn't have time to let the dough rise, and even the significance of how Lot is described in the Torah (Rashi, Genesis 19:3) as serving matzah on Pesach. Each of these topics could be its own *dvar Torah*.

Perhaps this is why some authorities hold that the leader of the seder should read "Mah Nishtana"; not the youngest child, or even all the children, or the guests, but the *leader* (see, for example, Rambam, Hilchot Chametz U'Matza 8:2). Like many questions that children ask, they are really questions that adults should also think about. It's easy to let our youthful curiosity grow stale and leave the questions in "Mah Nishtana" to children without realizing how much everyone of all ages can learn from them. We read the same story every year at the Seder table to recall *Yetziat Mitzrayim*, and it's possible to learn new things each year. Learning begins with good questions, and many times, it is the simplest ones which make us think the most and direct us to Hashem.

Relative Slavery

Yudi Sherman

Madrich; Migdal Student 5779; Richmond, VA

Every day, Jews have an obligation to remember the story of the Exodus. We understand how God expressed His prowess and omnipotence through taking us out of Egypt and slavery. On the surface, it seems quite reasonable to have this practice; this merciful and benevolent act of God should be recognized by a brief, daily reminder of His kindness. However, it is interesting that we obsess over and focus on this moment more than the revelation at Sinai, or the inauguration of the Mishkan. In contrast to these monumental events where there is merely an “honorable mention,” when it comes to the story of the Exodus, we also go as far as to gather family and friends once every year to celebrate and tell over the story of our ancestors’ plight and flight from bondage. Although the general theme of the night surrounds the story, the Haggadah captures what is perhaps the cause of the Passover Seder as a whole in these familiar words:

“We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt and the Lord, our God, freed us from Egypt with a mighty hand and outstretched arm. (Clause 1)

Had not the Holy One, blessed be he, liberated our people from Egypt, then we, our children and our children’s children would still be enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt. (Clause 2)

And even if all of us were wise, all of us understanding, all of us old and learned in the Torah, it is a positive commandment upon us to tell of the story of the Exodus from Egypt. (Clause 3)

And the more one tells of the Exodus from Egypt, the more he is praised. (Clause 4)”

In order to appreciate the lesson of these words, let us begin by drawing our attention to the first and second clause and the glaring redundancy in them. Isn’t it obvious that had we been freed from bondage (as indicated in c.1), we would no longer be enslaved (as indicated in c.2)? Furthermore, clause 3 seemingly assumes someone would think that the telling over the Exodus is somehow related to one’s knowledge and/or understanding of the Torah. Why would someone think that? This reliving of our ancestors’ story appears to be completely experiential; if this indeed is the case, separating the learned from the non-learned doesn’t seem to make sense. In fact, one might have thought the opposite after reading the equation in clause 4: the more one tells the story, the more one is praised. Don’t those who are wise, understanding and learned in Torah seek things worthy of praise? Additionally, why does this

commandment operate in such a way? Why have this additional “praise” component? How and why does this snapshot of the cause of our Seder read the way it does?

Before answering these questions, let us attempt to understand the nature of “freedom.” What does it mean to be free? Free from what? If it means to have “complete” control, are we ever free? If it means no longer imprisoned, must one have had to be a prisoner in order to be free? The same potential problem exists when trying to define slavery. If one is a slave when his life is controlled by a higher power, then one can argue we are always enslaved. If that were the case, we never left slavery, and to call ourselves *bnei chorin*, or free men, would be nonsensical. How can we use these terms without a clear definition of them?

There is a famous question that provides insight to our problem: Do you look at the glass as half full or as half empty? One can hear this and think the take-home message is to view life with an optimistic outlook; I certainly would agree. But I would suggest that the idea is a bit deeper. I think perspectives, emotions, states, and even tangible things, are all relative. In other words, in order for a thing to be what is, it must contrast with or relate to something else. This approach, though, is not simply that everything is relative, but rather that everything is relative based on how *we* relate to it. In most circumstances, the subject cannot change the object and try as he might, he will get nowhere until he chooses to *relate* to the object differently. Once one embraces this as an ideal, one can begin to shift perspectives. It is possible to realize the positives in life by virtue of the fact that, previously deemed neutral events, are in fact positive in relation to the negative.

With this in mind, let’s plug this theory into the freedom/slavery problem. “*We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt and the Lord, our God, freed us from Egypt with a mighty hand and outstretched arm.*” In other words, we were in an extremely negative state of servitude until God intervened, ending the negativity and thus creating the potential for positivity. “*Had not the Holy One, blessed be He, liberated our people from Egypt, then we, our children and our children’s children would still be enslaved to Pharaoh in Egypt.*” This idea is subtly different from the first. Not only did God prevent suffering, He caused those people to have the opportunity to receive the Torah, the greatest positive! “*And even if all of us were wise, all of us understanding, all of us old and learned in the Torah, it is a positive commandment upon us to tell of the story of the Exodus from Egypt.*” Although God removed the slavery, gave us freedom and gave us the Torah, one might think, “It’s great that God took out my ancestors from bondage, but even though I am free as result, I myself have never been a slave and therefore it would be illogical to relate my current state of freedom to one of slavery that I didn’t experience!” That would be an error. As we learn in the subsequent paragraph, Rabbi

Akiva, descended from converts, was engaged in the telling of the story all night. This comes on the heels of “*avadim hayinu*”, demonstrating that at the start of the Seder, you *are* your ancestors. While you may not have experienced what they did in actuality, your job at the Seder is to attempt to relate to their state as your own. One can then appreciate the magnitude of God’s greatness for taking us out of a state in which finding the positive was nearly impossible, and into one of freedom, one in which we have the choice to find positive. We see this clearly from the final clause, “*And the more one tells of the Exodus from Egypt, the more he is praised.*” When a person puts himself in the mindset of slaves, he can truly understand just how free he is in relation to them. And that, I think, is the root of this mitzvah and a core element in Judaism: freedom. But not simply freedom as defined by the dictionary, but rather freedom in relation to slavery. Whether it be servitude to your government, your master or even your thoughts, ultimately freedom will only come when you change how you relate to it.

Rabbi Elazar Ben Azarya: Night and Day

Yosef Bluth

Migdal Shana Bet Student 5780; Hewlett, NY

Upon first glance, the passage of *Harei Ani KiBen Shivim Shana* seems to be rather innocuous. It is a simple discussion over when one is obligated to discuss the Exodus from Egypt. Rabbi Elazar states that one must recall the Exodus at night, bringing a proof from Ben Zoma, while the Chachamim instead use that proof to include the times of *Mashiach*. What kind of argument is this? And why do we need this passage in the Haggadah at all?

In order to answer this question, I want to present a possible explanation of Rabbi Elazar's opinion. In his biography of Rabbi Elazar, *Talks and Tales*, Rabbi Dr. Nissan Mindel explains this passage to be referring not to the standard "night", but to the metaphorical "night" of the Exile. One might think that since we are in exile, there is no need to mention the initial redemption. However, Rabbi Elazar counters that the story of freedom is as equally relevant as it was when we had the Beit Hamikdash. This passage is even more impactful coming from Rabbi Elazar, who lived shortly after the destruction of the second Beit Hamikdash. The Haggadah, which was compiled after the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash, perhaps included this passage to serve as a justification for having a Seder in the first place - despite being in the metaphorical night period, we are still required to speak about the Exodus.

This interpretation also helps make this passage a little more coherent. When one looks at the simple explanation, it appears as though Rabbi Elazar and the Chachamim are talking past each other. One is talking about a time of day, whereas the other is discussing a time period, with no distinction made as to the actual time of day. However, this interpretation changes this argument to one about different time periods, with the two sides arguing as to which time period is the bigger *chiddush*. The Chachamim posit that the greater *chiddush* is the exact opposite of Rabbi Elazar. According to Rabbi Elazar, the given is that one should speak of the Exodus during the "day" - during a time of freedom, and the *drasha* teaches us that even in times of exile we are still commanded to speak of the Exodus. The Chachamim argue that it is during these very times, in times of exile, that the Exodus story is even more relevant to us. The *chiddush* is that even in the times of *Mashiach*, in which we will have been redeemed from this subsequent exile, that the initial redemption will still be significant and relevant.

Mah Nishtana Haben Hazeh

Yehonatan Baruch

Migdal Shana Alef Student 5781; West Hempstead, NY

The classic story of the four sons is perplexing at first glance. Four questions, four answers, without an obvious theme making this story at all necessary - how are these children relevant to our exodus from Egypt? There appears to be a dichotomy being created between the *Chacham* and the *Rasha* on one side, and the *Tam* and *She'eno Yodea Lish'ol* on the other, but what is it? Why do they evoke different answers? Even taking each son individually still raises questions, particularly the *Rasha*, who asks a seemingly innocent question, only to have his “teeth blunted”! With just a bit of insight, a rather obvious theme begins to emerge.

First, let's establish the sons as a single story by looking in the *pesukim*. Exodus 13:8 states: “And you shall explain to your son on that day, It is because of what the LORD did for me when I went free from Egypt.” There is a clear obligation at the Seder for a father to teach his sons of the redemption. This ties all four sons together, we now have the central theme, but still the question remains: Why do we have *these* four sons?

Let's take each pair together. The *Chacham* and the *Rasha* ask almost identical questions, both with “you” and not “we”, but as many commentaries point out, the *Chacham* adds “the Lord our God”, denoting an acceptance and togetherness that the *Rasha* apparently lacks. This may satisfy the question while running through the Haggadah, but why should such a seemingly minor shift in language evoke such powerfully different responses? The answer lies in a closer look at the choice of language. Rabbi Baruch Epstein, in his *Baruch Sheamar*, points out how *Chacham* is used rather than *Tzaddik*. According to Rabbi Epstein, a *Tzaddik* is one who simply follows God's will, whereas a *Chacham* is one who explores the deeper meaning of what it is he is doing. Thus, Rabbi Epstein explains the stark difference in questions asked: the *Chacham* is appropriately saying “you”, noting that only his elders have this obligation to explain the Seder night, whereas the *Rasha* is not just asking a question about the Seder, but on the entirety of *service* to God. The clear split between the two sons is now obvious.

The next two are a little more complex. The *Tam* and *She'eno Yodea Lish'ol* both evoke very similar answers with very similar questions, so why have both? Perhaps there is not a dichotomy here like by the other two sons, but something more halachic at

play. There are two extremes of the obligation of the father telling the story of redemption to his sons coming to fruition. On the one hand, we have the *Tam*, for whom the father has the easiest job, to give a simple response to a simple question. On the other, the *She'eno Yodea Lish'ol* presents the most difficult task: creating an artificial interaction to pass over the Passover tale - this explains why the response for him is so vague, to spark a further discussion.

While we have resolved the differences between the sons, the question still remains from the thematic viewpoint of describing the halachic obligation of the father to his sons at the Seder of why we have these four. The *Tam* and *She'eno Yodea Lish'ol* seem to cover the two extremes, so why have the *Chacham* and the *Rasha*? They evoke different responses, but surely you would fulfill your obligation with something on the spectrum between *Tam* and *She'eno Yodea Lish'ol*. The fact that we have four sons teaches us that this obligation is not one dimensional - it is not a sliding spectrum, rather it operates upon two axes. The *Tam* and *She'eno Yodea Lish'ol* establish the axis of level of involvement on the father's part (easy vs. difficult), while the *Chacham* and the *Rasha* establish the axis of depth the discussion should go, from the very cores of the halachot with the *Chacham* to a strong rebuke for the *Rasha* and his very place in all of Judaism.

What at first appeared as a slightly disjointed and out of place story now appears as a well thought out guide for how to run the Seder, and is a perfect thematic fit. The story of the Four Sons is really a quick how-to on how a father should fulfill his obligation to teach his sons of the redemption from Egypt, and incredibly creates a compass on which to map each and every individual child.

The Nature of Disgrace

Ezra Bleiberg

Migdal Shana Aleph Student 5781; Teaneck, NJ

The section of *Mitchila Ovdei Avodah Zara* seems to be greatly out of place. Why is the idol worship of Abraham's ancestors relevant to the Exodus from Egypt hundreds of years later? This question is reflected in an argument between Rav and Shmuel over where to start the story of the Exodus. The Mishnah (Pesachim 116a) states, "*Matchil b'gmut u'msayem b'shevach*," meaning, when you tell the story of the Exodus on the Seder night, you should start with the disgrace of Bnei Yisrael and end with their glory. Rav says that the disgrace refers to, "*Mitchilah ovdei avodah zarah hayu avoteinu*" - our ancestors' idolatry, while Shmuel maintains it refers to "*avadim hayinu*" - Bnei Yisrael's slavery.

In our version of the Haggadah, we see that both opinions were adopted, yet in reverse chronological order - *Avadim Hayinu*, the history of being slaves in Egypt, appears before this section of *Mitchilah*. Why would the Baal Haggadah include both passages, but not in the correct order?

These two disgraces are very different in nature. While slavery is a physically degrading state, idolatry is a spiritually disgraceful state. Rav and Shmuel seem to have very different views on what liberty we are celebrating on Pesach. Shmuel believes we are primarily celebrating the fact that God took us from physical slavery to physical freedom, starting with the beginning of the slavery and ending at the crossing of the *Yam Suf*. In contrast, Rav believes we are primarily celebrating the transition from moral slavery (idolatry) to moral freedom (the freedom to worship God), starting at Terach and culminating at our receiving of the Torah.

Looking at *Mitchila Ovdei Avodah Zara* gives us a different lens through which we can view the Exodus. When one confronts physical disgrace, one must reflect why that disgrace has occurred. Perhaps there is a moral imperfection that brought us to that physical expression of disgrace. It is perhaps for this reason that this paragraph is included in our retelling of the story in the order in which it is found. It is sometimes only through physical disgrace that we have the wherewithal to recognize the spiritual disgrace that has occurred.

Once we recognize this though, we are able to conclude our story with *shevach* - praise; both the physical redemption at the *Yam Suf*, and the spiritual redemption upon receipt of the Torah.

Vehi Sheamda: The Eternal Exodus

HaRav Chaim Ozer Chait

Rosh HaYeshiva Emeritus

As we proceed in the Maggid portion of the Haggadah, we come across the passage of "*Vehi Sheamda*," "And it is this that has sustained our fathers and us... But in all ages they rise up against us to destroy us, and the Holy One, Blessed be He, rescues us from their hands." With this passage, a change in the narrative of the Exodus takes place. Whereas up to this point, the focus was on the Exodus from Egypt; the theme of "*Vehi Sheamda*," on the other hand, is on the post-Exodus experience. This is an important contribution to the story of the Exodus, for it brings us to recognize G-d's great salvation of the Jewish people throughout the centuries. Throughout our long Diaspora, whenever the Jewish people were in dire need of salvation, G-d was there to rescue us. This terse statement gives a new and important meaning to the Haggadah, and to the mitzvah of *Sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim*. The mitzvah of Maggid is not just for the purpose of giving us a historical background of the Jewish people, but it is also to tell us the special relationship between us (*Klal Yisrael*) and *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, i.e. an eternal bond that will never be broken.

Many of our *mefarshim* explain the opening words "And it is this..." to refer to the previous paragraph whose theme is "The Covenant between the Portions" ("*Brit Bein HaBetarim*"). In other words, right from the outset, Hashem informs Avraham Avinu that the bond between God, Avraham, his children, and all future generations, is an everlasting bond that can never be broken.

The Brisker Rav adds another dimension to this idea of connecting the theme of "*Vehi Sheamda*" to "The Covenant between the Portions," based on the statement of Shmuel found in Masechet Shabbat 55a. There, Shmuel tells us that "the merit of the Patriarchs (*zechut avot*) is exhausted as a shield for protection for the wicked", but what protects the Jewish nation as a whole, including the wicked, is the Covenant between the Portions. This is our guarantee that the Jewish nation will always survive and will never be annihilated. This is why "*Vehi Sheamda*" plays such a significant role in the Maggid portion of the Haggadah.

It is for this reason that the standard practice has been to raise the cup of wine when we recite this passage. (It is also customary to cover the Matzah at this time, as when we raise the cup of wine for Kiddush the Matzot should be covered.) It should be noted, however, that Rabbi Yosef Dov Ha'levi Soloveichick ZT"l mentioned in the name of his renowned grandfather Rabbi Chaim Ha'levi Soloveitchik ZT"l, who accepted the

drasha of comparing “*zachor et hayom hazeh*” to “*zachor et yom haShabbat*” making it necessary to hold the cup of wine during the Maggid portion of the Haggadah, however when he came to “*Vehi Sheamda*”, he would put down the cup of wine. He felt that, strictly speaking, “*Vehi Sheamda*” doesn't meet the requirements to be part of the mitzvah of *Sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim*. In other words, according to Rav Chaim Halevi Soloveitchik ZT”L, the mentioning of “*Vehi Sheamda*” is based on the rules of how to properly give praise to Hashem; if you are giving praise and thanks to Hashem for a specific reason it is only proper to include other similar cases. The mitzvah of *Sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim* however, is only fulfilled when you specifically talk about the Exodus, and for this reason, he returned the cup to the table.

Varav Understood

Gavriel Koppel

Migdal Alumnus 5778, Baruch College, Philadelphia, PA

One of the most fascinating parts of Maggid is the Haggadah's way of concisely telling over the story of *Yetziat Mitzrayim*, not through the *pesukim* in *Sefer Shemot*, but through the *pesukim* recited during the offering of the *Bikkurim*, as outlined in *Sefer Devarim*. The first *pasuk* quoted (Devarim 26:5) discusses the background of how we ultimately got to *Mitzrayim*.

It recounts how Lavan had tried to destroy Yaakov and his descendants, which led to Yaakov dwelling temporarily in *Mitzrayim*. During this time, however, Klal Yisrael grew in population. As the *pasuk* describes, they became a nation "*gadol, atzum, varav*," "great, powerful, and many." The word "*varav*" seems a bit redundant. We already understand, as the Haggadah explains, from "*gadol atzum*" that Klal Yisrael had grown and multiplied exponentially during their time in *Mitzrayim*. What is "*varav*" teaching here?

The Haggadah answers this question through a *drash* from Yechezkel 16:7-8: "I have made you as numerous as the plants in the field; you grew and developed, and became charming, possessing a beautiful figure, and your hair grew long; but you were naked and bare. And I passed over you and saw you downtrodden in your blood and I said to you: 'Through your blood shall you live,' and I said to you, 'Through your blood shall you live.'"

The basic connection is the beginning of the quotation, the word "numerous", "*revava*". But by associating these verses together, the Haggadah shows a further story - while Klal Yisrael was multiplying and growing, there was still something lacking. Thus, the *pasuk* describes them as "*arom v'erya*", "naked and bare," and the description of "*mitboseset bidamayich*" "downtrodden in your blood." What idea is the Haggadah trying to get at with these strange references?

Before we answer this question, we must understand some of the context surrounding the *pasuk*. Rashi points out that repetition of "Through your blood shall you live" alludes to two different instances during *Yetziat Mitzrayim* in which blood was used as a vehicle for *geulah*: the blood from the *Brit Milah* performed by every man, and the blood from the *Korban Pesach*.

Perhaps what the Haggadah is getting at here is that when we went down to *Mitzrayim*, despite the increase in population and engagement in *pru urvu*, Klal Yisrael was lacking in some ideological perfections. If so, this can explain why the farmer, when offering the *Bikkurim*, is meant to recall the background of growth in *Mitzrayim* preceding the enslavement and eventual redemption. By reciting these words, the farmer is meant to understand the link between these two phenomena: an ideological imperfection on behalf of Klal Yisrael, and enslavement to the Egyptians. It's entirely possible the enslavement in *Mitzrayim* was meant to serve as a "wake-up call" to Klal Yisrael to fix their imperfections and help them understand the importance of recognizing HaKadosh Baruch Hu as a necessity in their lives through both hardships and good times. This is the perfect time for the religious farmer to realize where his food comes from and what he needs to do for continued sustenance.

At the Seder, we gain more fully the understanding of the lacking Klal Yisrael had, and thus, the meaning of the *drash* made from the word "*varav*."

Arami Oved Avi

Yaacov Strickon

Migdal Shana Aleph Student 5781; Milwaukee, WI

The section of *Arami Oved Avi* is one of the most confusing parts of the Seder. It is the start of the telling over of the story of Pesach, the meat of it, you could say. But when looking at the text, a question glares back at you. Why do we start the story with Lavan? And in exactly what way did he try to destroy all the Jews?

To answer these questions, I suggest we look closer at what this passage means, specifically two words: "*la'akor*" and "*oved*." Most translations translate "*la'akor*" as "to uproot", but in biblical Hebrew, it can also mean sterilize, or make barren, this is also what it means in modern Hebrew. "*Oved*" is translated traditionally in the Haggadah as "destroy", as in, "the Aramean (Lavan) destroyed my father." But "*oved*" can also mean "to become lost" or "to wander", which gives us the translation of, "Lavan made my father wander." I think that this is the better translation, because Lavan didn't destroy Yaakov! In fact, he married his daughters to him. What Lavan did do, though, was make Yaakov the shepherd for his flocks, and a shepherd's job is to wander with the grazing animals. What is the significance of Lavan's forcing Yaakov to wander to the story?

It is important to note that the recitation of "arami oved avi" comes from the *Bikkurim* declaration in Devarim 26:5-10. When one brings *bikkurim* to the Beit Hamikdash, he says these verses which describe the history of the Exodus from Egypt and entering the Land of Israel. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks suggests that the reason for this is to emphasize the fact that *bikkurim* are only possible when one is settled, and we weren't always a settled people, as Yaakov wandered when being Lavan's shepherd. I think we can add to this. After the Torah describes the wandering nature of Yaakov, we continue to read: "And he (Yaakov) went down to Egypt and temporarily dwelt there, few in numbers. And he became there a nation - great and mighty and numerous" (Devarim 26:5). The main thing I want to point out is, only when Yaakov settled down, even temporarily, was he able to become a nation. One part of a nation is national identity. The Torah is hinting that you can create an identity in a strange land, but you can't do that while you're wandering too. Perhaps we can even say that Lavan's plan was to make Yaakov wander in his land, so he couldn't create his own identity.

Now I'd like to turn back to the phrase "*Lavan bikesh la'akor et ha'kol*", which we are translating as, "Lavan sought to sterilize everyone" - he would achieve this by sterilizing Yaakov, as he is the ancestor of all the Jews. The irony of this translation, as

we alluded to above, is that Lavan did the opposite of sterilizing Yaakov - he gave him his two daughters to marry! But in this lies not only the answer, but also Lavan's cunning. The reason Lavan had Yaakov marry both Rachel and Leah was to give him power over Yaakov. By the fact that Yaakov was now outnumbered by his wives, and Lavan having power over them because they were his daughters, Lavan now had power over Yaakov. As Lavan says to Yaakov, "The women are my daughters, the children are my children, and the flocks are my flocks. All you see is mine" (Genesis 31:43). And earlier, he says, "I have the power to do you harm" (Genesis 31:29).

This ties into how old Yaakov's children were when he left. Yaakov's oldest, Reuven, was thirteen when Yaakov left Lavan house. Thirteen is an interesting age. It is recognized as the beginning of responsibility and the cusp of adulthood. Perhaps Yaakov realized that he needed to take his children away from this Aramean society before they became too used to it and influenced by it. Thus, he made sure to leave before his kids got any older.

With these points we can now answer our questions: Why start with Lavan, and how did he try to destroy all the Jews? Lavan's plan was not to sterilize Yaakov physically, but to do it on a level of national identity, hence "*ha'kol*" and not just Yaakov. His plan was to force Yaakov to wander as his shephard in Aram. This would cause Yaakov to never be able to settle down in a foreign land; Lavan tried to make it impossible for him to create a national identity for himself and his children. Resulting in, as Yaakov's children grew older they would assimilate into the local Aramean culture, and thus on the level of national identity, Yaakov would be sterilized.

It is important to contrast this with what occurred in *Mitzrayim*. *Mitzrayim* specifically ostracized us, kept us separate and kept us far from assimilation. While the exile in Egypt was physically terrible, we perhaps must recognize the dangers of the alternative. It is perhaps for this reason we start our exile story with the reference of what Lavan attempted to do to our father Yaakov.

Vayareu: They Made Us Bad

Rav Ashi Harrow

Mashgiach Ruchani; Ra"m

"Vayareu otanu haMitzrim vayeenu, vayitnu aleinu avodah kashah" (Devarim 26:6)

No, this *pasuk* is not describing the backbreaking work we do cleaning up for Pesach. Rather, it is describing the intense oppression of the Jewish nation by the Egyptians. Our *pasuk* records three expressions describing the hardships which the Jewish nation experienced, "*vayareu*", "*vayeenu*", and finally "*vayitnu aleinu avoda kasha*."

The Mishna in *Masechet Pesachim* states that during the Seder we *darshan* these *pesukim* found in the Torah (recited by the Jew who brings his *bikkurim* to the *Beit Hamikdash*), known as *Parshat Arami Oved Avi*, in which we tell the story of the slavery and salvation from Egypt in a very condensed fashion. Our text of the *Haggadah* cites *Midrashim* that do this by elaborating upon the words from these *pesukim* quoted in the Torah.

It seems that the simple idea being conveyed in these *pesukim* is that the Egyptians did evil to us and afflicted us, imposing hard labor upon our nation. However, it is very interesting to note that the *drasha* on the words "*vayareu otanu hamitzrim*" does not mention the Egyptians harming us, rather the *drasha* expresses the panic and state of worry possessed by the Egyptians. The fear that the Jewish people will collaborate with attacking enemies to overturn the Egyptian kingdom. In accordance to the understanding of this *drasha*, the word "*vayareu*" should not be understood to mean that the Egyptians did evil to us, but rather "they made us bad," which means to say, they portrayed us as "bad" people; as people that will turn against them, the Egyptian nation, in a time of war and distress.

It seems that the reason the *darshan* explained the *pasuk* in this manner, and not the simpler way to understand the word "*vayareu*", is based on the use of "*otanu*" in this verse. If the *pasuk* wanted to emphasize the evil way the Egyptians *acted towards* us, it should have used the word "*lanu*" [to us] and not the word "*otanu*" [us].

There is an additional explanation brought down by many commentators who also paid attention to the usage of the word "*otanu*" instead of "*lanu*." They explain that the meaning of the *pasuk* is that the Egyptians were the cause of us to become wicked individuals. This idea stems from the fact that when a person is lacking basic physical components, he will surely focus on his own survival and at times this can affect his morals with the society around him. We find this idea in the gemara (Eruvin 41b): "The

Sages taught: Three matters cause a person to act against his own will and the will of his Maker... and the depths of extreme poverty.”

I would like to offer an additional explanation to these *pesukim*. This idea is based on the words of *Chazal* in the gemara we learned in yeshiva this year in *Seder Bekiyut*, and touches upon a very important and relevant issue that every one of us is faced with throughout our lives. Perhaps we can explain that the concluding words of the *pasuk*, “*vayitnu aleinu avoda kasha*” is the explanation and the *reason* for our suffering, and not an additional expression of that suffering. The Egyptians turned us into “bad people” and also afflicted us, causing us to suffer tremendously, and this came about through them placing upon us “hard work” [*avodah kasha*].

What is this “hard work”? The gemara (Sotah 11b) explains that “*avodat parech*” means that they appointed women to do the chores that belong to men and they placed men in the positions befitting women. While it is understandable that the physical labor forced upon the women was back-breaking and brought suffering, was this really “*avodat parech*” for the men? Surely these stereotypically womanly chores were physically easier? The answer is that even though physically they were certainly easier, when a person is not working in an area befitting his mental state, he is doing chores that are foreign to his inner makeup. This can cause him to suffer tremendously.

Hashem created each and every one of us with special traits and talents with which to interact with the world. When we use our potential and talents, we feel self-fulfillment and success in our actions, but if we are forced to act not according to our individual talents and traits we will feel very bad about ourselves.

Based on this, we can perhaps understand the words “*vayareu otanu*.” It means they made *us* bad, meaning our inner being was not fulfilled. (The word *ra* is the opposite of *tov*, which we see throughout the Creation narrative means to be complete and aligned with Hashem's intention for that creation.) Our feeling of self-fulfillment and success was destroyed by this plan of the Egyptians - forcing us to live a reality not aligned with our inner state. This plan of the Egyptians pained us to our core.

I think there is a very important idea we can derive from these words of the Haggadah, especially for students that will soon be choosing the direction they would like to pursue in finding a job to support their family and benefit society. One shouldn't take this choice lightly, nor should one place all the weight of his decision on how high his yearly income will be. Rather, he should find a job that he believes will benefit his inner makeup and will make him happy while taking part in the mitzvah of supporting his family.

While the intention of the Egyptians was to cause us to forget our true identity as a great nation and physically oppress us, the *hashgacha* of Hashem caused that their actions brought about the opposite effect: “But the more they were oppressed, the more they increased and spread out, so that the [Egyptians] came to dread the Israelites.” (Shemot 1:12)

May we merit to know how good we are, realize our talents and bring *kvod Hashem* to the world by using our good to benefit the world around us!

Ani V'lo Malach - The "Nature" of Mashchit

Chayim Zifkin

Madrich; Migdal 5779; Detroit, MI

While reading through the Haggadah, especially the section of Maggid, we tend to forget that it is a compilation of Tanaitic thoughts and teachings. Oftentimes, we breeze through the numerous strange, and sometimes questionable, *drashot*, without batting an eye or giving ourselves a second to think about what is being said. One such *drash*, which is brought down from the Mechiltah, that certainly gave me pause, goes as follows:

"And the Lord took us out of Egypt with a strong hand and with an outstretched forearm and with great awe and with signs and with wonders" (Deuteronomy 26:8).

"And the Lord took us out of Egypt" - not through an angel and not through a seraph and not through a messenger, but [directly by] the Holy One, blessed be He, Himself, as it is stated (Exodus 12:12); "And I will pass through the Land of Egypt on that night and I will smite every firstborn in the Land of Egypt, from men to animals; and with all the gods of Egypt, I will make judgments, I am the Lord."

"And I will pass through the Land of Egypt" - I and not an angel. "And I will smite every firstborn" - I and not a seraph. "And with all the gods of Egypt, I will make judgments" - I and not a messenger. "I am the Lord" - I am He and there is no other.

While reading through these passages, the point the *Tanna* is driving at becomes clear: some sort of idea of God being the One Who personally destroyed the Egyptian firstborn.

At this point, we can stop and say, "This all sounds and looks great! I can accept that God Himself personally wreaked havoc throughout the land in order to show His connection to the Jewish people." But when you start to think about it, what in the world does that mean? Are we saying that God Himself actually "descended" into Egypt? We know *definitionally* that God, a non-corporeal being Who does not and *cannot* exist in Spacetime, could not have done this on a physical, personal level! If God were to undergo some sort of change, one of two things has to happen: either the being prior to change was not God, or that being which has been "turned into" God is not God. If this question isn't enough to raise some eyebrows, the *pasukim themselves* seem to

contradict this very idea: When God tells Moses what is to occur, He says, "...when I shall see the blood and I shall pass over you; *there shall not be a plague of destruction* (negef mashchit) upon you when I strike against the land of Egypt" (Exodus 12:13). A bit after this, the Torah describes, "...and God will pass over the entrance and He will not permit *the destroyer* (HaMashchit) to enter your homes..." (Exodus 12:23). Are we supposing that God turned into a plague or a destroyer in order to carry out this decree? As mentioned above, this would be impossible!

To bolster this question, in the Rambam's *nusach* of the Haggadah, he leaves out the word "*u'vi'atzmo*" - "Himself". "Ani" here *can not* be referring to God directly wiping out the firstborn. So what does it mean?

I would like to suggest that this *drash* is coming to give us an idea of what exactly was happening on that night. We are being shown that on the night before the Exodus, the very normality of nature was turned on its head. We see numerous examples of this throughout the *pasukim*. To name a few, why does the Torah have to go out of its way to tell us that not a single dog snarled at an Israelite (Exodus 11:7)? Additionally, how were the Egyptians "okay" with the Israelites slaughtering their gods in order to roast and eat them? How would any of us feel if a large group of people started marking a mockery of something we hold in a high regard? The narrative of the *pasukim* doesn't tell us anything about a mass Egyptian riot, seemingly because there wasn't any!

It seems from the *pesukim* that we want to stress this idea; the normal causal laws which the universe operates by were temporarily altered to allow a "*mashchit*" to go through the land and wipe out the firstborns. I would like to theorize that whenever the Torah uses the *lashon* of "*mashchit*" in reference to some sort of retribution, it refers to a supernatural operation. An example of this can be seen when Lot urges his son-in-laws to flee before the destruction of Sodom; "Get up and leave this place, for HaShem is about to destroy the city (*ki mashchit HaShem et ha'ir!*)"

This could be what the *Tanna* is calling "*Ani*", "I", in the *drash*; only God has the power to change the course of nature. Another way to put it is the term "*hashgachah*", or "Divine Providence". The idea is that this night is truly unlike all other nights - the very laws of nature ceased to hold true.

This can explain the *drash*'s further emphasis on "and not a *malach*", by using the Rambam's concept of *malachim*. The Rambam in the *Moreh HaNevuchim* talks about *malachim* being what we refer to as forces of nature. He says:

"...All forces are angels. How great is the blindness of ignorance and how harmful! If you told a person who is one of those who deem themselves one of Israel's

sages that the Deity sends an angel, who enters the womb of a woman and forms the fetus there, he would be pleased with this assertion and would accept it and would regard it as a manifestation of greatness and power on the part of the Deity... But if you tell him that God has placed in the sperm a formative force shaping the limbs ... and that this force is a "Mal'akh" ... the man would shrink from this opinion..." [Moreh Nevuchim 2:6]

Using the Rambams' idea expressed here, I'd like to posit that when the *Tanna* says "I and not a *malach*", "*malach*" is referring to the normative causal laws of nature. Of course God did not descend into the land! Of course there was a Destroyer, a messenger of God, which swept through the land to lay waste to the firstborns! Therefore, "I" *must* be referring to *hashgachah*, while "and not an angel" refers to the normal cause and effect through which the world operates. However, the *messenger itself* was a product of Divine Providence. A break in nature paved the way for a non-normative agent of God to slay the firstborns, something which can only be possible "directly" by God. "I am the Lord" - I am He and there is no other.

The Makkot - Proof Through Succession

Dovid Lichter

Migdal Shana Bet Student 5780; Far Rockaway, NY

To free *Bnei Yisrael* from slavery in *Mitzrayim*, God inflicts the *Mitzrim* with *makkot*. While the most efficient way to free *Bnei Yisrael* would be to implement a singular great and powerful *makkah*, God chooses instead a series of discrete and successive. What was the rationale to break up the *makkot* into multiple occurrences? Clearly, one can assume there was a greater objective to the *makkot* than mere punishment.

We maintain in Judaism that the most important thing in one's life is to come to as great of an understanding of *Hashem* as one can. One must observe and study the *Torah*, the mitzvot, and the natural world to arrive at a greater understanding of *Hashem* and His hand in the world. Studying *Yetziat Mitzrayim*, an important mitzvah on its own and the theme of *leil haseder*, helps direct a person toward this objective.

As noted by one *chacham*, Moshe and Pharaoh had an argument as to whether or not God can play an active role in this world and change the laws of nature. Pharaoh maintained that God was limited in that regard and could not mess with the laws of nature, while Moshe held that He can. The *makkot* served as a proof to Pharaoh and his followers that God does indeed intervene in the world.

Upon experiencing the first two *makkot* from Moshe, Pharaoh had his sorcerers replicate what Moshe had done. He maintained his claim that nothing truly unusual happened, and that these few performances were not impossible performances shown by God through Moshe. going through multiple rounds of *makkot* which were irreplicable, Pharaoh had no choice but to recognize that the *makkot* were "*etzbah elokim hee*" - "It is God's finger."

This clarifies why the *makkot* were done in a manner of succession, rather in one fell swoop. Had there only been one *makkah*, Pharaoh would have had a viable claim that what Moshe had done was not through Divine Providence. Through the succession of the *makkot*, there was undeniable proof that God intervenes in this world at His will.

Eser Makkot: A Hot Take

Daniel Ganopolsky

Migdal Shana Bet Student 5780; Brooklyn, NY

Before we explore the “miracles” that our ancestors witnessed in the land of Egypt, I would like to define what we mean when we say “supernatural miracles”. In one of the Rambam’s earliest works, the Commentary on the Mishnah, the Rambam asserts that miracles are a part of nature. The Mishnah (Avot 5:5 in the Rambam’s edition) lists items that were created during the last moments of the sixth day of creation, each of them miraculous (e.g. the “mouth” of the earth that swallowed Korach). The Rambam, in his commentary to that Mishnah, explains this to mean that miracles were part of creation. When setting the laws of nature in motion, unique exceptions to those laws were included; miracles were pre-programmed into the laws of nature. Therefore, technically, they do not violate nature but are a part of it. We relate to them as miracles because they occur once every few centuries, sometimes even just once, so to us they seem to break the laws of nature. The Rambam writes similarly in his introduction to Avot, commonly referred to as Shemonah Perakim, ch. 8: “[We hold that] God already expressed His will in the course of the six days of creation, and that things act in accordance with their nature from then on... That explains why the Sages found it necessary to say that all the supernatural miracles that have occurred [in the past] and all those that we are promised will come about [in the future] were already designated to come about in the course of the six days of creation, when the miraculous events were implanted in the nature of the things involved in them.” For example, we would never call rain a supernatural miracle because it happens so often; even earthquakes or tsunamis happen often enough. But if something in nature occurs that has never been seen or recorded before we tend to refer to it as a divine act or unnatural miracle. However, even these rare phenomena are programmed to take place within the laws of nature, just less often.

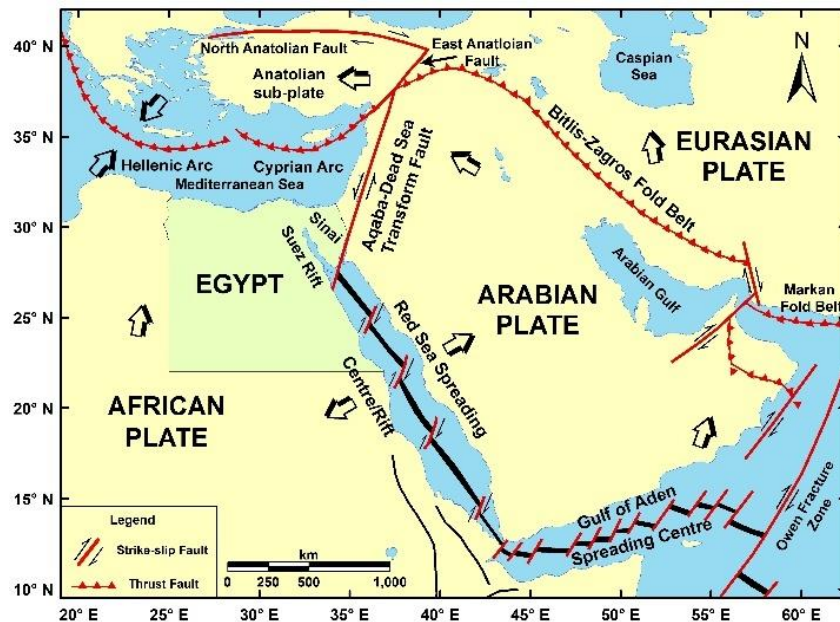
The other route, of course, is to say that at a certain point in time, God decided to intervene and deviate from the laws of nature and/or physics to create said miracle. The potential problem I see with going down this road is twofold: First, we would have to posit that God exists within time, and the second is that when God created the universe and us, He overlooked certain variables that later became major issues that required divine intervention and miracles to solve and overcome. Both of these ideas present a myriad of philosophical problems. Time is finite, God is not. The second problem implies God was lacking something when He created the universe. I would love to discuss why

these two approaches are so problematic, but unfortunately this is not the place to discuss them, so for now we will refer to the first way of thinking.

As the Rambam says in the Moreh Nevuchim ch. 34, “It is certainly necessary for whoever wishes to achieve human perfection to train himself at first in the art of logic, then in the mathematical sciences according to the proper order, then in the natural sciences, and after in the divine science.” With that in mind, let us attempt to dissect one of the *Makkot* that took place in Egypt by utilizing the understanding of modern science.

“And every first-born in the land of Egypt shall die, from the first-born of Pharaoh who sits on his throne to the first-born of the slave girl who is behind the millstones” (Exodus 11:5). The death of the firstborns is definitely one of the more difficult plagues to explain by science. Not only did this only affect the Egyptians, but even within the Egyptian family seemingly only some of the family members were killed by God, and supposedly directly *Himself*. Explore we shall!

Rabbi Michael Shelomo Bar-Ron suggests that this plague was actually caused by an earthquake. To understand how an earthquake could have caused such specific damage to a certain people we have to take a look back at Egyptian history for help. However, before we do that we have to ask the most important question, do earthquakes even occur in Egypt?



The image above shows a fault line in-between Israel and Jordan heading down directly towards the middle of Egypt's eastern coast. If an earthquake were to occur, Egypt would definitely feel it. During the years the Israelites resided in Egypt, it is possible that the Capital where the Pharaoh was located, was called Luxor. It was positioned directly where the fault line intercepted with Egypt (as shown below). Therefore, the Capital, where most of the Egyptians lived, would have experienced the quake more strongly than any other part of the country.



Still the question remains, why were the Jews not affected and why specifically the Egyptian firstborns - as far as we know, an earthquake cannot choose who to kill! Based on the historical records we have and various archeological expeditions, we know that ancient Egyptian households consisted of bunkbeds inside the bedrooms. Traditionally, the firstborns would sleep on the top bunk. Without a doubt, if an earthquake were to take place, the firstborns on the top would fall and have debris fall on them which surely led to their deaths. Now, even were there other casualties, as is the norm when an earthquake rocks a city, that does not contradict the Torah's description. There is no *pasuk* that says that the firstborns were the only ones who died; it only mentions that all of them did, which can be explained by the bunk bed situation.

As for the Jews, the *pasuk* in Vayigash 45:10 says: "You will dwell in the region of Goshen, where you will be near me—you and your children and your grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and all that is yours." The Torah tells us that the Jews lived in a special land designated for them by Yosef. Not only was the land of Goshen very fertile and large, it was also located along Egypt's northern coast, far away from the capital city of Luxor and the fault line. The Jews would have been virtually undisturbed by the earthquake.

Right after the Torah mentions the upcoming death of the firstborns it continues in Exodus 11:7, “But not a dog shall snarl at any of the Israelites, at man or beast—in order that you may know that God makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel.” At first glance, it seems very odd for the Torah to mention dogs barking or lack thereof, but I believe this too can be answered by the earthquake theory. Current research suggests that dogs can hear seismic activities that precede earthquakes (such as the scraping, grinding, and breaking of rocks underground). This would then explain why the dogs in Luxor would have been barking, and why no dog barked at the Jews, there was simply no earthquake for them to sense.

All this should be read with a grain of salt. Our knowledge of the sciences changes everyday and there is potential for this theory to change with it. However, that should not stop us from exploring God’s “miracles” through the science he provided for us. We should continue to investigate, research, and seek clarity of God’s universe in order, like the Rambam says, to perfect ourselves.

A Famous & Complex Acronym

HaRav Dr. Dvir Ginsberg

Rosh HaYeshiva

One of the culminating moments of the Seder night involves the recitation of the Ten Plagues. There is an almost climactic aspect to it, as it is positioned towards the end of Maggid, serving to demonstrate God's complete control over nature while reminding us of the pivotal role played by the plagues in our exodus from Egypt. Upon completing this, we recite, almost as an afterthought, the following:

"Rabbi Yehuda gave them simanim: ב"ש באח"ב דצ"ג"

Is it really that important that the Ten Plagues be placed in the form of an acronym? It turns out (no big surprise) that there is a debate amongst various Rishonim as to the intent of this acronym. The various opinions will help reveal how this seemingly simple acronym offers a deep enlightenment regarding the Seder experience.

The initial question raised by nearly all the commentators concerning this contraction is quite simple: it does not take any type of sophisticated wisdom to take the first letters of the plagues and create this acronym. We know Rabbi Yehuda was a tremendous *talmid chacham*. How would this contribution add to his reputation?

The most common interpretation of the acronym involves looking at the plagues as grouped together based on various thematic similarities. However, there are two other lesser known opinions that shed new light on this seemingly unsophisticated acronym. This first is brought in the name of Rashi by the Ritva. Rashi reinforces the above question, commenting that an elementary school student could come up with this formulation. He then explains that without this acronym, one might come to say that there is no chronological order to the Torah – "*ein mukdam umeuchar baTorah.*" Why would one have this concern?

King David offers a review of the plagues (Tehillim 105), infusing his own analysis in the recounting. When writing about the different plagues, King David did not follow the historical order found in the Torah. For example, he first writes about the plague of *choshech*, then *dam*, and then *tzfardeah* – clearly not the order found in the Torah. Rashi therefore suggests (as quoted by the Ritva) that the order of plagues found in Maggid, codified by the acronym, serves to differentiate from the order (or lack thereof) posited by King David. What is odd about this opinion is that Rashi, throughout his commentary on the Torah, insists that there is no chronological order to the Torah. How

do we understand this contradiction? And how does his explanation resolve his initial question?

Let's take the other opinion before answering Rashi. The Rashbatz writes that using *simanim*, or acronyms, was a common practice of Rabbi Yehuda. He did this to prevent his students from erring. As an example, Rabbi Yehuda uses an acronym to prevent errors in the area of measurements of the two loaves used in the Beit Hamikdash (Menachot 96a). He emphasizes (somewhat similar to Rashi) the importance of this specific order of the plagues being clear, versus the order espoused by King David. He concludes by writing that it is critical, via this technique of acronyms and their value for students, to emphasize this exact order of plagues as found in the Torah. What is the main idea being presented by the Rashbatz?

Clearly, both agree about the acronym's main purpose – it is a *kiyum* in the re-telling of the events of our exodus from Egypt (*sipur yetziat mitzrayim*), the primary mitzvah of the Seder night. As the Rambam writes in the Mishneh Torah (Hilchot Chametz U'Matzah 7:1), it is a mitzvah on the night of the fifteenth to tell the story of the miracles and wonders that were done for our forefathers in Egypt. This acronym serves as an enhancement in the performance of this mitzvah. According to Rashi, the reason for the acronym is to stress the importance of the chronological order of the plagues. In general, one would not be primarily concerned with the order, and would instead focus on each individual plague as an area of study. That is not to say there is no idea in the order itself. However, the necessity of following the timeline would be secondary, at best. Therefore, Rashi is telling us that the acronym emphasizes the need to focus on the plagues in the order they occurred. This makes sense in the context of re-telling events – following the chronological order is critical in transmitting historical records. Thus, when reciting this acronym, we are emphasizing the necessity of following the historical order, and how it fits into the theme of re-telling the events.

The Rashbatz, focuses on a different aspect. As he points out, Rabbi Yehuda used acronyms to teach students not to err, and therefore, these were used as a method of memorization. In the case of the Seder night, as we all know, there is a pivotal concept involving teaching our children what took place in Egypt. From the very first inquiry via *karpas*, through the different ideas found in Maggid, the entire Seder night takes on the framework of a back and forth between parent and child. As the theme of education plays such a crucial role, Rabbi Yehuda's use of this acronym becomes much clearer. Sure, it is a simple acronym, but it reflects the importance of the Seder in the education of our children. It helps emphasize the prominence of not just studying the plagues for our own benefit, but to ensure we are teaching our children as well.

This year, let's elevate this acronym from an afterthought to another example of the deep wisdom contained in the Haggadah.

Dayenu: Being Grateful

Joseph Gladstein

Migdal Shana Aleph Student 5781; Seattle, WA

Every year at Pesach, we love to sing “Dayenu”. But do we know the meaning behind the song? We know that Dayenu means “It would have been enough”; yet when studying “Dayenu”, we see it really wouldn't have been enough if Hashem didn't do all fourteen things listed. Rather, it would have been enough to cause us to praise Hashem for all He did for us. Thus, the underlying theme throughout Dayenu is one of gratitude. This can be broken down into three sections, the three sections of Dayenu. The first five stanzas focus on being freed from slavery, the second five are centered around the miracles, and the last four point to our closeness to Hashem.

The first five are as follows:

1) If He had taken us out of Egypt and not made judgments on them... 2) ...and had not made [them] on their gods... 3) ...and had not killed their firstborn... 4) ...and had not given us their money... 5) ...and had not split the Sea for us; [it would have been] enough for us."

We see that all five of these stanzas have to do with not just the Exodus, but leaving the world of slavery. Being enslaved, the Jews could only fantasize about leaving their bondage. Punishing the Egyptians was the farthest thing from their minds. Yet Hashem deemed it critical to demonstrate His awesome power, not just to the Jews, but to the whole world. While each step was a necessary prerequisite for the following one, this cannot mean a diminishing of gratitude. It is easy to fall into the trap of being grateful once you no longer have something. For Jews, this is not the true idea of *hakarat hatov*. We should never take things for granted, and we can never wait until the loss of something to turn to God. Rather, we must see every step as part of an overall process, and be grateful for each moment. Recently I broke my collar bone and have been in a sling for the last six weeks. Over that time it was difficult for me to shower, get dressed, and even sleep. I was so accustomed to being able to do these tasks so easily that it never even crossed my mind to be grateful for them. Dayenu gives us an opportunity to think of the necessary things in our lives and truly be grateful for them.

The second group centers around Hashem's miracles:

1) If He had split the Sea for us and had not taken us through it on dry land... 2) ...and had not pushed down our enemies in [the Sea]... 3) ...and had not supplied our needs in

the wilderness for forty years... 4) ...and had not fed us the manna... 5) ...and had not given us the Shabbat; [it would have been] enough for us."

These five stanzas reinforce how important it is for us to have gratitude for Hashem's miracles. Without Hashem splitting the sea and helping us survive through the wilderness, we would have undoubtedly died on our own. We must be cautious to not view these as fulfilling of expectations. Even giving us a day of rest, a special day of connection called Shabbat, which was unparalleled in the ancient world, this is a miracle.

The last four talk about our closeness to Hashem:

1) "If He had given us the Shabbat and had not brought us close to Mount Sinai... 2) ...and had not given us the Torah... 3) ...and had not brought us into the land of Israel... 4) ...and had not built us the 'Chosen House' [the Temple; it would have been] enough for us."

These last four stanzas describe in so few words the foundational events in our relationship with Hashem. We are expressing the gratitude of that closeness in Dayenu. There is no better example of pure gratitude of connection to Hashem than the case of Mount Sinai. At first glance, there is nothing special about being brought to Mount Sinai in itself. The question every child asks at the Seder is what would have been the point of going to Mount Sinai if there was no Torah given there? The answer of the perfume factory and smelling like perfume is the classic. But it's not so true. Yes, Mount Sinai was significant in that it is where we received the Torah, but it was also where Moshe Rabbenu ascended to receive the Tablets; it's where the Torah describes the people actually heard the voice of Hashem; it's where they celebrated their freedom at last and encamped there. The connection to Hashem is one that was built at that lowly hill, and it is one we have maintained each and every day, so we are thankful. The fact we have Hashem's stated will and His commandments in the Torah helps us build that relationship stronger and stronger, and no better a place to do that than the land of Israel, the land of our forefathers. Finally, the Temple is representative of our unified efforts and a house of prayer and sacrifice that we would go to today with the coming of *Mashiach*.

B'chol Dor V'dor

Asher Powers

Migdal Shana Bet Student 5780; Memphis TN

As Maggid comes to an end every year, there's one paragraph, placed between the beginning of Hallel and Raban Gamliel's three requirements for the night, that seems out of place.

"B'chol Dor V'Dor - in each and every generation - a person is obligated to see himself as if he left Egypt."

What an abnormal requirement! Are we supposed to alter our actual perception of the self and view ourselves as a slave who was liberated from Egypt?

The Haggadah sources this obligation from the verse, *"v'higadta l'vincha bayom hahu lamor, ba'avur zeh asah Hashem li"* - "And you shall explain to your son on that day, 'It is because of what God did for me" (Ex. 13:8). How does this source lead to the commandment of viewing oneself as being enslaved? How literal can this be? The Haggadah then continues that we are obligated to know that we too were taken out of *Mitzrayim*, not just our ancestors. This part of the obligated is sourced from the verse, *"v'otanu hotzi misham, l'maan havi otanu, latet lanu et ha'aretz asher nishba la'avoteinu"* - "and us He freed from there, that He might take us and give us the land that He had promised on oath to our fathers" (Deut. 6:23), which involves a retelling of the Exodus from Egypt to the generation of Jews about to enter Israel. Yet these Jews, the second generation that were born outside of Egypt, weren't taken out of Egypt. Once again, how do we understand the obligation from this source?

Perhaps a mishnah in Masechet Pesachim (116b) can help shed some light on this mystery. The Mishnah states the text as presented in our Haggadah, but missing the second half. The phrase of *"V'otanu hotzi misham"* - "and us He freed from there", is only added by Rava in the gemara, who states, "He must also say that God took us out." At first glance this seems redundant, as it is nearly identical to our original text from Shemot. However, if we look closer at the language, we might be able to see why Rava makes this addition. Our first pasuk uses the word *"li"*, "for me," whereas Rava's addition uses *"otanu"*, "us." Perhaps this is why the requirement is so out of place. How could the individual accomplish this requirement when it's a group requirement?

The Rashbam gives a different explanation for the addition of the verse. The new verse requires that we must *show ourselves* as though we personally left. This change in language, from *lirot* to *l'harot* is also quite odd, seemingly changing how he viewed the obligation. The Rambam is also famously known for using this *girsas* in his version of the Haggadah. It's also important to note that the Rambam removes the original verse completely. Why change the language?

Perhaps the answer can be found in the rest of the mishnah in Pesachim. Rabban Gamliel states that one must mention three items at the seder, and failure to do so results in one not fulfilling the obligation of the night. The first is the *Korban Pesach*, because God passed over the house for the last of the tenth plague. The second is Matzah, because God took us out of Egypt. Finally, there is Maror, because of how the Egyptians embittered our lives in Egypt. These requirements would seem to apply to someone who was alive at the time. The Rambam, in his Perush on the Mishnah (Pesachim 10:5), says, "*v'halacha k'rabban Gamliel.*" - "the Halacha is like Rabban Gamliel." If you haven't said those three things, you haven't fulfilled your obligation. What is the Rambam telling us?

Based on the Rambam's reaction to the Mishnah, it seems clear that *showing yourself* is a more extreme understanding of the words than *seeing yourself*. There must be something qualitatively different between them in order to justify such a radical *girsas* change. Perhaps seeing yourself is an internal change in how you see the self, whereas showing yourself is a destruction of the self overall, almost a sacrifice of the self to join in the shared group experience. This also explains why the Rambam excludes our original verse. In Shemot it said "me", antithetical to the idea of allowing the "me" to become the "us". In order to understand why he intensifies the obligation, we must alter our preconceived notions about what weight "*B'chol Dor V'Dor*" carries in the scope of the Haggadah. Raban Gamliel and the Rambam after him agreed that Pesach, Matzah, and Maror are all essential components to the Seder, but there must be more to it than that.

The Haggadah continues by ending *B'Chol Dor V'Dor* and bringing forth Hallel: "It is for this reason (*lefikach*) that we are obligated to praise God, etc..." The Brisker Rav explains that one who didn't properly see themselves as though they were slaves and then were rescued, is not obligated in Hallel and *shira*, and if they said Hallel, it's not considered a *Hallel shel Shira* (Chidushei HaGri"z: 210). Apparently, the obligation of Hallel on the Seder night is a representation of a higher *simcha* and *shira* than a normal Hallel would be. But what kind of *simcha* does that look like?

In my *shana aleph*, I walked into the Beit Midrash for the Seudat Purim and I was greeted by a *shana bet* student. He walked up to me, smiled, and joyously shouted, "We

defeated Haman! We won!” It was at that moment that I understood what *simcha* meant on Purim. To be happy for a day off, or because we’re Jews, that’s nice, but it’s not *Simchat Purim*. On Purim, we are happy because *we*, the collective *we* won on that day, and Haman our enemy lost his life, as did his ten sons, and 75,800 other people who wanted to destroy *all of us*. So too on Pesach, we should have that same level of *simcha*. *We* were slaves under Pharaoh in Egypt, and it was *us* that God rescued and took us out, performed miracles, and gave *us* the Torah.

What place does this obligation occupy in the Seder? B’Chol Dor V’Dor is the essence of the night. It is the main component of everything one is obligated to do or say throughout the entire Seder. This idea is best shown by the language change from *lirot* to *leharot*, as we mentioned earlier. The idea is not to imagine that you were also at the Exodus, but to put yourself in the shoes and mindset of a Jew. I think this is the main difference between the two. *Lirot* is to understand that if Hashem hadn’t taken the Jews out of Egypt we too would still be slaves, but *leharot* is to put yourself in the shoes and mind of a slave who is then liberated by God and taken to freedom. Why then, do we have the rest of the Haggadah? Why do we need multiple pages full of *pesukim* and stories to teach us something that gets recapped right at the end of Maggid?

I believe this is best explained by the Brisker Rav. The word *lefikach* means therefore, or for this reason. It is for *this* reason that we must praise God and sing, meaning that until we properly identify ourselves with the rest of the Jews, we cannot take part in the praising of God through *Hallel shel Shira*. Showing one’s self as someone who was a slave and was liberated isn’t enough. It is incumbent on each person to understand that our ancestors were idolaters, that Avraham was told about the slavery in Egypt, what Lavan tried to do to Yaakov, and that he then went down to Egypt. We must identify with every single step of the story, from Avraham to Moshe, so that we can say together, “*Halleluka hallelu avdei Hashem, hallelu et shem Hashem mevorach me’atah v’ad olam.*” Only then can we truly say we were there just like our ancestors.

The Salvation Song

Rabbi Jonathan Ziring

Educational Coordinator; Ra"m

"In each and every generation, a person is obligated to see himself as if he left Egypt... Therefore we are obligated to thank, praise, laud, glorify, exalt, lavish, bless, raise high, and acclaim He who made all these miracles for our ancestors and for us: He brought us out from slavery to freedom, from sorrow to joy, from mourning to [celebration of] a festival, from darkness to great light, and from servitude to redemption. And let us say a new song before Him, Hallelukah!" (Haggadah Shel Pesach, Sefaria translation)

The Haggadah links our obligation to sing praises to G-d to the fact that we are experiencing the Exodus ourselves. That forces us to ask, however, when exactly did our ancestors sing songs of praise to G-d upon leaving Egypt? The words of the song of *Az Yashir* or *Shirat Ha Yam* are well known and recited as part of our daily prayers, but when did the Jews say them?

In the Torah, they are recorded after the crossing of the *Yam Suf*. The implication of some commentaries (such as Ibn Ezra) is that the song is entirely retrospective, only sung after the Jews had finished crossing, the sea had returned to normal and the Egyptian army had been annihilated. However, Ramban and Seforno (to Shemot 15:19) note that the song itself implies that the Jews began singing while the Egyptian army floundered on the wet seabed, while the Jews crossed on dry land. Thus, they contend that the Jews began singing while still crossing. For what it is worth, in the movie *The Prince of Egypt*, the Jews begin singing as they leave Egypt, before they even reach the water.

Dr. Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg (*The Particulars of Rapture*, pp. 215-217) notes that this exegetical dispute parallels a halachic one. The Talmud (Berachot 54a) rules that one must recite a blessing upon seeing the place where the Jews crossed the Sea. Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin (*Ha'amek She'alah* 26:2) argues that this is only if one sees the place from which the Jews emerged from the Sea. His nephew, Rabbi Baruch HaLevi Epstein (*Torah Temimah*, Shemot 14:22, note 10) cites his view, but argues, based on Rashi, that as long as one sees any point that the Jews crossed, one would recite the blessing. Rabbi Berlin thus argues that even in the future, praise for the

miracles of the Exodus must be focused on the conclusion, while Rabbi Epstein claims that it can be oriented towards the process.

Dr. Zornberg notes that the implications are critical. “The timing, of course, makes a difference. Do they sing their song of praise after salvation is complete... Or do they sing while still in the unresolved course of the miracle? The difference is related to the motif of fear... If they do indeed sing while still in the process of crossing, the fear and anxiety which are part of the process, the sense of their fate hanging in the balance, must be imagined as informing that Song.” (ibid, page 216) More broadly, does one only thank G-d once everything has worked out and one feels relief and unrestrained joy? Or does one thank G-d for the miracles He has done, even if there is still much to fear and the result is unclear?

Furthermore, the thanksgiving for the Exodus becomes the paradigm from which the recitation of Hallel for future miracles is derived. The Talmud (Megilla 14a) argues that if we recited Hallel for being saved from slavery in Egypt, we must certainly thank G-d for the salvation from the potential genocide of Purim. Building on comments of Rabbi Moshe Sofer (*Responsa Chatam Sofer*, Orach Chaim 208), who sees this as the source for a biblical obligation to respond to all miracles with thanksgiving to G-d, many Religious Zionist authorities used this as the model for reciting Hallel on Yom HaAtzma'ut every year.

Based on Rabbi Achai Gaon's *Sheiltot* (#26), Rabbi Berlin (*Ha'amek She'alah* ad loc.) and Rabbi Yitzchak Zev HaLevi Soloveitchik (in his commentary to the Haggadah) also understand that the obligation of thanksgiving is expanded to include any miracles that may happen for an individual. However, they argue that thanksgiving is required only at the time of the individual's salvation, and not in future years on the same date as the miracle.

Nevertheless, it is clear that even when limiting the obligation to the time of salvation itself, there is a fundamental dispute as to what triggers the obligation - the recognition that G-d has done something for us, even when there is more to be done and fear remains, or the relief that comes from feeling it is finally over.

Perhaps the Hallel at the Seder is divided in two to reflect both sensibilities. We sing two paragraphs in the middle, and the rest at the end. The emotions that can be channeled when fear and appreciation are mixed are different than those that flow when our joy is pure and undiminished.

As noted, Pesach is the halachic model for how we show our gratitude to G-d for all that He does for us. Few of us would have imagined that we would experience a second Pesach with COVID-19 (now in 2021!) still hanging over us. Yet, while we have not reached the end, strides have been taken and there is reason to be hopeful. Thank G-d, vaccines were developed in record time, even if distribution remains a challenge and variants threaten to undermine their effectiveness. The Seder reminds us that we can sing for what we have, even if we are painfully aware that we are not “out of the water” yet. Hopefully, we will soon sing again, this time, following our complete salvation, when we have nothing more to fear.

Hallel

Gavi Spellman

Migdal Shana Bet Student 5780; Sharon, MA

The second cup of wine at the Seder brings with it an interesting halachic question: do we make a *bracha* of *borei pri hagafen*? Does the *bracha* made on the first cup cover the second as well, or are they separated somehow, such that they need separate *brachot*? There is a *machloket* on this topic between the Rambam and Shulchan Aruch, analyzed by the Rav in *Harerei Kedem (Chelek Bet, Siman 84)*. The Rav connects the *bracha* question to the purpose of the four cups, but not in the way you might think.

The Rambam says in *Hilchot Chametz Umatzah (7:10)* that we make a separate *bracha* on each and every one of the four cups of wine, and each one serves a purpose. We say *kiddush* over the first, say the *hagaddah* (what we call Maggid) over the second, say *bircat hamazon* over the third, and say the extended *Hallel* over the fourth. In contrast, the *Shulchan Aruch* says in *Orach Chaim (473:7)* that we prepare the second cup before Maggid so that the children will ask why we have a second cup of wine before the meal. Then, in the next *siman*, he says that we do not make a *bracha* on the second cup. The Rav looks very carefully into the language differences between the *Shulchan Aruch* and the Rambam. The *Shulchan Aruch* connects preparing the second cup before Maggid to the children asking questions, whereas the Rambam separates the two steps. The Rav extrapolates that the *Shulchan Aruch* believes it is a nice thing to do to have the second cup prepared before Maggid, but it is not essential, whereas the Rambam believes it is required to have the second cup prepared before Maggid.

The Rav also applies this distinction to another area, that of lifting the cup during Maggid. The Rambam in *Hilchot Shabbat (29:7)* writes that any cup over which a *bracha* is being made (such as *kiddush*, *benching*, and *havdalah*) needs to be lifted at least one *tefach* off the table. By extension, the Rambam would say to hold the cup for the entire Maggid, since the function of Maggid is to lead up to the second cup. However, the *Shulchan Aruch (473:7)* says that when one gets to *lefichach*, which leads into the beginning of *Hallel* and the *bracha* of *ga'al yisrael*, one should lift his cup and hold it until *ga'al yisrael*. As the Rav explains, this makes perfect sense; the *Shulchan Aruch*, who holds that the second cup is not tied to Maggid, says that we don't lift the cup until we get to the lead in to the *bracha*, whereas the Rambam, who holds that all of Maggid is a lead in to the second cup, says to lift the cup for the entire Maggid.

Up to this point, all the Rav has done is found a connection between the Rambam's and Shulchan Aruch's respective *piskei halacha* regarding making a bracha on the second cup and how it connects to Maggid. What we must do now is to prove that those philosophies are more than mere coincidence, and that they are necessary to determine whether or not to say a new bracha. My first thought was to jump to hefsek, where one side holds that there is a hefsek and would need a new bracha, and one side does not. However, as I thought about it more, the idea fell apart. At best, hefsek wasn't really applicable at all. At worst, the Rambam and the Shulchan Aruch were reversed. Then I realized that I had all the information in front of me, and the respective philosophies regarding the four cups dictate the psak for the bracha.

The Rambam's premise, the very reason that he ties Maggid to the second cup, is that every cup serves a separate purpose, and they cannot be combined. In the previous *halacha*, he says that if one drinks all four cups at once, he fulfills the freedom aspect of the mitzvah, but not the "four cups" aspect. As such, we cannot rely on the *bracha* from the first cup for the second cup too, because the first cup is specifically for *kiddush*, and the second cup is specifically for Maggid. Since they are separate themes, even though they are the same act, we make a new *bracha* to reflect the separation.

In contrast, the Shulchan Aruch focuses more on the drinking itself. He says (474:1) that we make *borei pri hagafen* only on the cup of *kiddush* and the cup of *benching*, and we make a *bracha achrona* only after the fourth cup. In that way, we say *borei pri hagafen* at the beginning, which covers us for the second cup, as we have not said a *bracha achrona*. In *benching*, which is between the second and third cups, we cover not only the food we ate, but the wine we drank as well. As such, we make a new *borei pri hagafen* on the third cup, and that *bracha* covers us for the fourth cup as well. After the fourth cup, once we are all done, we make an after *bracha* at the end.

The Shulchan Aruch views the four cups as being just a beverage that, while we drink it at various parts of the Seder, it is simply a beverage that doesn't change. In contrast, the Rambam views the four cups as a procedure that we follow to reflect each part of the Seder, and that they are fundamentally different. Thus, the Shulchan Aruch says that we only lift the second cup when we get to the part relating to it, namely the part of *Hallel* that ends Maggid, whereas the Rambam holds that we lift the second cup for all of Maggid, since that is the beginning of the theme that the second cup represents.

How Many Tavshilin This Year?

Shua Bass

Madrich; Migdal 5779; Oak Park, MI

Something we spend a lot of time on in Migdal is analyzing debates between rishonim, both on cases that are practical to our everyday lives and cases which seemingly have no relevance to us, given the time that we are in. Luckily for us, there is a debate amongst rishonim on a case that is relevant to us this year. We will go step by step to understand the words of the Mishnah, Gemara, and - rishonim to hopefully get a better grasp of the case and hopefully appreciate the tensions Chazal were faced with. The question we are faced with this year, where Pesach starts after Shabbat, is how many *tavshilin* are we supposed to bring?

The Mishnah in Pesachim (114a) gives us a list of things to bring to the leader of the seder at a specific time. Included within that list are the *tavshilin*. The gemara asks a very simple question: What are the *tavshilin*? To this Rav Huna answers that the Tavshilin are Beets and Rice and Rav Yosef says they are two types of meat. Both agree that the foods are brought to remember the Korban Pesach and Chagigah. Rav Huna is more focused on introducing something to the seder which would not naturally be present. By doing this we are reminding ourselves of the Karbanot. Rav Yosef agrees that the *tavshilin* are brought to remember the *korbanot*, however he says we need something that resembles an essential aspect of the *korbanot* themselves! And that can only be achieved through the two types of meat. Thus if, the two *tavshilin* are brought to remember both the Korban Chagigah and the Korban Pesach. In a year when Pesach falls out on Motzei Shabbat, we wouldn't be bringing the Korban Chagigah. So if the purpose of these two *tavshilin* to remember the two korbanot, are both tavshilin still required in a situation where we would be bringing only one of the two *korbanot*?

Tosfot commenting on the above gemara, (Pesachim 114b) cites a machloket regarding our question. The first opinion claims that if Pesach falls out on Motzei Shabbat then we would only bring one *tavshil* because the Korban Chagiga doesn't push off Shabbat. The Ri is then quoted, arguing that one should still bring two - so that one won't get confused in subsequent years.

Interestingly, the Rosh claims that when Pesach falls out on Motzei Shabbat we only bring one *tavshil*, the reason being that if we were to bring the second piece of meat this year when Pesach falls out on Motzei Shabbat, in the future when the Beit

Hamikdash is built, we would assume incorrectly that we are supposed to keep bringing the Korban Chagigah on Shabbat. Tosfot responds to this by saying we don't need to worry about it because when we have the Beit Hamikdash, we would have leaders like Moshe and Aaron who would never let anyone make the mistake of thinking to bring the Korban Chagigah on Shabbat.

Both Tosfot and the Rosh agree that we would only bring one *tavshil* when Pesach is on Motzei Shabbat but the reasons they give have seemingly nothing to do with each other. How do we start to understand this Machloket? What is going on between the Tosfot and the Rosh and what is the tension? Why does Tosfot not care about what the Rosh is worried about?

We must take a step back and ask what we are trying to accomplish by bringing the *tavshilin*. The Gemara told us it is in order to “remember” the Korban Pesach and the Korban Chagigah. The best way of remembering something would be to duplicate it. Since the system of *korbanot* does not lend itself to duplication in the times without a Beit Hamikdash, we are stuck. Chazal are faced with a very difficult task; they want to ensure that we remember the *korbanot* without being able to duplicate the process. With this understanding Tosfot’s reason for not bringing two pieces of meat is obvious. If you assume that “remembering” the *korban* is by duplication, then there could never be a duplication of the Korban Chagigah on Motzei Shabbat because it was never brought after Shabbat.

The Rosh however, takes a very different approach. He argues that we wouldn’t bring the second piece of meat because it would lead the Jewish people to the wrong conclusion about bringing the Korban Chagigah in the future. In other words, the function of the meat is not a duplication, but simply a reminder. It is for us to think about what we don’t currently have, not to go through some duplication process as if we are doing it in real time. As such, it is understandable that he would be concerned for erroneously thinking of the masses. While Tosfot, who is focused on the duplication, the actual symbolic sacrifice of the *korbanot*, is not concerned about mistaken practice - since in practice the ones actually enacted the sacrifices are careful and will not come to error.

The Nature of the Maror

Avi Klar

Migdal Shana Bet Student 5780; Teaneck N.J.

Often, when a person hears the word maror, lettuce comes to mind. The translation of the word “maror” means bitter, yet lettuce is not a food we would consider bitter. We eat it daily, whether it’s in a salad, on a burger, or maybe even as a quick snack by itself. However, there is an interesting feature of lettuce. It is a sweet vegetable, yet, there is a bitter aftertaste. Rabbi Yisrael Donderovitz notes this and suggests that this peculiar feature is what actually allows us to use it as maror. In other words, while the food itself may not taste bitter, it is only after it is consumed that one notices the bitterness. It seems that the importance of maror extends beyond the substance. Rabbi Donderovitz explains that the reason that lettuce is the ideal food for maror is because it helps provide an experiential transition of sweetness to bitterness that occurred to our ancestors. You see, there is a certain sweetness when the Jewish people were successful in Egypt, when Yosef was viceroy, but this ultimately turns to bitterness when the Jewish people are enslaved and brought low after Yosef died. There is a symbolic idea we are meant to have while eating this food, and the bitterness associated with the foods is a means to internalize that meaning.

Perhaps this plays out in the foundation of the maror obligation as well. The Torah commands us to eat maror along with matzah and the Korban Pesach: “In the second month, on the fourteenth day, in the afternoon, they shall make it; they shall eat it with unleavened cakes and bitter herbs. They shall not leave over anything from it until the next morning, and they shall not break any of its bones. They shall make it in accordance with all the statutes connected with the Passover sacrifice” (Numbers 9:11-9:12). Although the matzah is fairly well-defined, as is the Korban Pesach, the Mishna in Pesachim lists 5 possible options for maror. Why is that? Perhaps we can suggest that the purpose of making maror an ambiguous item is so that our very choice of the item imbues it with meaning. Meaning, whichever food one picks as maror on Pesach, whether horseradish or lettuce, that food becomes maror; it receives a new status and becomes a qualitatively different food, one with symbolism and meaning for us on Pesach. We also see this change through the unique *bracha* that we make on this food only on Pesach, “*Al achillas maror*”, in addition to the normative *bracha* of

“*haadama*” (made on the *karpas* for both the *karpas* and *maror*). If so, the question becomes, what is the purpose of having *maror* and what idea is one supposed to be reflecting on while eating this “bitter” food?

I would like to suggest that eating maror is not an idea in the food itself (*cheftza*) but rather in the person eating the food and how he relates to it (*gavra*). We use this food as a reminder of the suffering the Jews experienced in Egypt and the bitter times of our ancestors. The food being bitter helps allude to the suffering, thereby strengthening our relationship to it. Psychologically, people internalize ideas and messages better when they have an experience or personal relationship towards the event or idea being conveyed. We are able to engage in the *mitzvah* of *Sippur Yitziat Mitzrayim* and hear about the pain the Jews were in, however that is solely intellectual knowledge. The Torah wants us to gain empirical knowledge, to internalize, and to feel the suffering of our ancestors and relate to that suffering. As such, the Torah turns the suffering part of *Sippur Yitziat Mitzrayim* into an event of eating bitter foods. Thus, it is not the food per se that the Torah wants for us to consume, but rather the creation of an event that allows us to internalize the pain. Therefore, the goal of maror is not simply to eat a bitter food, but rather to internalize a symbolic event, and that is achieved through eating our “maror food”. So, when a person eats maror on the night of the seder, it is more than just another food. It is a projection of the past, an experiential sequence of sweetness, bitterness, and the imbuing of meaning out of the food they eat. This is all to assist us in feeling what they felt, suffering in some small way the way they suffered, as slaves in Egypt.

Charoset

Ezra Koppel

Migdal Alumnus 5776-5777; Software Developer; Far Rockaway NY

It's always a treat to find a halacha in the Rambam that seems to contradict something he has said prior. If you take a look in the third mishna of *Arvei Pesachim*, you'll find a disagreement regarding whether *charoset* is considered a mitzvah. The *Tanna Kamma* makes use of a premise that the charoset is not a mitzvah, and Rabbi Elazer B'Rabbi Tzadok argues on that point, saying the charoset is indeed a mitzvah. In the Rambam's final words in his commentary to this mishna, he declares the halacha to be like the *Tanna Kamma* and that the charoset is not considered a mitzvah.

But let me turn your attention to the Rambam's words in Hilchot Chametz U'Matzah 7:11: "*charoset* is a mitzvah by the words of the Sages." So *charoset* is a mitzvah! Continuing in the halacha, the Rambam gives the reason for the charoset (which is to remember the mortar that we slaved with in Egypt), and a recipe for making it. To end the halacha, the Rambam states that the *charoset* should be brought to the table on the night of Pesach.

If the Rambam said in his Commentary to the Mishna that the *charoset* was not a mitzvah, why then does he blatantly declare it as such in the Mishneh Torah?

Rav Soloveitchik suggests the following resolution to the contradiction (cited in the *Siach Hagrid* 74-77): While the Rambam does indeed *pasken* in accordance with Rabbi Elazar in terms of *charoset* being a mitzvah, he does not agree that it is a standalone mitzvah to eat the *charoset*. Rather, the Rambam understands the mitzvah of *charoset* as being subsumed in the mitzvah of *sippur yetziat mitzrayim*. In other words, there is no mitzvah of *achila*, like there is for the mitzvot of matzah and maror. It is for this reason, the Rambam emphasizes that it must be brought to the table - as that is the way to fulfill this mitzvah. True, we use it as our dip for the night, but only as a means for *sippur*. We bring it to the table to tell the story that we were slaves in Egypt, building with mortar.

Korech: Why Are We Doing That Again?

Betzalel Cohen

Migdal Shana Aleph Student 5781; Far Rockaway, NY

Korech is one of the most overlooked parts of the Seder. Everyone knows that we do *Korech* in remembrance of *Hillel* who, in the times of the *Beit Hamikdash*, made a sandwich out of the three staples of the Seder meal: *Pesach*, *Matzah*, and *Maror*. What not many people know, however, is the perplexing background as to why it is important to reenact this event on Seder night. Why do we need to remember something *Hillel HaZaken* did, when, as it will soon be shown, that he was *das yachid* (individual opinion) who did this practice, and he might even agree that you shouldn't do it nowadays for the mitzvot of matzah and maror?

One possible reason that *Korech* is done today is because it is a remembrance of the *Korban Pesach* that we would eat in the time of the *Beit Hamikdash* on the Seder night with the matzah and maror. This makes sense to do on the night of the Seder, when we reenact many aspects of the Seder from the time of the *Beit Hamikdash*. However, there are a few major problems with going down this route.

One problem is that we don't emulate any of the other rituals of *Korban Pesach* in any way at the night of the Seder. For one, we say, "*Zecher LiMikdash KiHillel*" and not "*Zecher LiKorban Pesach KiHillel*."

A second problem is, we only eat matzah and maror with nothing to symbolize the *Korban Pesach* itself. Now, it is true that the reason we do not eat meat in place of the *Korban Pesach*, nor try to represent it in any way (like adding additional matzah during the act of *Korech*), is because we don't want to mix up the meat on our table with the genuine article. Even the meat on top of the *Ka'arah Plate* has certain restrictions on what meat it can be so that it shouldn't resemble the *Korban Pesach*. In addition, it should not be pointed to while discussing the *Korban Pesach*. So we do see that we stray away from this idea on Seder night.

A third problem is, even assuming there needs to be a remembrance of the *Korban Pesach* on the Seder night, according to many commentaries (like the *Rosh*), there is already a remembrance of the *Korban Pesach* - the *Afikoman*! Given all of these issues, if it's likely not to remember the *Korban Pesach* itself in any way, then what is its purpose?

If you look in the Haggadah itself, you might notice that in the paragraph of “*Zecher LiMikdash KiHillel*” it mentions that Hillel’s source for Korech is the pasuk of (Exodus 12:15) “*Al Matzah U’Morerim.*”

The rabbis interpret this pasuk to mean that although matzah is a separate mitzvah *d’oraita* (with a separate source - Exodus 12:18), maror is only mentioned in the context of the Korban Pesach. With no Korban Pesach, given that there is no Beis Hamikdash today, the mitzvah of maror falls to a *d’rabbanan* level. The gemara (Bavli Pesachim 115a) discusses this in the context of Korech. There is a tradition that Korech is actually not appropriate to do nowadays. Since matzah and maror are on different levels of obligation, they cancel each other out, as we are discarding a stricter obligation (matzah) to perform a smaller one (maror). The Rashbam explains that this is because the maror taste is so strong, it counteracts the taste of the matzah, which is integral to fulfilling the mitzvah of matzah.

The gemara says that Hillel would *not* disagree with this concept. He believed that the idea of mitzvot counteracting each other only applied to different level obligations. In his day, the time of the Beit Hamikdash, he could make this Korech sandwich because the ingredients were all *d’oraita*. However, he would say that nowadays, that Korech should *not* be done to fulfill your mitzvot of matzah and maror because the taste would cause problems.

This would explain why we do not solely do Korech to fulfill our mitzvot at the Seder, as we do not fulfill the mitzvah of matzah at all by doing it, but why don’t we do Korech to fulfill the mitzvah *d’rabbanan* of maror? Wouldn’t this make logical sense to do, as the source of eating the Korban Pesach with matzah and maror is the only source for the mitzvah of eating maror at all?

Before answering this, it is important to emphasize the *machloket* of Hillel and his peers in the time of the Beit Hamikdash. Hillel would make a Korech sandwich, because he interpreted the pasuk of “*al matzot u’morerim*” as describing a positive value to eating them together. However, the Chachamim understood this pasuk as the value of matzah and maror to be side-dishes in the main meal, which is the Korban Pesach. The gemara tells us that Hillel only viewed the pasuk as a *lechatchila*, and if someone did not do Korech, they still fulfilled the mitzvah albeit on a bidieved level, while the Chachamim believed that Korech would not fulfill the mitzvah at all due to the problems described above.

There is a parallel discussion in the Yerushalmi (Challah 2b) about this argument between Hillel and the Chachamim. However, it asks a question that the Bavli never does. In the Yerushalmi, Rabbi Yochanan cites this *machloket*. The Yerushalmi asks,

“But Rabbi Yochanan would make the Korech sandwich of matzah and maror!” The problem the Yerushalmi has is that between the Chachamim and individuals, we follow the Chachamim because they are the majority. Apparently, the Yerushalmi believed that the halacha sided with the Chachamim. Yet, we find an explicit passage in the Bavli that says we do Korech today precisely because there is no decision whether to hold like Hillel or the Chachamim. We will return to this distinction soon.

How does the Yerushalmi answer this question on Rabbi Yochanan’s position? It gives two possibilities. One answer is that the Chachamim allow for Korech nowadays (and therefore, in Rabbi Yochanan’s day), now that matzah and maror are on different levels of obligation. It is true that in the time of the Beit Hamikdash, when both matzah and maror were *d’oraita*, the Chachamim would say that mitzvot on the same level counteract one another, but that is no longer a problem nowadays. According to this answer, we could indeed fulfill our obligation of maror d’rabbanan through Korech! (However, that leaves us with the question why we would do maror separate from Korech nowadays.)

The second answer the Yerushalmi offers is that when we say that mitzvot can counteract each other, that is only when there is a majority against a minority. Thus, the Chachamim believed that even in the time of the Beit Hamikdash, you could make a sandwich of only matzah and maror, because there is no majority - it is evenly one and one. But, if you put all three of these foods (the pesach, matzah, and maror) together, the other two mitzvot will cancel the one mitzvah you want to do. Therefore, each couple cancels the other, and you end up not fulfilling any of them. Rabbi Yochanan ate Korech because it was only two.

It is not clear from the Yerushalmi in what way the “majority/minority” distinction is qualitative or quantitative. Qualitative mitzvot would be whether it is *d’oraita* or d’rabbanan, where a *d’oraita* has a higher value than a d’rabbanan. On the other hand, quantitative mitzvot means the simple number amount of mitzvot in the collection, where mitzvot counteract only when there are more than two.

The Chachamim might hold that *either* a qualitative or quantitative majority is all that is necessary to be present to create counteraction. Applying it to Korech, during the time of the Beit Hamikdash, the problem becomes one of quantity and not quality, since all of the mitzvot are on the same level (*d’oraita*). Since you did three mitzvot at the same time, $2 > 1$, and the majority number wins out. But what is the Yerushalmi saying about nowadays? This is answering why Rabbi Yochanan felt comfortable eating the matzah and maror sandwich after the time of the Beit Hamikdash, but is it because the quantity was good, as in no majority since it was 1 vs 1? Or is it because the quality was

different between them, insofar as there was matza, which is *d'oraita*, and there is maror, which is *d'rabbanan*, and therefore they don't cancel out (the exact opposite of the Bavli's *sevara*)?

Whatever the *sevara* is, it is interesting that the Yerushalmi assumes we must hold like the Chachamim against Hillel, since they are the majority, and we should not fulfill our obligation of matzah and maror through Korech (despite Rabbi Yochanan's fancy *sevaras* to the contrary). Yet, the Bavli declares that we don't hold like anybody in this argument, and concludes not to do the mitzvot by way of Korech because of the taste (as we saw from the Rashbam). It may be because of this conundrum that the gemara says that we do both sandwiching and matzah and maror individually to make sure we fulfill our complete obligations. But then again, why do Korech at all? It seems, according to the Bavli at least, that Hillel would agree you can fulfill your mitzvah with matzah and maror separately. So what's the point?

I think there is a possible way you can go about looking at Korech in which it starts to make sense. The first thing to note is that in the Bavli there is something of a self-contradiction in the Bavli declaring we don't conclude the halacha like either side, yet Hillel would admit that you can (and perhaps should) fulfill the obligations through the Chachamim's method. What would it mean that the law is not established like either side in this argument if both sides agree that you shouldn't do it nowadays for the mitzvah? There's obviously some tension that makes the gemara feel that it is an important thing to do or remember, though it is not yet clear why that is. I think the Rambam can give us an insight as to what the gemara is talking about.

The Rambam clearly holds that in the time of the Beit Hamikdash, they did Korech to fulfill the mitzvah, but only with the matzah and the maror, seemingly holding like the Yerushalmi's second answer. Moreover, he also says that one should go ahead and make the Bracha of "*Al Matzah UMorerim*." This is crucial, as one only makes a *birkat hamitzvah* on a mitzvah. Now one could say there might be a mitzvah specifically in the time of the Beit Hamikdash to eat the matzah and the maror together, and that might be partially true, but why would we do that? Why not read them as separate mitzvot always?

It seems that the consumption of these foods are fundamentally connected halachically, so much so that it is important to combine the two in some way for their respective mitzvot. Therefore, if you are holding like the Yerushalmi's second answer (like the Rambam), then as the Chachamim agree, one way of successfully doing that in the time of the Beit Hamikdash is to eat matzah and maror in a sandwich. What Korech's importance comes down to nowadays according to the Rambam is eating

them together, and if this is the important thing to remember, it can't be accomplished without you actually eating them together, even if everyone would agree there is no mitzvah nowadays. However, if this is the case why do we say "*Zecher LiMikdash KiHillel*"? After all, according to the second answer of the Yerushalmi, both Hillel and the Chachamim would agree that in the time of the Beit Hamikdash, you would be able to eat it as a sandwich!

I think with this we really see the potential problem that the Gemara Bavli was struggling with. There are really two arguments here and if you understand them you get how the Yerushalmi and the Bavli are not arguing and the seemingly contradictory nature of the Bavli resolves itself.

The first argument is that although the Chachamim did agree that the matzah and maror are fundamentally connected to one another, they didn't feel that this connection extended to the Pesach rendering it obligatory to be eaten together, as if the Pesach was fundamentally connected to the other foods it wouldn't be canceled out by the other mitzvot. Hillel felt that the Pesach was fundamentally connected to the other foods and therefore even if he held that the mitzvot do indeed cancel each other out (which he doesn't), he would feel that in this case since they are fundamentally connected they wouldn't cancel one another. With regards to this argument, both the Bavli and the (second answer of the) Yerushalmi hold like the Chachamim.

This is why the Yerushalmi questions Rabbi Yochanan about why he acted according to Hillel: because the gemara assumed that the Chachamim, who we hold like, would say that in the time of the Beit Hamikdash, this fundamental connection by Pesach didn't exist. So, there was no reason you'd be able to sandwich anything together. The gemara corrects this notion by saying that although there is no fundamental connection by Pesach, and the way they understood canceling out was different, and there is an idea of fundamental connection by matzah and maror. Therefore they would say that there is benefit to sandwiching only matzah and maror.

The second argument is that the Chachamim felt that even though there was a fundamental connection between the two foods, it wasn't necessary to sandwich them in order to show this *kiyum* (better fulfillment) of the mitzvah, and in doing so nowadays this sandwiching is unnecessary because there is no mitzvot you fulfill by doing it. Hillel says that this fundamental connection must be shown by sandwiching and is important to be shown this way nowadays despite agreeing that there is no mitzvah. Hillel would agree that you are *yotzei* the mitzvah in the time of the Beit Hamikdash if you eat them separately *bidieved*, but if you don't eat them in the form of a sandwich you're missing out on a key idea of the night. Therefore in reality he is holding that one needs to do this

as a *kiyum* of the mitzvah, despite Korech itself not fulfilling the mitzvah. Within this argument the gemara says that we do not hold like either side.

Therefore, we do as gemara instructs at the end of the day. Each mitzvah is performed separately to fulfill their respective obligations. And then, to do Korech in remembrance of Hillel who felt that this fundamental connection of the two mitzvot must be shown by sandwiching. We do both because we didn't establish the ruling like anyone regarding this point and there's a possibility that this is a *kiyum* of the mitzvah.

As you can see, the reason we do this nowadays is because we are very stringent in our obligations and therefore we want to fulfill as much as possible to the best of our ability. It seems from our topic that at the end of the day that Korech is only a possible *kiyum* of the mitzvah via a remembrance action, and therefore, if one heard this they would be justified in saying that you would not need a specific *shiur* (amount) for Korech. In fact, the Rambam does not call for it. I, in my limited knowledge, cannot yet explain why one *would* require a *shiur* for Korech, as we have just scratched the surface of this topic, but hopefully now after reading this, if you did make it this far, you will realize the significance behind your actions tonight and realize that this is not an action that you can just skim over, do, and forget. If this discussion has piqued your interest you should look into this topic further in order you realize the beauty behind everything we do in our Seder so that we should merit to see Mashiach in our days. Amen.

Inoculation Towards Particularism

Rav Aryeh Sklar

Alumni Coordinator; Ra"m

There are many reasons offered for why the Haggadah splits Hallel into two parts. The classic answer is that we are expressing two types of Hallel: one for our redemption from Egyptian servitude (past-minded), and one for our redemption in Messianic times (future-minded). My go-to every-Pesach joke is that we split the Hallel to commemorate God splitting the sea and saving us from the Egyptians. But I'd like to offer another possible reason that resonates with me in a much deeper way, and perhaps will with you as well. Let's go on a bit of a journey.

Stop me if you've heard this one: The reason for the custom to pour out a little wine, or with our finger, at the mention of the plagues (*dam*, *tzfardea*, etc), is because we are diminishing our happiness on the Seder night. According to this line of thinking, how can we be exuberantly happy on the Seder night, given that so many Egyptians were hurt and killed? Thus, we pour out some wine. Press F to pay respects, right? Wrong. The likely origin for this custom is literally the opposite of this approach. Let me explain.

The earliest source of doing the custom is from Rabbi Eleazar of Worms, a major 12th century Ashkenazi rabbi, in his *Derasha LaPesach*. (He also claimed that it is a deeply entrenched Ashkenazi custom going back at least a few hundred years before him.) He explains the number of pours equals the number 16 (the plagues [10], the mnemonic [3], and "*dam va'esh vetimrot ashan*" [3]), which symbolizes God's 16-edged "sword." (I know what you're thinking. God has a sword? And it has 16 edges? While this is mentioned in Midrash Tehillim 31:6, few commentaries explain it without relying on mystical ideas. I like Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan's explanation in his commentary to *Sefer Yetzirah* 1:5, that it refers to a 4-dimensional hypercube, symbolic of God's ability to control the entirety of the 4-dimensional universe.) Essentially, the idea is that God yields this 16-edged sword to destroy the enemies of the Jewish people. Far from an expression of mercy and love for other nations, pouring out the wine is a representation of our praise of God's omnipotence as demonstrated by the plagues and a prayer that He should continue to "play God" with His universe in our defense!

Over the years, I've also seen other older sources that give similar explanations. Some say we pour out wine as a symbol that God should continue to *pour out* His wrath (so to speak) on our modern enemies, which we emphasize at *Shefoch Chamatcha* as

well. Others say that it is to symbolize that just like the wine is lessening and lessening with each pour, so too the Egyptians were continually lessened (and lessened) by each plague. Nevertheless, the point is clear - this is not about sympathy for the Egyptians. It is very much the opposite of that.

So where does the popular interpretation come from? You start seeing it relatively recently, and it might just be cast as a “modern” idea to fit modern sensibilities. Probably so. But it should be noted that it doesn’t come out of thin air. There is a concept in the Talmud itself of sympathy for God’s creations, the Egyptians, when they are dying at the *Yam Suf*. In Sanhedrin 39b, the Talmud states: *Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachman says that Rabbi Yonatan says... At that time the ministering angels desired to recite a song before the Holy One, Blessed be He. The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to them: My creations are drowning in the sea, and you are reciting a song before Me?”*

Thus, God silences the angels who attempt to sing God’s praises for destroying the Egyptian - these are still God’s creatures being killed, so how can the angels sing praises? It makes sense, then, that we would continue to express God’s sentiments at the Seder night by also representing a limiting of joy through the pouring of the wine. However, there are several problems with this approach, even besides the actual historical origins of the custom probably not being based on this idea. One question is that we indeed sing many songs on the Seder night, quite a few of them describing God’s destruction of Egypt and the many plagues and maladies He cast against them. We have debates - were there 10 plagues? 50 plagues? 250? We say (in so many words) in *Dayeinu*, “It would have been enough to praise God had He not killed the firstborn, split the sea, gave us their money, but He did! Wow!” And so on and so forth.

Another issue is that this concept of reducing our joy on behalf of the Egyptians does find halachic application, but specifically not for the Seder night. For example, to explain why Pesach only has the half-Hallel after the first day of Yom Tov, but Sukkot has a full Hallel for every day of the holiday, the Beit Yosef (OH 490) quotes two possibilities:

The reason given in Arachin 10a is that on Sukkot, Hallel is said each day anew [since it has a new korban set every day], while that is not so for Pesach. The Shibolei Haleket quotes from the Midrash Harninu a reason that we do not say the full Hallel the rest of Pesach, for the Egyptians drowned, and the verse says do not rejoice in the downfall of your enemy.

According to the *Shibolei Haleket*, we only say a half-Hallel and not a full Hallel after the first night and day of Pesach out of sympathy for the Egyptians. If so,

presumably the implication is that a full Hallel does not express this sympathy - which we have at the Seder (albeit split in two) and the first day of Pesach! If you ask why we would only have this sensitivity some days and not others, apparently, there is something about the first day that allows us to sing full-throatedly, which we cannot the rest of the days. We must explain this. Additionally, how can it be that God silenced the angels, yet the Israelites burst into song that is recorded in the Torah called *Az Yashir!* This as well needs to be explained.

Another instance of this concept is found specifically with regard to the last day *Yom Tov* of Pesach. The Rama writes on Shulchan Aruch 490:7 that the language of “*zeman cheruteinu*”, “time of our freedom,” in *Kiddush* and davening should not change on the seventh day from what had been said on the first day of *Yom Tov*. Why would one think it should change? Because there were some authorities who indeed held we should change “*zeman cherutenu*” to “*zeman simchateinu*,” “time of our rejoicing.” The Maharil (*Seder Hatefilot shel Pesach* 144) explains: “Some say ‘*zeman simchateinu*’ because of the great joy of the drowning of the Egyptians [which the rabbis understood as having taken place on the seventh day of leaving Egypt]. And so writes the *Sheyarei Kneset HaGedola*.” The Maharil himself, however, disagrees with this idea: “But this is difficult, for we say regarding [half-]Hallel, ‘When God’s creatures are drowning in the sea’ - so how can we say ‘*zeman simchateinu*’ on drowning?” In other words, if we limit our Hallel because of the sensitivity to the Egyptian loss, the Maharil argues, then how can we blatantly express joy in our prayers against this sensitivity? It would seem that the Rama accepted this, and codified it in the halacha that one should not change the language, out of sympathy for the Egyptians.

So how is this night different from all the other nights and days of Pesach? Why do we have empathy the rest of the holiday (expressed by the half-Hallel and not changing the language on the seventh day), but not tonight? The answer comes by resolving a very stark contradiction to the ideas above. Berachot 9b states: “*Rabbi Yehuda, son of Rabbi Shimon ben Pazi, said: David said one hundred and three chapters [of Psalms], and he did not say Hallelujah in any of them until he saw the downfall of the wicked. As it is stated: ‘Let sinners cease from the earth, and let the wicked be no more. Bless the Lord, my soul, Hallelujah’ (Psalms 104:35).*”

The Talmud tells us that David didn’t rejoice and express “Praise be to God!” until he saw the downfall of the wicked. This is strange, for doesn’t God stop the rejoicing of the angels at the downfall of the wicked? Don’t we stop our rejoicing somewhat after the first day of Pesach? Why would David’s joy be appropriate and a praise of God to express this happiness? Indeed, the Meharsha on this passage in Berachot asks that exact question: “This is difficult for those *acharonim* who give the reason, citing the

Midrash, that we do not say full Hallel on the remaining days of Pesach because God says, 'My creatures are drowning...' For here it says just the opposite, that David did not say Hallel until he saw the downfall of the wicked!"

The answer to the Meharsha's question, I believe, lies in the two perspectives that we can have in regard to the downfall of bad people. One is the God perspective, perhaps what we would call the universal perspective. The other is the human perspective, particularistic, which is personal and limited. Objectively speaking, on the level of the Divine, every creature was created by God and every human being is formed in the image of God, *b'tzelem Elokim*. In this perspective, no one can say his blood is redder, or his father comes from Adam and another person's does not. Even the sinners of Israel are still Jews, and even the worst Egyptians are still God's creatures. That is a Divine perspective. But there is also a human perspective. We were saved. Our enemies were defeated. As we left Egypt, we watched as the Egyptians drowned in the sea and we rejoiced, for our slavery was finished and we were finally free of their wretched rule. From the human, limited, personal perspective, it is impossible not to feel an overflow of gratitude and a need to offer a full thanks to God, represented by a full Hallel.

These two perspectives are in tension with one another. How do we deal with these contradictory views? Apparently, the rabbis saw King David living in this tension. As we saw described in Berachot, for 103 chapters of Psalms, David refused to express a full-throated praise of God at the downfall of enemies with a "Hallelujah", until he himself experienced it. At that point, he could not hold back. From afar, not affected by the wicked as much and their defeat, he was able to remain objective and see all of God's children as one. But when he became personally involved, and witnessed it himself, he finally was able to give that praise that comes from the personal, emotional, self - Hallelujah!

On this night, the first night of Pesach, we are obligated to see ourselves as if we personally left Egypt (Mishna Pesachim 10:5). An application of that is to express the great overflow of gratitude that our ancestors must have felt in their exodus from Egypt, by reciting a full Hallel. If we took the Divine perspective, we would in essence be saying that we simply are not seeing ourselves as personally saved, with the great outpouring of praise that one would give in that situation. No! We personally were saved, and we personally raise our fourth glass high and reciting Hallel to demonstrate it! However, the rest of the holiday, we do not have this obligation. Perhaps, it can even be said, that for the rest of the holiday, we have the obligation to specifically take on the Divine view - for it did not in fact happen to us personally. We don't say a full Hallel. We don't change the language of "*zeman cherutenu*" despite the historical significance of

the seventh day. When we go through the story after the first day, it's about the history of what happened, universal and objective, and we can't bring ourselves to rejoice overly much about the Egyptians.

This is why the reasoning of spilling the cup as sympathy for the Egyptians, so in vogue today as the reason offered, while not completely mistaken as a Jewish value, is very misplaced on the Seder night. There is a time and a place for everything. We already have halachic systems in place to express that value, and the Seder is simply the wrong time for it. If you want, pour out your cup any other day of Pesach - but not at the Seder. The Seder is for that personal perspective to fully express itself. However, as we asked above, how do we deal with that tension at the Seder? How can the rabbis force us to take on a new, personal, perspective cold-turkey, when we are normally meant and even obligated to see things from a more universal perspective? It is for this reason that I believe the Hallel is appropriately split in two. Perhaps the rabbis understood that if the Hallel was recited all at once, it would be too much of a shock to the system. Thus, to ease us into this perspective, they didn't make us say it all at once. Two sections, split nicely at the Seder, will allow us to fully take on this conceptualization without our minds rebelling against it and rejecting it. The halving of Hallel on the Seder night actually allows us to say it all at once during the day, at *Shacharit*. Why? Many vaccines, like the Covid-19 vaccine here in Israel, are given in two parts, for this reason - it wouldn't be effective if given all at once. One day a year, we take a shocking perspective that ignores the world and manifests our emotional reality, and we need two smaller doses to handle it. Then we can declare it in the daytime fully without fear. We don't even have to wait two weeks between doses.

As we raise our cups to drink the fourth cup, we can say we are truly and personally free, without needing to pour out a drop. This is our night, the night of our people's beginnings, and we declare it loudly and proudly.

Chasal Siddur Pesach

Rav Shmuel Dovid Chait

Menahel

We conclude the Seder night with Nirtzah, which consists of a variety of different *piyyutim*. It is important to note that these select *piyyutim* were not part of many of the early Haggadot. We do not find any reference of these *piyyutim* amongst the Haggadot of the Geonim, nor in that of Rashi or the Rambam. “*Chasal Siddur Pesach*” first appears in the Haggadah around the 14th century, and as time went on, “*Leshana Haba beYerushalayim*” was added as the final conclusion.

“*Chasal Siddur Pesach*” was written by the 11th century French rabbi, Yosef Tov Elem (Bonfils). Interestingly, it was actually not written for the Seder night. It was written as a *piyyut* to be said during the prayers of Shabbat HaGadol. *Piyyutim* were said on special days to inform people of the importance of the day. It is still common in Ashkanazi communities to say *piyyutim* on Yom Tov, though many communities in Israel and America limit saying *piyyutim* to Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

About 200 years after Rabbi Yosef Tov Elem wrote this *piyyut*, it made its way into the Haggadah. There are a number of questions that need to be addressed. First, why was it placed in the Haggadah when it was clearly not written to be part of the Haggadah? Secondly, why do we call this section of the Seder “Nirtzah”, and why is it in the *Nif'al* form (passive form), whereas all the other sections, like “Kadesh” and “Urchatz”, are all in the Imperative or command forms? Lastly, why was it necessary to add the phrase “*Leshana Haba beYerushalayim*” as the final concluding statement to the Haggadah? After all, this ending was not even part of the original *piyyut*.

Apparently, *Chasal Siddur Pesach* was added into the Haggadah to remind us of the *Korban Pesach* that we no longer offer after the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash. We therefore have to conduct the Seder in the absence of *Korban Pesach*. *Korbanot* convey many profound ideas. One such important theme that is present in all *korbanot* is the concept of *ritzuy*, i.e. Hashem should accept our *korbanot* favorably. Similarly, we find that when we speak about *korbanot* in *Shemoneh Esrei*, we start off with “*Retzeh.*” And, we see the verse in Parshat Vayikra (1:4) “and it shall be favorable for him (*ve-nirtzah lo*), and atone for him.” So too, we end off the Seder saying that even though we did not bring the *Korban Pesach*, Hashem should accept our Seder favorably, as if we did bring the *Korban Pesach*. Indeed, we give this last section of the Haggadah the title “Nirtzah” - meaning, to request that our Seder should have that same acceptance as

if we actually brought the *Korban Pesach*. Furthermore we may add, it was written in the *Nif'al* form to convey the same idea. When we offer a *korban*, it is not just the mere action of offering the sacrifice, but by offering a *korban*, it should create a change in the person. Hashem accepts our *korban* because we've become a different person, a perfected person through the sacrifice of the *korban*. Similarly, by going through the Seder and understanding what we're doing in place of the *korban*, it should also make a change in us and our Seder should be accepted favorably by Hashem.

Rav Soloveitchik ZT"l notes (as brought down in the Mesoret HaRav Haggadah) that there are two times we end a night with *Leshana Haba beYerushalayim*: after Yom Kippur, and at the end of the Seder. Rav Soloveitchik ZT"l explained that at these two times the impact of the loss of the Beit Hamikdash is accentuated. After going through the *Avoda* on Yom Kippur and after talking about the *korban* and not being able to offer it, we are left with a feeling of remorse and sorrow. Therefore, we end both of these days with "Next year in Jerusalem!" Meaning, we pray that next year we'll be able to perform these two days properly in the Beit Hamikdash.

I would just like to add, that although it is true that the highest form of performing these two Mitzvot are when the Beit Hamikdash is built, however, the *Korban Pesach*, unlike the *Avoda* on Yom Kippur, can be fulfilled even without the Beit Hamikdash. Even today, by just building the *Mizbeach*, we can bring the *Korban Pesach*. We hope and we pray that as more and more Jews ascend the *Har Habayit*, the Temple Mount, on a daily basis to pray, the phrase we say when ending the Seder, *Leshana Haba b'Yerushalayim*, is more realistic and has much more meaning than ever before. Chag Sameach!

Vayehi Bachatzi Halayla

Shaun Slamowitz

Migdal Shana Bet Student 5780; Denver CO

After a meal full of hearty discussion, a less than healthy helping of long-awaited food, enough wine to keep the festivities flowing, and hopefully not *too* much matzah, it's no surprise the concluding portion of Nirtzah often falls by the wayside. And yet, much like the end of a story, without the conclusion of Nirtzah, the Seder isn't truly complete. The often passed-over songs and passages comprising Nirtzah embody the overall spirit of the Seder and, when placed into context, elucidate the fundamental principles of *Yetziat Mitzrayim* and the whole seder service.

Out of all the incredible songs and ruminations, which all have their own allusions and explanations, there is one portion of Nirtzah which is perhaps the most cryptic and confounding out of all the rest—the passage of *And it Happened at Midnight*. In this piece, the Haggadah informs us of all the historical events which occurred exactly at midnight. Through a plethora of distinct events, such as Avraham's victory over the Four Kings and Yaakov's struggle with the Malach, to Achashverosh's dream, and even all the way to “the day which is not day and not night,” i.e., the *Mashiach*; the Haggadah seems to unify a large group of disparate events whose only relationship seems to be midnight. While not initially a surprising passage to be found in the Haggadah, upon further inspection, the passage begs a few questions. Firstly, what is the significance of midnight in all of these historical cases? What factor could possibly tie all these diverse events which happen at midnight together? Even more puzzling, what connection does midnight have with Pesach? I know, I know, *Makat Bechorot* happened at midnight... but why? And secondly, if the passage of *And it Happened at Midnight* relates to the killing of the firstborn, wouldn't it have been more suited in Maggid where we actually talk about the plagues? Why place it in Nirtzah?

Before answering these questions, it is important to first understand the nature of time both from a Torah perspective, as well as from the perspective of modern physics. In Albert Einstein's paper on special relativity, Einstein revealed that, contrary to popular consensus, time was not an absolute construct through which things changed, but rather inherently tied to space. Time was no longer a medium of change but rather change itself. Similarly, I'd like to suggest that the unifying factor between all the events which occurred at midnight is change itself, and more specifically, a shift from galut to that of geulah.

In the *sedrah* of Bo, the Torah (talking about the night of the plague and subsequent Exodus) records, “*That was for G-d a night of vigil to bring them out of the land of Egypt; that same night is G-d’s, one of vigil for all the children of Israel throughout the ages.*” (Exodus 12:42) On this verse, Rashi (citing Rosh Hashanah 11b) comments, “This night is protected, and comes as such from ages past, against all destructive forces...” According to Rashi, the nature of the night was predetermined to be one of protection. Meaning, that from the moment of creation, the midnight of Pesach was inherently destined to be one of salvation from danger. In other words, at the critical moment where the Jews not only faced destruction from their neighbors but from G-d’s plague as well, G-d had already “pre”-ordained it so the Jewish people would be saved through the very system of change—time.

When viewed through this lens, the circumstances introduced through the passage of *And it Happened at Midnight* begin to make sense. Events like Achashverosh’s dream which leads to Mordechai’s parade through the streets, or Yaakov’s triumph over the angel, and especially our eventual redemption and the coming of *Mashiach*, all embody a shift from danger to safety, from death to life. The significance of midnight is that it’s a herald of salvation, and it is for this reason that the plague of *Makat Bechorot* was placed at midnight.

Now, with this understanding of the theme of the passage, we can begin to answer our second question: Why do we reflect on midnight now, in Nirtzah, instead of alongside the very miracle of Pesach that corresponds with midnight? However, in order to do this, we must understand the very difference between Maggid and Nirtzah. The word “Maggid” comes from the same shorsh of the word “*lehagid*,” which means to tell. In its essence, the portion of Magid is the transmission of the facts of the story, the very building blocks of *Yetziat Mitzrayim*. On the other hand, the term “Nirtzah” comes from the shorsh meaning to want, “*ratzah*.” However, even more fascinating, are the words “*hartza’ah*” and “*artzit*”, both of which are derived through the same shorsh of *ratzah*, meaning to lecture and to recount. When understood in this sense, the difference between Magid and Nirtzah becomes very nuanced. Whereas Magid, the telling of the story, comprises the individual components of *Yetziat Mitzrayim*, Nirtzah, the act of retelling or recounting, is an act of reflection. Therefore, to fully appreciate and fulfill the obligation of *Sippur Yetziat Mitzrayim*, one must consolidate the pieces of Magid and reflect on the themes of the seder in Nirtzah.

Through these realizations, we can now comprehend the overall message of *And it Happened at Midnight* along with its placement in Nirtzah. Unlike what one would initially expect, the passage of *And it Happened at Midnight*, is not relating to the plague of *Makat Bechorot*, but rather, it is initiating a moment of reflection on the theme of the

entire seder—the incredible creation of change, and the role it plays in our salvation. Therefore, the passage was not placed in Maggid, as there midnight would be viewed through its relationship to *Makat Bechorot* instead of as an institution unto itself. Rather, Chazal wanted us to reflect upon the very theme of transition, of being slaves to being free, and the very midnight that made it possible.

Adir Hu

Shmuel Halbert

Migdal Shana Aleph Student 5781; Nashville, TN

We officially end the seder in Nirtzah with the hopeful statement, “*L’shanah haba’ah b’Yerushalayim!*” Nevertheless, it is customary to continue praising Hashem with song. We have already praised Hashem for delivering us from Egypt in Hallel, and now the Seder takes a more forward-thinking outlook. People’s memories serve to guide them on future decisions. Similarly, our memories as B’nei Yisrael of the Exodus serve to prepare us for the Final Redemption. To prepare for the Mashiach, we need to remember Who delivered us the first time, and Who delivers us every time, so now we praise him in Nirtzah with songs such as “*Adir Hu.*”

“*Adir Hu,*” which translates as “He [Hashem] is mighty,” is an acrostic where each line gives Hashem a very concise praise: “He is mighty, He is select, He is great...” There is difficulty in ascribing attributes to G-d, because positive attributions can be misconstrued to be underwhelming in the presence of the Infinite Creator. Thus, Jewish writers throughout history would often write poems praising G-d, such as “*Ashrei*” and “*An’im Zemirot,*” in acrostic form to praise Him with every letter of the *aleph bet*. The Hebrew acrostic then was a symbol that every praise in its full form is owed to Hashem. Then, the chorus goes,

*“May He rebuild His temple soon!
Speedily, speedily, in our days, soon!
G-d, build! G-d, build! Rebuild your temple soon!”*

Continuing the Torah’s glorification of Hashem for redeeming us from Egypt, we glorify him so that we may merit the Final Redemption.

By praising G-d in anticipation of the coming of Mashiach, we are doing right what our ancestors in Egypt did not. One of the tragic things about the Exodus was that the first generation who experienced the splitting of the sea and the giving of the Torah almost entirely perished in the desert. They were ready for the means of being liberated from Egypt, but not the end where they would inherit the land of Israel and build the Beit HaMikdash. For forty years they complained of this and that in the desert to the point that they gave ear to the *meraglim*, those who condemned the very land they were to inherit.

In contrast to our ancestors, it is important for us to not make the same mistake, but to praise Hashem and appreciate gifts He has, does, and will, bestow upon us. There is a beautiful way to do this, and it is through song. Just like at the Sea of Reeds with *Shirat Hayam*, at the Seder table with “*Adir Hu*,” we sing praises of G-d and anticipate the coming of Moshiach.

“I believe with complete faith in the coming of the Messiah. And even if he delays, in spite of that, I will still wait for him expectantly each day that he will come.”

13 Facts Echad Mi Yodea Doesn't Want You To Know

Yosef Soloveitchik

Migdal Shana Bet Student 5780; Richmond VA

Throughout our childhood, we have been singing the song Echad Mi Yodea, blissfully trusting in the truth of the text found within. However, it is time to wake up my sleepy sheep! Echad Mi Yodea is not a simple folk song as it seems, but rather a one-sided biased approach to 13 different concepts! Read further to find out the truth Echad Mi Yodea doesn't want you to know.

- 1) While God may be One, if you claim to truly know or understand God, you are lying. In *Moreh Nevuchim*, Rambam explains how positive knowledge or understanding of Hashem is impossible (*Moreh Nevuchim* 1:59). Therefore, when you say you know that which is One, you are lying.
- 2) While we are always told about how Moshe came down from Har Sinai with the *Shnei Luchot Habrit* (*Shemot* 32:15), there is a less-mentioned, but still well-known, other part of the story, where Moshe, upon coming down and seeing the Golden Calf, breaks the *luchot* (*Shemot* 32:19). Eventually, he returns to Har Sinai for a second time, where he receives a second new set of *luchot* (*Shemot* 34:29). When one adds the original tablets and the new set, we get four total tablets, quite a lot more than our original two suggested by the song.
- 3) Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov are always presented to us as the list of the three *Avot*. However, depending on your definition of "*avot*," two more names could be potentially added to that list: Yosef and Moshe. Regarding Yosef, a very large portion of *Sefer Bereshit* is dedicated to him. Additionally, he gives some final words to his family just like the other *Avot* did before him (see the end of *Sefer Bereishit*), making him arguably sort of one of the *avot*. The other person who can be part of the list of *Avot* is Moshe, since Hashem offered to wipe out the Isrealite nation, except for him, and make Moshe into a new nation, making him into a potential, if not actualized member of the *Avot*.
- 4) While we all know of the four *Imahot*: Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel, and Leah, we often forget Yaakov's other wives Bilhah, and Zilpah. If they are included in the count of the *Imahot*, then the count would go up to six.
- 5) *Chamisha Chumshei Torah* is a term that flows right off the tongue - referring to the five *seforim* that everyone agrees make up the Torah. While the number five may be taken for granted today, this is actually a dispute in the Talmud (*Shabbat* 116a) whether there are five books, or possibly seven. In Parshat Beha'alotcha, there appears the well-known upside-down *nuns* surrounding two verses. Rabbi

Yehudah HaNasi held that their function was to section off these two verses as a “*sefer bifnei atzmo*.” Thus, *ipso facto*, this makes what comes before and after are their own *seforim* as well. Accordingly, our count of *seforim* jumps from five to seven.

- 6) On the topic of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi, we have all been told that the Mishna contains six *sedarim*. There are many *Masechtot Ketanot* such as Masechet Sefer Torah. If one were to include the various *Masechtot Ketanot*, which are not included in the main six, the number of *sedarim* in the Mishna would quickly balloon above the stated six.
- 7) While there may be seven days in a “*shabata*”, that holds true only if we define “*shabata*” as a week. One could though define it like the term is used in Vayikra 25:8 - the “*shabbat*” of the shemithah cycle. As such, it would be perfectly acceptable to sing “2555 are the days of the *shabata*” way more than the seven of Echad Ani Yodea. I don’t think anyone’s seder can possibly last long enough to arrive at that number.
- 8) While a *brit milah* usually happens after eight days, if the baby is born on twilight on Friday then, depending on how the calendar falls out, the *brit* can be pushed off to as much as twelve days. This isn’t even taking into account how long it can be pushed off if the baby is unhealthy (Mishna Shabbat 19:5).
- 9) There is a discussion in Shabbat 135a as to the permissibility of violating Shabbat to perform a *brit milah*. The Talmud states that if the baby is a 9- or 7-month baby, desecration is permitted in preparing for the *brit*, while if it is an 8-month baby, it is forbidden. The rationale is that the 8-month baby has almost no chance of surviving, and thus, one may not desecrate Shabbat on its behalf. This is in contrast with a 7-month baby, which seems to have been an alternative legitimate time frame for gestation. In fact, Moshe Rabbeinu was born as a 7-month baby, thus giving his mother the ability to hide him for 3 months (see Rashi on Shemot 2:2). While pregnancy is usually 9 months, 7 is also a viable option.
- 10) As rock solid as the number 10 may seem for the number of the *dibrot*, the Ten *Dibrot* are mentioned twice, once in Shemot and a second time in Devarim, with subtle differences between them. If we count each difference as a separate *dibrah*, for example counting the *shamor* and *zachor* variants of the fourth *dibrah*, as separate, the total number of *dibrot* would surpass ten.
- 11) The eleven stars refers to eleven stars in one of Yosef’s dreams. This may seem airtight until you realize that the *sun* was also in that dream, and the sun also technically counts as a star, bringing up the total number of stars to twelve (Bereishit 37:9).
- 12) Although we usually talk about the twelve tribes of Israel, there are actually

thirteen tribes if you think about it. Usually when they are counted either Levi is skipped, or Ephraim and Menashe are merged.

- 13) While everyone agrees that there are thirteen attributes of Mercy of Hashem, there is disagreement about how to arrive at those thirteen. These attributes come from the division of the verse, "*Hashem Hashem Kel Rachum V'Chanun Erech Apayim V'rav Chessed V'Emet Nosei Chesed...*" (Shemot 34:6-7). So, for example, the Ramban and others divided Hashem and Hashem as two different attributes, while Rav Hai Gaon among other rishonim view the double mention as a single attribute. If one were to total up all of the divisions of the attributes between the *shivot*, one would arrive at more than 13 different possible "attributes" (18 according to my count).