SHEMA KOLEINU: PESACH 5781
DIVREI TORAH FROM OUR REBBEIM, FACULTY, TALMIDIM, AND ALUMNI

OUR SHEMA KOLEINU IS DEDICATED IN MEMORY OF RABBI HY ARBESFELD '49
IN HONOR OF HIS FIRST YAHRZEIT.
Introduction
To Know And To Thank: The Essence Of The Pesach Seder Experience

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The evening of the Pesach Seder is certainly one of the busiest and most exciting evenings of the year. Many, many hours of advance preparation – whether cleaning, shopping, cooking, setting the table, packing, organizing, and whatever else – go into making the Seder the special experience that it is, and when the time to begin finally arrives, the family gathers at the table with much anticipation. We are, of course, well aware that there are many active mitzvos to be performed on this evening – eating matzah and maror, drinking the arba kosos, heseibah (reclining), retelling the story of yetzias Mitzrayim, eating a sumptuous yom tov meal, reciting Hallel, and more. But while there may perhaps be some challenges inherent in properly fulfilling some of these mitzvos, we more than likely are able to discharge our obligations with relative ease if we put our minds – and mouths – to it.

It is worthwhile, however, to consider as well what inner feelings we should try to have on this exalted evening, what mental state we should try to achieve, what emotions we should try to create, and hence what thoughts we should try to walk away from the Seder with. The mishnah in Pesachim (116b), in a passage that is actually incorporated into the Haggadah towards the end of the Maggid section, gives us some guidance in this regard, teaching that in every generation, one is obligated to view oneself as if he personally came out of Egypt. The Rambam (Hilchos Chametz Umatzah 7:6) rules accordingly. What we must each do, then, is somehow imagine that we too were slaves and have now been redeemed. That is the mental and emotional feeling we should try to produce at the Seder, perhaps by means of, but certainly in addition to, performing the evening’s various ritual mitzvos.

But this, to be sure, is no easy task. I’ve never been to Egypt; how can I view myself as having just left there? I’ve never been enslaved; how can I imagine what it feels like to be set free? If anything, the requirement presented in this mishnah makes the attainment of the desired mental and emotional state of mind even more difficult. By comparison, even consuming the requisite amounts of matzoh, maror, and wine seems easy!

Perhaps we can develop an approach based upon a famous idea shared by the Ramban in his commentary at the very end of Parshas Bo (Shemos 13:16). In an important discussion of the role of miracles and the reason why we have so many mitzvos, aside from those related to Pesach, which serve to remind us of yetzias Mitzrayim, the Ramban states emphatically that what Hashem truly wants of every human being is simply that he should know that Hashem exists and is always present, and that he should thank Him for what He has given him. Applying this to the newly redeemed slave, we may suggest that his experience enabled him both to see Hashem during his dark moments, as He suddenly appeared in order to lead him from anguish to joy, and to thank Him once the salvation was complete. And maybe it is precisely these two mindsets that we are therefore supposed to strive to attain ourselves on Pesach night – the awareness of Hashem’s presence in our lives and the sense of gratitude towards him for whatever we have.

While it is true that we have never been slaves in Egypt, we have all experienced dark moments in our lives, times when we feel that everything has gone wrong and that nobody is on our side. For many of us, perhaps during this past year, with its quarantines, its deprival of many things that we enjoy, and its gen-
eral disruption of the life to which we had grown accustomed, there were times when we felt like we were slaves, if not in the sense of engaging in back-breaking labor on behalf of someone else, in the sense of having absolutely no control over what we could and could not do. At the Pesach Seder, it is imperative that we recall that even at these times, Hashem is still with us, even if He is sometimes hard to perceive.

Towards the beginning of Maggid, we praise Hashem by saying “Baruch HaMakom…” HaMakom, translated as “the Omnipresent,” is of course a description of Hashem; the question is why we use this particular description at this particular juncture. HaRav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, zt”l, once noted that this description is used when we wish to highlight the fact that Hashem is indeed present specifically when one might think that He is not, that He has abandoned him. When we comfort a mourner, who surely often feels abandoned and alone after having lost a loved one, we say “HaMakom yenachem eshem…” When we begin to daven on Yom Kippur, a time we all feel distant from Hashem because of our sins (see the words of the Rambam, Hilchos Teshuvah 7:6-7), we say “al da’as HaMakom…” In each of these cases, we remind ourselves and others of the omnipresence of Hashem when it is difficult to sense Him. And so too at the Seder, when we get ready to describe the slavery of our ancestors in Egypt, we say “Baruch HaMakom...,” declaring that despite His apparent absence, Hashem was, is, and always will be present, and that such is the case in our own lives as well.

At the same time, we are also obligated to express our enduring appreciation of Hashem. The pesukim that form the basis of the main part of Maggid, which are broken down and analyzed phrase by phrase in the Haggadah, beginning with the words “Arami oved avi...,” come, as indicated by the aforementioned mishnah in Pesachim (ibid.), from the text which the Torah commands is to be recited by the Jewish farmer who brings his bikkurim, his first fruits, to the Beis Hamikdash as an expression of thanks (Devarim 26:5-8). Why cite this particular text? Perhaps because the mitzvah of bikkurim is one which expresses the notion of hakaras hatov, acknowledging and appreciating the good which Hashem, in this case, has provided. And it is hakaras hatov that is a centerpiece of the Seder experience as well. So important is this idea of being grateful for what Hashem has given us that the Midrash (Bereishis Rabba 1:4) states that it is for the sake of the mitzvah of bikkurim (among other things) that the world was created! Presumably, the message is not that this mitzvah is itself so important (as compared to others), but that what it represents – hakaras hatov – is.

Despite the challenges and the bumps in the road that we all often face, we all certainly have much to be thankful for as well. On Pesach night, in addition to acknowledging the presence of Hashem in our lives even when things are not going as well as we might want, we must also look for those things in our lives which are going well, which are good, over which we can rejoice, and for which we can thank Hashem. There are times when we take many of His gifts to us for granted, and we sometimes even demonstrate an air of entitlement; this is inappropriate, as displaying proper gratitude, as we have demonstrated, is such a basic requirement. Knowing that Hashem is present in our lives and cultivating feelings of gratitude towards Him for what He does for us, the two values which the Ramban says are what Hashem wants us to demonstrate, are likewise central to the Pesach Seder experience.

As we sit at the Seder this year, let us try to reflect upon acknowledging the presence of Hashem in our lives at all times, and upon the many things in our lives for which we ought to thank him – and in this way come to the mindset with which we can fulfill the obligation to consider ourselves as though we have personally been redeemed.

Chag Kasher Visameiach to all.
A Dynamic Dialogue

Rabbi Joshua Kahn
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Stories have a powerful role in the narrative of a nation. They shape us and our national identity. During Pesach, particularly at the Seder, we relive and recount our Egypt experience, feeling both the slavery and then the freedom that we experienced in Mitzrayim. At the centerpiece of this narrative is a series of pesukim from the Torah that we use to retell this journey. If we were writing the Haggadah and wanted to choose pesukim that would capture the story of our slavery and subsequent redemption, we would likely focus on Sefer Shemos. And yet, the pesukim that are used to tell the story are a series of pesukim known as Arami Oved Avi. These pesukim, from Sefer Devarim, are recited by the Jewish farmer when he brings his bikkurim to the Beis Hamidkash. He would ceremoniously proclaim these pesukim, tersely recounting Jewish history, recalling our slavery in Mitzrayim, followed by our redemption, culminating in the construction of the Beis Hamikdash. This very brief series of pesukim are cryptic and rely on extensive derashos of Chazal to make them comprehensible to us. These derashos serve as the accompanying text of Maggid. When setting up the Haggadah, why was this cryptic, more difficult text chosen, rather than the comprehensive, detail laden version of Sefer Shemos that would be much easier for us to understand?

Rav Soloveitchik zt"l answered that perhaps the section of Arami Oved Avi is chosen precisely because of its difference from the easier to understand narrative of Sefer Shemos. Had we used Sefer Shemos, each person would have been able to open the Haggadah and read through it by himself. The Torah Shebichsav storyline is easy to understand even by ourselves. However, in order to grasp the pesukim of Arami Oved Avi, we rely on the accompanying Torah Sheba'al Peh, demonstrating that understanding Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim requires a vibrant multigenerational dialogue, which is integral to learning Torah Sheba'al Peh. The Seder is not just about reliving Jewish history; rather, it is about the transmission of our heritage, giving over our system of emunah and passing down our mesorah to our children. The Seder is an active, engaging dialogue that requires us to understand the complexities of emunah and our national and personal history. The cryptic pesukim of Arami Oved Avi are therefore the perfect point of departure for this conversation.

With this idea in mind, our Shema Koleinu is especially important, because it reflects an effort by the Rebbeim and talmidim of the Marsha Stern Talmudical Academy/Yeshiva University High School for Boys to engage the broader community in a dialogue of Talmud Torah and the transmission of our deep and profound mesorah. This kuntres is the result of the efforts of many individuals. Thank you to Rabbi Dov Emerson who created the vision for this project and nurtured it throughout the process. Thank you to Rabbi Shimon Schenker and Rabbi Baruch Pesach Mendelson for their ongoing efforts for Shema Koleinu. Thank you to our Editors-in-Chief, Shimi Kaufman ('21) and Yisroel Hochman ('21), for leading this project.

It is our deep honor to dedicate this volume in memory of Rabbi Hy Arbesfeld ('49), הרבי חיים בן אברהם zt"l, in honor of his first yahrzeit. Rabbi Arbesfeld had a profound impact on our yeshiva. His enthusiasm and commitment to Torah learning and ensuring that every talmid could afford an MTA education was remarkable. The excitement with which he described his high school experience was inspirational! May the Divrei Torah that were so central to his life be an ongoing zechus for Rabbi Arbesfeld zt"l and ybd"l his family.

Best wishes for a Chag Kasher Visameiach.
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Mechiras Chametz

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Mechiras chametz sometimes gets a bad rap. The widespread practice of observant Jews selling their chametz to a non-Jew prior to Pesach, and thus avoiding the prohibitions of bal yira'eh and bal yimatzei while preserving the chametz for repossession after Pesach, is sometimes seen as a way of not having one’s cake and eating it too; an evasion that perhaps fulfills the technical imperative of the Torah directive (and perhaps not), yet seems to be artificial and contrived in nature. The ambivalence toward this practice (as well as other “sale” approaches, which are subject to varying degrees of controversy) is reflected in the joke that is told about a rabbinic ban on smoking: the orthodox Jews aren’t worried, as they will simply sell their lungs to a non-Jew.

This conflicted attitude is played out in the halachic literature. True, the Tosefta (Pesachim 2:6-7) does speak of a situation in which a Jew, finding himself stuck at sea as Pesach approaches, transfers ownership of his chametz to a non-Jewish fellow traveler, and reclaims it after the holiday. However, the impression is one of an unplanned, non-ideal, and isolated incident; the current reality, where entire communities plan in advance to preserve their stocks of chametz through annually scheduled arrangements with their local rabbi, appears to be a significant expansion of the depicted scenario.

A more commonly heard complaint is that the sale seems like a joke: the chametz does not leave the original owner’s residence (something some poskim insisted should happen (See Terumas HaDeshen 119 and Bach, OC 448, d’h kasav.); the purchaser does not appear interested in actually taking possession of the chametz; (See Machatzis HaShekel, O.C. 448:4; Responsa Chasam Sofer, YD 310; Responsa Lihoros Natan, II, 27); rarely, if ever, does the seller have to open his doors and cabinets to the new owner of his food; and the chametz invariably reverts to its original ownership immediately after Pesach.

Rabbeinu Yerucham (Netiv V, part V, 46a), commenting on the Tosefta’s ruling, asserts that one who utilizes this option should not engage in ha’aramah (evasion of the halachah). The Beis Yosef (Orach Chayim 448:5) questions this requirement: the entire plan appears to be a ha’aramah, and yet, it is permitted!

Persistent Controversy
Controversy over the sale has persisted over the generations, despite its increasing usage, and while some of the objections focused on the more problem-fraught method of a rabbi purchasing his congregants’ chametz in order to sell it to a non-Jew (See, for example, R. Uri Shraga Feivush Toubish, Reponsa Uri Vi-Yish’i, 121), it is clear that some great rabbinic authorities (See, for example, Responsa Shoel U’Meishiv, II, 2:77) objected even to the more prevalent current practice, where the rabbi does not purchase the chametz, but rather acts as an agent to sell it to the purchaser. (On this distinction, see also R. Ya’akov Ariel, Resp. Bi’ohalah Shel Torah, I, 59)

The Bechor Shor (Pesachim 21a) asserts that mechiras chametz is indeed a ha’aramah, and for that reason is ineffective against a biblical prohibition of owning chametz. He assumes, however, that the chametz at hand is only subject to a rabbinical prohibition, because, as the Talmud (Pesachim 10a) states in the context of bedikas chametz, the bitul of chametz is effective to negate the Torah prohibition. (Others who accepted this premise include Ketzos Hachoshen, 194:4; R. Meshulam Igra, Responsa 39:1, and R. Natan Note Kahane, Resp. Divrei Rinanah, 30 and see the extensive references in the footnotes, # 11, by R. Yitzchak Hershkowitz). See
also R. Yitzchak Shmuel Shechter, Responsa Yashiv Yitzchak X, O.C. 9.

However, many achronim (Mekor Chaim 448:9; Responsa Minchas Yitzchak, VIII:41) challenged that premise, noting that the chametz that is negated is not the same chametz as that which is sold, and thus a biblical prohibition would still attach; as such, one who would utilize mechiras chametz must be comfortable saying that it is effective on a Torah level. (The Kogalglover Rav offers a creative explanation of the Bechor Shor’s view in his Responsa Eretz Tzvi, I, 84.)

Indeed, there are many who have adopted a policy not to sell chametz gamur, presumably reflecting a lack of confidence in the sale’s efficacy together with the assumption that the chametz in question is not batel. (See R. Asher Weiss, Haggadas Minchas Asher p. 280) Nonetheless, the acceptance of mechiras chametz in all forms is widespread, with Jews purchasing chametz knowing in advance it will be sold, and some poskim even considering the question of whether it should be an obligation to sell one’s chametz as part of the appropriate safeguards for Pesach (See Responsa Lihoros Natan VI, 25).

In Defense of Mechiras Chametz

Perhaps an explanation can be offered for the embrace by so much of observant Jewry of the embattled mechiras chametz. It would begin by considering the prohibitions of bal yira’eh and bal yimatzei that the sale is meant to address. The Ran (Pesachim 1a, d’h umah) asserts that these prohibitions serve as a kind of "siyag min haTorah" (See R. Yosef Engel, Lekach Tov, 8:1): in essence, the Torah is really primarily concerned that we should not eat chametz. However, if chametz is kept in one’s possession, there is a great risk that in a distracted moment, or in the course of a semi-awake midnight snack, one might prepare himself a meal of the normally-permitted chametz. To avoid this eventuality, all chametz must be removed from one’s possession.

By embracing mechiras chametz, Klal Yisrael is declaring that there are two things that can prevent them from eating chametz: not having any, and the transgression of gezel. If the chametz is in one’s house, but is off-limits because of the prohibition of stealing, that is enough to keep the Jews away from its consumption. Therefore, it doesn’t matter whether or not the chametz will ever be picked up by its purchaser, or whether or not the sale will be reversed after Pesach. All that does matter is that during Pesach, the chametz legally belongs to another; that is enough to make sure it will be untouched. In other words, Klal Yisrael is willing to stake its "kareis" on its commitment to avoiding theft.

In this context, it is worth noting the words of the Semag (Mitzvos Asei #73), who states that the exile has gone on too long because of deficiencies in honesty and integrity in dealing with the nations of the world. When that problem is present, redemption can not take place; it would be a chilul Hashem for God to redeem a nation that is perceived as immoral. As such, perhaps the practice of mechiras chametz is a conscious decision, at a time when we focus on geulah, to enter into a monetary relationship with a non-Jewish person, and to honor the integrity of that relationship with one’s spiritual life. Such an attitude, taken with proper seriousness, might just bring the geulah, one step at a time.
Biyur Chametz

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Rosh Yeshiva, RIETS

Rabbi Soloveitchik On the Destruction Of Chametz

The mishnah (Temurah 33b) divides issuei hana‘ah, objects from which benefit is prohibited and thus must be disposed of, into two categories: nikbarin, those which are to be buried, and nisrafin, those which are to be burned. Nikbarin includes any such prohibited object that the Torah does not require us to eliminate through burning. The Mishnah then states that the method of disposal of these two kinds of objects may not be reversed: one may neither bury nisrafin nor burn nikbarin. According to the Rabbis (Pesachim 21a), biyur chametz, the elimination of chametz, may be done in any fashion. Chametz would thus seem to belong to the category of nikbarin. How then, asks Magen Avraham (Orach Chayim 445:1), is it permissible to burn chametz?

The Gra (Orach Chayim 445:1) maintains that even the Rabbis are of the view that ideally one should burn the chametz. In fact, this is implied by the language in the mishnah, which states that one may even (“af”) eliminate the chametz through other means, implying that it is a secondary option; furthermore, there is frequent mention at the beginning of Pesachim of the rules regarding the burning of the chametz without any indication that the majority opinion does not specifically require burning at all. Evidently, then, chametz is different from other nikbarin in that it is preferable to burn it, even though secondary options certainly exist. Chametz, therefore, not only may be burned, but should be burned.

We can utilize this idea to explain another halachah as well. The Gemara (Pesachim 21b) states that chametz that is singed before it becomes prohibited on Erev Pesach is permitted on Pesach. Some of the Rishonim (Tosfos, Pesachim 21b, d’h chorcho kodem zmano) are of the view that the statement of the Gemara deals with the case where the chametz has been rendered inedible; only then is it permitted to eat this chametz on Pesach; others (Rashi, Pesachim 21b, d’h lo tzericha) require the chametz to have been transformed to the point that it no longer appears or tastes like chametz. Rambam, however, does not specify any of these requirements. He might very well believe that since it is preferable for one to fulfill the mitzvah of tashbisu, eliminating the chametz, by burning the chametz, as opposed to other methods of destruction, it becomes permitted after it has been burned sufficiently, even if it is still edible and recognizable. This is due to the principle of na’aseis mitzvah: once one performs the specific mitzvah that is applicable to a particular prohibited item (if there is one), the prohibition is no longer in effect. It would be for this reason that Rambam records this halachah in his discussion of the details of the mitzvah of biyur chametz (Hilchos Chametz Umatzah 3:11) and not while discussing the halachos of inedible and ruined chametz (ibid. 4:8–12).

There is, however, one caveat that must be added. It is explicit in the same Gemara that according to the Chachamim, this burning is effective in permitting the chametz to be eaten only if it is done before the onset of the prohibition of chametz on Erev Pesach; if it is done afterward, the chametz remains prohibited. According to Rabbi Yehudah, however, it becomes permitted if burned at any time. Now, if the Chachamim indeed apply the principle of na’aseis mitzvah, and allow the burned chametz to be eaten because they agree that ideally, one must burn the chametz, then they should allow the chametz – no matter when it was burned. We must, therefore, conclude that according to Rambam (see Hilchos Chametz Umatzah 2:1), since the mitzvah of tashbisu, destroying one’s chametz, is in effect only before the
chametz becomes prohibited, only then is there a preference to eliminate it specifically through burning. After it becomes prohibited, one is required to dispose of the chametz simply so as not to violate bal yira’eh (the prohibition of possessing chametz on Pesach) – but there is no longer a requirement to specifically burn the chametz, because there is no kiyum asei of tashbisu, to destroy the chametz. Since there is no preference to destroy the chametz by burning, no permissibility to consume the chametz is created by na’aseis mitzvoso. Rabbi Yehudah, however, derives the obligation to burn chametz from the mitzvah of burning nosar (sacrificial meat that was not eaten during its allotted time), and therefore, the mitzvah applies specifically after the prohibition sets in; he thus maintains that when one burns the chametz, even at that point it becomes permitted.

Rama (Orach Chayim 445:1) writes that the custom is specifically to burn the chametz and not use other means of destruction. The Gra comments that the reason why this is only a custom is that even Rabbi Yehudah actually requires burning only after the time that chametz is prohibited (except according to Rashi), and since our practice is to eliminate the chametz earlier, there is no real obligation to burn it according to any opinion in the Gemara. Yet the Gra himself maintains, as noted above, that before the chametz becomes prohibited, everyone agrees that at least ideally one must burn it! We must perforce conclude that even though one indeed fulfills a mitzvah by specifically burning the chametz on Erev Pesach while it is still permitted, and that is why one may derive benefit from the burnt chametz even on Pesach, it is still not in any sense obligatory to do so. Therefore, it is only a custom to burn the chametz.

### Destroying chametz on Shabbos

On the fourteenth of Nissan, Erev Pesach, there is a mitzvah to destroy all chametz found in one’s domain. When the fourteenth of Nissan occurs on a Shabbos, Rabbi Meir (Pesachim 49a) states, all chametz must be destroyed before Shabbos (on the thirteenth of Nissan), except for chametz that will be needed for two Shabbos meals. Rambam (Hilchos Chametz Umatzah 3:3) and the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 444) follow Rabbi Meir’s opinion. With respect to chametz that is leftover on Shabbos, Rambam and Shulchan Aruch state that one must nullify the remaining chametz and cover it until after the first days of yom tov, at which time one is to destroy any leftover chametz. Rabbi Akiva Eiger, in his glosses to the Shulchan Aruch, wonders why one must wait until after yom tov to burn the chametz instead of discarding the remaining chametz on Shabbos itself, prior to the time that the prohibition against chametz goes into effect. Rabbi Akiva Eiger suggests that there may be a prohibition of handling chametz that must be destroyed, and states that the matter requires additional investigation.

The question posed by Rabbi Akiva Eiger can be resolved as follows. According to Rambam, Rabbi Meir, in requiring that chametz must be destroyed on the thirteenth of Nissan prior to Shabbos, is of the view that one is not permitted to perform the mitzvah of destroying the chametz on Shabbos. One may set aside the amount of bread that will be needed for the two Shabbos meals. One may not, however, destroy the leftover bread on Shabbos because that would violate a rabbinic prohibition of destroying chametz on Shabbos.

The concept that the destruction of chametz on Shabbos violates a prohibition is analogous to the destruction of challah that has become impure. The mishnah (Beitzah 27b) states that challah that has become impure may not be moved during a yom tov. Rashi states that although feeding one’s animal on a yom tov is permitted, and ordinarily, one may feed impure challah to his animals, one may not feed impure challah to his animals on a yom tov, because there is a prohibition against the destruction on a yom tov of kodshim (consecrated items) that have become impure. Rashi explains that the fact that the Torah requires one to destroy impure kodshim indicates that the destruction of such items is considered a melachah (work), and performing a melachah on a yom tov is not permitted. Rashi’s rationale may similarly apply to the destruction of chametz. The fact that the Torah requires us to destroy chametz before Pesach indicates that such
Is There a Mitzvah of Tashbisu?

The punishment of lashes is not imposed for violation of a prohibition that is nitak la’asei, that is, associated with and mitigated by fulfilling a positive commandment. The Gemara (Pesachim 95a) states that a person who did not remove his chametz from his possession before Pesach is not liable for lashes, because the negative prohibitions of bal yira’eh – “lo yira’eh lecha se’or, no leaven shall be found in all your territory” (Shemos 13:7) and bal yimatzei – “se’or lo yimatzei bebateichem, no leaven shall be found in your houses” (Shemos 12:19) are each considered nitak to the positive commandment of “tashbisu se’or mibateichem, eliminate leavening from your property” (Shemos 12:15). The ruling of Rambam (Hilchos Chametz Umatzah 1:3), that a person who purchases chametz on Pesach is punished with lashes, seems to be inconsistent with the Gemara. To resolve this inconsistency, Rav Chaim of Brisk explained that in this case, the positive commandment actually acts as an implied prohibition. Although the mitzvah of tashbisu is phrased in the active form, it does not, according to Rav Chaim, constitute a nitak law. Rather, the verse implies an injunction against owning chametz, with the requirement to destroy it is merely a preventive measure (issur asei). Consequently, the aforementioned prohibitions are not considered nitak la’asei, because the positive commandment of tashbisu is not an ordinary asei.

The mishnah (Pesachim 2:1) records a dispute between Rabbi Yehudah and the Chachamim as to the correct method of eliminating chametz from one’s possession. Rabbi Yehudah states that the only acceptable method for destroying chametz is with fire. The Chachamim are of the opinion that any method may be employed, including grinding the chametz and casting it to the wind. According to Rabbi Yehudah, burning chametz is more than just a means to ensure that one will not violate the prohibitions of bal yira’eh and bal yimatzei, for if that were the case, he should agree that any method of destruction would suffice. Rather, burning chametz, according to Rabbi Yehudah, must be considered a kiyum mitzvah, and as such, mitigates the prohibitions of bal yira’eh and bal yimatzei, and lashes would not be administered for their violation. According to the Chachamim, however, the desired result is the elimination of the chametz. The purpose of destroying the chametz is to preclude one from being in violation of the negative prohibitions and not to facilitate a kiyum mitzvah; the method of destruction is thus immaterial. As such, according to the Chachamim, there is no positive commandment to offset the negative commandments, and a violator would thus be liable for lashes. The ruling of the Gemara (Pesachim 95a) that one does not receive lashes for either of these prohibitions is based upon the opinion of Rabbi Yehudah, while Rambam (Hilchos Chametz Umatzah 3:11), who states that one is liable for lashes if he commits these transgressions, accepts the ruling of the Rabbis.

If, however, according to Rav Chaim, tashbisu is only an implied prohibition, one may ask why it is that on Erev Pesach we recite a blessing on bedikas chametz, the act which is a prelude to destroying the chametz, as this would appear to violate the principle that one does not recite a blessing on a mitzvah that is designed to avoid a prohibition.

The answer lies in the important distinction between the nature of the mitzvah of tashbisu before midday of the fourteenth of Nissan, when chametz is still permitted to be in one’s possession, and after that time. Ramban (beginning of Pesachim) explains that just as we learn from the word “ach-however” (Shemos 12:15) that we are to split the day in terms of the prohibition of owning chametz, meaning that it is permissible to own chametz until midday and only forbidden after that time, so, too, we learn that we are obligated to remove chametz from our possession before midday. Therefore, until
midday, tashbisu is a kiyum asei, representing a fulfillment of the mitzvah, and hence, it is appropriate to recite a blessing on this kiyum, because the bedikah and biyur are done before midday. However, the prohibitions of bal yira’eh and bal yimatzei, and hence the possibility of considering them nitak la’asei, came into force only on Pesach, and at that point, the mitzvah of tashbisu has already been transformed into an issur asei, a prohibition derived from a positive commandment.

Alternatively, even if we were to assume that the prohibitions of bal yira’eh and bal yimatzei are nitak la’asei, it is possible to suggest another reason why one would receive lashes for owning chametz, despite the fact that this prohibited act can be mitigated by a positive commandment. Rambam (Hilchos Temurah 1:1) writes that one receives lashes for violating the prohibition of temurah, transferring the kedushah from an animal designated as a korban to another animal. He explains that one gets lashes even though temurah can be rectified by fulfillment of the positive commandment that the sanctity devolves on both animals (Vayikra 27:10), because temurah actually constitutes two negative commandments, “lo yachlifenu, you shall not change it” (Vayikra 27:10) and “vilo yamir oso, you shall not replace it” (Vayikra 27:10). The positive commandment can rectify only one negative commandment; thus one receives lashes for violating the second negative commandment. Owning chametz also entails two negative commandments, lo yira’eh and lo yimatzei. Since the positive commandment of tashbisu can mitigate only one prohibition, one receives lashes for purchasing chametz. This approach is still difficult, because the Gemara (Pesachim 95a) clearly states that one is not liable for lashes for either prohibition, as they are associated with a positive commandment. Rabbenu Chananel presents an alternative text for this Gemara. His text reads, “One does not receive lashes for owning chametz on Pesach, because this violation does not involve an activity.” This undoubtedly was the text that Rambam had as well. This text implies that a person who does take an active role in the violation of the prohibitions of bal yira’eh and bal yimatzei, such as by purchasing chametz on Pesach, would indeed be liable to receive lashes.
Yaakov Weinstock ('22)

It's that time of year again. One can feel the excitement Biyur Chametz creates as the time for Pesach to begin draws closer. Due to all the commotion that surrounds Erev Pesach, one can lose sight of the lessons certain parts of Erev Pesach are supposed to convey to us. One of those activities is Biyur Chametz, burning, the destruction of our chametz. Everyone knows the grave issur of owning chametz on Pesach and eating chametz, but why does there have to be such a spectacle made of destroying this chametz on Erev Pesach? What is the essence of Biyur Chametz? I believe the answer to this question can give us a new outlook on Biyur Chametz, and give new meaning to Pesach as a whole.

The Gemara in Pesachim (5a) quotes a beraisa from Bei Rabbi Yishmael which says “in the merit of three rishons” we are rewarded three things: the first to cut off the descendants of Eisav, to build the Beis HaMikdash, and for the name of Moshiach. Rashi explains that the three rishons that the beraisa refers to are the yamim tovim of Pesach and Sukkos, and the mitzvah of lulav. However, what does Pesach have to do with any of the three rewards mentioned in this beraisa?

The Maharsha in his Chiddushei Aggados (5a) explains that Pesach has a large connection to not only Geulas Mitzrayim, but also the future Geulah. Through observing Pesach properly, we will merit our future redemption. However, the Maharsha goes a step further and says that Pesach’s association with geulah helps explain the mitzvah of eliminating chametz. The rising chametz represents the strength of the yetzer hara and Eisav, which we attempt to eliminate by destroying our chametz. Thus, this links Pesach directly to the reward that the descendants of Eisav will be destroyed. This Maharsha demonstrates that our destruction of the chametz is in some way representative of our attempts to destroy the yetzer hara. However, the Maharsha makes an extremely profound statement that requires further analysis. What does it mean that chametz is the yetzer hara? What is the comparison?

The answer lies in a Gemara in Sukkah (52a), which states that in the beginnings of one’s life the yetzer hara begins as a small string, but continues to grow as one keeps falling into its traps to be like a thick rope. The growth of yetzer hara can be compared to rising dough. As one gives the dough yeast, the dough will rise and become chametz. Therefore, one can say that the comparison between these two is that both chametz and one’s yetzer hara continually grow through time. Based on this Maharsha, we might be able to understand the idea of burning the chametz on a deeper level. As the Gemara in Sukkah tells us, it is the nature of the yetzer hara that it continually grows as the person falls in its traps. When one does byur chametz, it is a statement that even if one made mistakes, he wants to try to start again, and destroy the yetzer hara even though it has already grown so large. The chametz is burned to symbolize this renewal process we are trying to undergo, but what does renewal have to do with Pesach? Why is this the time that we focus on conquering the yetzer hara?

The essence of Pesach is a commemoration of the beginning of the formation of a group of families into a new nation. The entire Pesach story is the creation of the new entity of Klal Yisroel. Those that were just families became new people, part of a bigger cause of being a member of Bnei Yisroel. The Jews underwent a renewal process of their own to become one nation, and essentially had to change themselves to become that cohesive unit which stood by Har Sinai to accept the Torah “k’ish echad b’lev echad” - as one nation, with one heart. To reach this level required effort and self-improvement. We try to replicate this self-improvement the Jews had to go through as they had just left Mitzrayim to become Hashem’s chosen nation through the Biyur Chametz, where we try to eliminate our weak points and im-
prove ourselves in any way we can. Therefore, as we destroy our chametz, may we internalize this lesson to improve ourselves in any way possible.
Heseibah

Rabbi Baruch Pesach Mendelson  
Maggid Shiur, YUHSB

The Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 462:5) rules that a talmid who is eating the Seder at the table of his rebbi may not perform heseibah (leaning) while eating on the night of Pesach, unless he gets explicit permission from his rebbi. The Mishnah Berurah (462:15, Sha'arei Tzion 462:20) explains that the mitzvah to fear one's rebbi is learned from an explicit possuk in the Torah of "es Hashem Elokecha tira" (you shall fear Hashem your God), with the word "es" including talmidei chachamim. Since the mitzvah to fear a talmid chacham is a diraisa obligation, while the mitzvah to lean at the Seder is only a dirabanan, one does not lean in the presence of his rebbi. However, when the talmid receives explicit permission, this is the equivalent of the rebbi forgoing the fear due to him, and as such, the talmid becomes required to perform heseibah like anyone else. However, the Aruch Hashulchan (462:6) rules that if the rebbi gives the talmid permission to lean, he is still not obligated to lean, as he can still say that he feels uncomfortable leaning in front of his rebbi. Thus, if the rebbi grants permission, the talmid has a choice of whether or not to lean. Why does the Mishnah Berurah rule that a talmid who is given permission by his rebbi to lean must do so, while the Aruch Hashulchan frames it as a choice?

In addition, the opinion of the Aruch Hashulchan appears strange at first glance. Why should the talmid have any right to say he is uncomfortable leaning before his rebbi? Since there is a mitzvah midirabanan to do so, why does it matter if he feels uncomfortable? It would make sense if leaning was something which is optional at the Seder, but since it is a requirement, once the talmid is given permission to perform heseibah, why should he not be obligated to do so?

We can draw a distinction which can help to clarify the machlokes. There are two possibilities as to how the fear of one's rebbi pushes away their chiyuv to lean. It could be that the fear of one's rebbi supersedes the chiyuv heseibah, but the chiyuv heseibah remains in place, just with another more pressing chiyuv of kavod harav overriding it. Thus, when the rebbi forgoes their kavod, the already existing chiyuv of heseibah simply goes back into effect. Or, it could be that the existence of the requirement of kavod harav completely nullifies the chiyuv heseibah, such that even when the rebbi gives permission for the talmid to sit, there is no longer any requirement for the talmid to lean. It would appear that the Mishnah Berurah holds according to the first possibility developed here, that the chiyuv heseibah is not cancelled out, but merely overridden by the fear of one's rebbi, such that when the rebbi does not enforce his honor, the chiyuv heseibah returns. The Aruch Hashulchan, in contrast, would understand that the kavod harav completely uproots the chiyuv heseibah, such that when the rebbi forgoes his honor, the decision of whether or not to lean is entirely up to the talmid, as the requirement has already been removed.

However, this in and of itself is strange: according to the Aruch Hashulchan, why should the kavod harav completely cancel the chiyuv heseibah, even after the rebbi forgoes his kavod? Perhaps we can suggest that the Aruch Hashulchan follows the opinion of the Ravyah (as brought in Rama Orach Chayim 492:4) that nowadays, there is no chiyuv heseibah at all, since the whole purpose of heseibah is to demonstrate cheirus, freedom, and since nowadays we are not accustomed to leaning, there is no show of freedom involved in leaning. (The Rama rules that women rely on this Ravyah so as not to have a chiyuv
heseibah.) It may be that the Aruch Hashulchan would understand, in a similar fashion, that a talmid sitting in front of his rebbi would be so uncomfortable leaning that there would be no show of cheirus in doing so. Thus, even after the rebbi is mochel on his kavod, there would be no strict chiyuv to lean.

However, upon further iyun, this would appear to be impossible, as the Aruch Hashulchan elsewhere (ibid. 6) rules that women are exempt from heseibah at the Seder because it is unnatural for them to lean to the side, reflecting the opinion of the Rif and the She‘ilto, in contrast to the aforementioned Rama, who explains women are patur because of the Ravyah’s opinion. In fact, the Aruch Hashulchan actually asks a kashya on this shittah of the Rama, since if the reason women do not lean is because leaning is not a show of freedom nowadays, then even men should be patur. Thus, we see that the Aruch Hashulchan cannot hold like the Ravyah, and our question returns: why would the Aruch Hashulchan not maintain that there is a chiyuv for a talmid to do heseibah once he gets permission from his rebbi? Additionally, the Mishnah Berurah implies that he agrees with the Rama’s opinion based on the Ravyah, as he quotes none of the authorities who argue. If this is so, why would the Mishnah Berurah not pasken that whether or not to lean is the choice of the talmid, if he agrees that leaning does not necessarily show cheirus nowadays?

Perhaps we can explain these two opinions in the poskim as follows: The shittah of the Ravyah would appear to be based on two fundamental assumptions. First, it assumes that the primary purpose of heseibah at the Seder is to demonstrate cheirus, and second, it assumes that since we are not accustomed to lean nowadays, our leaning is not called “derech cheirus”, and as such, we are not obligated to lean nowadays. Thus, there are two ways to understand why most other rishonim disagree with the Ravyah - they either disagree with the first assumption, or the second. According to the Aruch Hashulchan, all of the Rishonim agree with the first point in the Ravyah, but disagree with the second. In other words, they agree that heseibah is intended for cheirus, but they argue that since nowadays, there are still some people who lean from time to time, leaning is still considered derech cheirus, and as such remains an obligation. Thus, if a talmid feels uncomfortable leaning before his rebbi, the Aruch Hashulchan holds that he is patur, since even according to those rishonim who argue on the Ravyah, the purpose of leaning is to show freedom, and if the talmid feels uncomfortable, this is no show of freedom! In fact, this is similar to the reason which the Rif and She‘ilot give for why women are patur; since they are not accustomed to leaning at all, this is not deemed to be derech cheirus for them. Similarly, since a talmid is not accustomed to leaning at all before his rebbi, even if his rebbi gives him permission to lean, he still may choose whether or not he wishes to do so.

For the Mishnah Berurah, however, another explanation is required. Tosfos to Maseches Megillah (4a) asks why the Gemara (Psachim 43b) uses a special derashah to learn that women are required to eat matzah, from the fact that everyone who is included in the issur to eat chametz is obligated to eat matzah. Tosfos wonders why the Gemara did not say women are obligated to eat matzah based on the principle of af hein hayu bi’oso haneis, that women were involved in the miracle of Pesach, just like this principle obligates them to hear megillah on Purim! Rav Moshe Soloveitchik zt”l famously explained that the principle of af hein hayu bi’oso haneis only works to obligate women in mitzvos which are based on pirsumei nissah, publicizing the miracle, but not to obligate them in mitzvos which are simply intended to remember a miracle. Thus, since matzah is not a mitzvah based on pirsumei nissah, women would not be obligated based on the rule of af hein hayu bi’oso haneis, and a separate possuk is necessary. We can add that the reason why women are obligated in mitzvos of pirsumei nissah is because these mitzvos are performed out of hakaras hatov for the miracle which was done, and as such, women are also required to show gratitude for miracles they were involved in. However, for mitzvos which are simply about recalling a miracle, there is no aspect of gratitude for the miracle, and these mitzvos are therefore considered like any other time-bound positive mitzvah, from which women are exempt.
Based on this, Rav Yoshe Ber Soloveitchik zt"l (the Rav) explained that the Ravyah is of the opinion that heseibah is fundamentally about pirsumei nissah, but since nowadays there is no show of freedom in leaning, this chiyuv disappears. However, the other rishonim maintain that there is also an aspect of remembering the miracle involved in leaning, and as such, the chiyuv remains nowadays, since although the pirsumei nissah no longer applies, the zecher lineis does. This is why the Rama ruled that only women are patur from heseibah nowadays, since according to the rishonim who argue on the Ravyah, the only obligation nowadays comes from zecher lineis, which only women are exempt from. In regards to pirsum haneis, all agree with the Ravyah that no obligation exists.

Using this distinction, we can explain the reasoning of the Mishnah Berurah. Although the Mishnah Berurah agrees that women are patur from heseibah based on the Ravyah, this is only because women are only obligated in the pirsumei nissah, which no longer applies nowadays. However, the Mishnah Berurah would maintain that there is still an aspect of zecher lineis, which causes the mitzvah of heseibah to remain in effect even nowadays. Thus, even though the talmid may be exempt from the pirsumei nissah based on his awe of his rebbi, the requirement of zecher lineis remains in full force. As a result, the Mishnah Berurah rules that if the rebbi foregoes his kavod, the talmid is obligated to lean, based on the requirement of zecher lineis.

However, since the Aruch Hashulchan maintains that according to all rishonim, the only obligation of heseibah comes from the feeling of cheirus (as we explained above), once the talmid no longer feels free by leaning, he is patur from doing so even if his rebbi allows him to.
"Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine. Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has chosen us from all peoples and has raised us above all tongues and has sanctified us with His commandments. And You have given us, Lord our God, [Sabbaths for rest], appointed times for happiness, holidays and special times for joy, [this Sabbath day, and] this Festival of Matzos, our season of freedom [in love] a holy convocation in memory of the Exodus from Egypt. For You have chosen us and sanctified us above all peoples. In Your gracious love, You granted us Your [holy Sabbath, and] special times for happiness and joy. Blessed are You, O Lord, who sanctifies [the Sabbath,] Israel, and the appointed times."

In the text of the kiddush for the night of Pesach, we find that the word bi’ahavah - with love - is already a part of the blessing. However, when Pesach falls out on Shabbos, we add an additional instance of this word. What is the reason for this addition?

Nechama Lebowitz, in her Haggadah, explains based on the Gemara in Maseches Shabbos (10b) which states that God gave Shabbos as a gift to the Jewish People. The Gemara says that Hashem said the following: matanah tovah yesh li bibeis ginosai, ushmo Shabbos - I have a wonderful gift in my storehouse, and its name is Shabbos. Of course, Hashem gave this gift to the am hanivchar, Bnei Yisroel. The Gemara also mentions after this that one who gives a gift to his friend must tell them. Based on this, a question emerges - why are we told to give tzedakah anonymously, if we are also supposed to inform recipients of who gave them their gift? Tosfos on this Gemara explains that it is only when a gift is given out of love that the giver is required to inform the recipient. Nechama Leibowitz explains, based on this Tosafos, the extra word of bi’ahavah. Since God gave the Jewish people Shabbos as a gift out of love, this needs to be proclaimed. And lest anyone think that Hashem gave us the Shabbos as a charitable donation, we declare that it was given bi’ahavah - as a gift to the Jewish people, based on His incredible love for us. The word of bi’ahavah sets the tone and perspective for the entire rest of the Seder, as we spend the night focusing on and thanking Hashem for his tremendous love for His nation.
Urchatz

Akiva Kra ('21)

During Urchatz, we wash our hands in preparation for the karpas. This idea is originally found in Maseches Pesachim (115a), where the Gemara says that food which was dipped into liquid required hand washing. Since the karpas consists of a vegetable dipped in saltwater, we wash our hands now. It is brought down in Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 158:4) that no berachah is recited over this hand washing. However, it might be worth wondering why we wash our hands before eating a vegetable dipped in liquid during the Seder, even though we do not do it the rest of the year.

One answer to this question comes from the Pele Yoetz. He suggests that we perform this act because we are extra stringent on the night of the Seder. We are stringent for the most minor technicalities, just as we are meticulous about the smallest piece of chametz.

A different answer is provided by the Chiddushei HaRim and the Avnei Nezer. Perhaps the question is not “why do we wash before eating a vegetable”, but “why do we wash after Kadeish”. To answer this, they point out that Urchatz represents purification from evil, an aspect of sur mei’ra (turn away from evil). Kadeish, on the other hand, represents holiness and sanctification, an action of asei tov (do good). Traditionally, when one wants to grow, they first remove the bad from themselves, and then work on the good. After all, if one wants to purify themselves in a mikvah, they cannot do so while still holding onto something tamei. However, we wash after Kadeish to demonstrate something special about the Seder. On Pesach night, anyone can grow! We wash after kiddush to show that, during the Seder, turning away from evil (represented by Urchatz) does not need to come before doing good (represented by Kadeish). Anyone who sits at the Seder table could improve in at least one aspect of their lives. What the Chiddushei HaRim and Avnei Nezer teach is that at the Seder, anybody can change.

Perhaps, this answer is no different from that of the Pele Yoetz who says we are extra meticulous at the Seder. This can be suggested when we consider a question on the Pele Yoetz’s explanation of Urchatz. If the purpose of washing before Karpas is to be extra meticulous on Pesach, just as we are for chametz, then why do we only keep this one, relatively minor stringency of washing before eating wet vegetables? Why would we not keep many more chumros and extra details of halachah to a greater degree?

Maybe the answer is based on that of the Chiddushei HaRim and Avnei Nezer, that we can do good without focusing on the bad. Many Jews are not meticulous in fulfilling every halachah and stringency. It would almost be laughable if someone suggested that the Jewish nation, including those barely fulfilling any mitzvos, perform one of the least kept stringencies, namely, washing before vegetables. However, this could be the exact reason we do it, to prove that everyone can be anything at the Seder night. The answer to the question about why we are not stringent the whole Pesach is because only at the Seder can one do good if they have not yet turned away from bad. Additionally, we are not stringent regarding other stringencies because this is as stringent as it gets. We are using one example to prove a point! You can do it! You can grow tremendously at the Seder.

The potential for growth on the night of the Seder is unfathomable. May we all be able to take advantage of this and gain from our experience Pesach night.
Rav Herschel Schachter explains the background of *Urchatz* in the *Seder*, and why or why not it is incorporated in daily life as well:

"As a result of a *gezeirah dirabanan*, stam yadayim (unrinsed hands) carry *tumah* as a *sheini litumah* (second-degree impurity). There is a further *gezeirah dirabanan* that any *tumah* that renders *terumah* unfit - namely, a *sheini litumah* - renders liquids a *rishon litumah* (first-degree impurity) upon contact (*Mishnah Parah* 8:7), and that liquid can then transfer *tumah* to food on contact (*Shabbos* 14a·14b). The Chachamim enacted a *takanah* requiring *netilas yadayim* before handling a *davar shetibulo bimashkeh* (a food dipped in liquid) to prevent transfer of *tumah* from the hands to the food through the medium of the liquid.

Although *Tosfos* (*Pesachim* 115a, *d"h kol) holds that this *takanah* does not apply nowadays, when we are not careful to avoid eating *tamei* food, most *Rishonim* maintain that the Chachamim instituted washing before dipping food into a liquid in the same manner as they did for bread. Therefore, in the case of *davar shetibulo bimashkeh*, we act *lichumrah* in both directions: We wash *netilas yadayim* to satisfy the majority opinion, but we do not recite *berachah*, since, according to *Tosfos*, such a *berachah* would be *livatalah* (*Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim* 158:4).

In fact, the Taz (473:6) criticizes those who are not careful to wash before eating a food that has been dipped into liquid or before eating fruits or vegetables that are still wet after being washed. He writes that we should wash *netilas yadayim* all year round, just as we do on the *Seder* night during *Urchatz*.

The Netziv (*Imrei Shefer, Pesichah*), however, defends the common practice not to wash for a *davar shetibulo bimashkeh*, following the opinion of *Tosfos*. He writes that we wash our hands on *Seder* night before dipping the *Karpas* into salt-water because of a different reason - as a *zecher liMikdash* (a remembrance of the *Beis Hamikdash*). We conduct ourselves during the *Seder* the same way that the people did at the time that the *Korban Pesach* was eaten, and at that time, *netilas yadayim* was necessary to avoid the state of *tumah* described above. This is the reason that some have the practice that only the father of the household performs *Urchatz*, although the common practice is that everyone washes without a *berachah* before karpas."

In the notes of my grandfather, Rabbi Dr. Shmuel Morell, he quotes from one of his favorite *seforim* for *Pesach* by Rabbi Yosef Tabori titled "*Pesach Doros*". There, Rabbi Tabori explains a practical reason for the *minhag* quoted by the Netziv "that some have the practice that only the father of the household performs *Urchatz*.

He states that this can be explained by looking at what we see as a custom of only German Jews today, that really was a custom in all of European Jewry. People would first wash their hands, then make *kiddush*, then they would make *hamotzi*. My grandfather explains that this idea could be traced back to Rabbeinu Yoel in the 13th century. Rabbeinu Yoel gives a few reasons for this practice, but Rabbi Tabori chooses one to discuss here in order to prove a point. Rabbi Tabori brings the explanation that when Chazal introduced the *minhag* of getting up after *kiddush* to wash, they were sitting at small, moveable tables, and a waiter would bring water to wash with at your seat. But at the time of Rabbeinu Yoel in Europe, they sat by big tables which were not movable, and they didn’t have waiters bringing them water. So, they instituted the *minhag* of washing before *kiddush*, because *kiddush* was a part of the meal, so it wouldn’t be a significant *hefshek* between the washing and the bread.

However, there is an issue by the *Seder*, because there is a significant *hefshek* between *kiddush* and the
meal. So in those communities, they would have the leader of the Seder wash his hands after kiddush but before karpas with a waiter as derech cheirus, because it was easy for a waiter to reach the head of the table. However, everyone else would wash before kiddush. Rabbi Tabori concludes that over time, a minhag had developed that in many places only the leader of the Seder would wash the first washing.

My grandfather finishes off the piece by explaining that most people have returned to the old minhag of everyone washing at the allotted time of Urchatz, and that it is also the minhag of our family.
Karpas

Eitan Rochwarger ('23)

The Karpas, which comes after kiddush and washing our hands, seems to be the first out of the ordinary part of the Seder. It is so strange that it is included as one of the four questions asked during the Mah Nishtanah. So, why is it that we dip a vegetable in saltwater and eat it? The Rambam (Hilchos Chametz Umatzah 7:7) writes "when a person feasts on this night, he must eat and drink while he is reclining in the manner of free men". Everything we eat at the Seder is meant to represent our slavery and freedom, so we eat saltwater to remind us of the bitterness of oppression before we were freed. There are also some opinions who say that the only purpose of the Karpas is to give another thing for the children to ask about during the Mah Nishtanah. However, there is a brilliant explanation from historian Solomon Zeitlin, who said that the Karpas was intended as a reminder of the dipping of the blood which was performed as part of the ritual of the Korban Pesach. This explains why we dip, but why do we specifically dip a vegetable?

The only place in Tanach where the word "karpas" is used is in Megillas Esther, where the possuk says "chur karpas utecheiles" - white cotton and blue wool (Esther 1:6). This possuk in Megillas Esther is brought up in Maseches Megillah (12a) when trying to understand what the word "chur" means. The Gemara quotes the opinion of Rabbi Yosi ben Channah that karpas are cushions of velvet. This use of the word is mirrored in the story of the sale of Yosef, where Rashi understands that Yosef’s special coat, his kesones pasim, comes from the same root as this word karpas in Megillas Esther. So, what is the connection between the karpas which translates to fancy pieces of fabric and clothing, and the vegetables we eat at the Seder?

Rav Shlomo Kluger gives a brilliant answer to this question. He believes that the origin of this term is from the Persian word karaf, which means a fine piece of fabric, but can also mean parsley or some other leafy vegetable. He writes that the kesones pasim was the catalyst for the entire galus in Mitzrayim - if Yaakov would not have prioritized one son over all his others, the Egyptian slavery would never have happened. When the Rabbis saw that the coat was made with this karpas fabric, they decided to add a practice with a green vegetable, as the two words are related.

What emerges is an amazing understanding not only of the meaning of Karpas, but of its place in the Seder. As we are beginning the process of telling the story of Yetzias Mitzrayim, we begin with the very beginning of the exile, the sale of Yosef due to his brother’s jealousy of his kesones pasim. This teaches us a brilliant lesson which can carry us through the rest of the Seder: the most insignificant actions, such as Yaakov giving a coat to his son, can have far-reaching effects which we never could have imagined. Reminding ourselves of Yosef’s coat right at the outset of the Seder reminds us that the entire story was in Hashem's hands from the first moment, as only He could have orchestrated events to play out as they did. This is a lesson which we should keep in mind as we tell the rest of the story of Yetzias Mitzrayim.
Yachatz

Aaron Sisser (’23)

In shiur this year, we are learning Maseches Pesachim. We have been learning many laws about what to do in the days leading up to Pesach, and also how to act on the holiday itself. In Maseches Pesachim, on Daf 114a, we learn an interesting rule about the Seder. The mishnah states three words that arouse questions of Rishonim. These words are, “heivihu lifanav matzah”, which translates to “and they brought before him matzah”, with the “him” here being the leader of the Seder. Thus, the mishnah teaches that after Karpas, they should bring matzah before the ba’al habayis. Tosfos asks a question on this mishnah: how can the mishnah be telling us that the matzah should be brought before the leader of the Seder, if the matzah has been in front of him for the entire Seder up until now? The mishnah implies that there has been no matzah at the table until now, but we know this is not true!

Tosfos answers as follows. One of the main mitzvos that we are obligated to accomplish on the Seder night is the mitzvah of “vihigadita libincha”. This mitzvah relates to us that parents at a Seder should teach to their children about all the amazing, wondrous miracles that Hashem performed on behalf of Am Yisroel. We perform this mitzvah throughout the Seder in many different ways. Many times throughout the Seder, we do things not in the way that we normally do throughout the year. One of the main reasons we do this is so that “the children will ask”. Then, once the children ask their parents why we are doing these unusual things, their parents will be able to fulfil their obligation to teach their children the story of Yetzias Mitzrayim. This concept is famously highlighted in the “Mah Nishtanah”, the four questions which children are meant to ask their parents about various anomalies on the Seder night. All of these questions are in the Haggadah so that the children will ask their parents. Then, after the Mah Nishtanah has been said, the children are answered with the next words in the Haggadah: Avadim Hayinu LiPharoh BiMitzrayim - we were slaves to Pharoh in Mitzrayim. This example illustrates one of the key concepts at the Seder - parents educating their children on why we celebrate Pesach.

Now, let us look back at our sugya in Maseches Pesachim. We are faced with the dilemma of how matzah can be brought out to the leader of the Seder if it was already there to begin with? Tosfos beautifully answers this question using the concept that we have just learned of vihigadita libinchach. Tosfos says that the “shulchan” - table - of the leader of the Seder is removed right after Karpas. (In olden times, each person at the Seder - and at other meals - used to have their own small table.) Tosfos says that this relates back to our aforementioned concept of getting the children to ask; the reason why we remove the table of the ba’al habayis is so that the children will ask why we are doing this, and then the parents will be able to answer the children. The parents can answer that we will bring it back for the second dipping. Then in an action which adds onto this mitzvah, the children will ask the parents a follow-up question: why are we doing two dippings? These questions from the child will give the parents an opportunity to be yoztai their mitzvah of vihigadita libincha in a spectacular way! Tosfos' answer fantastically shows the great lengths that we go to in order to better be mikayem the mitzvah of vihigadita libincha.

Furthermore, Tosfos adds on an amazing pshat which makes the whole scenario that much more beautiful. We know matzah is known as lechem oni, which means poor man’s bread. However, the Hebrew
shoresh (root) of the word oni can also be used to mean a response or answer to a question. Tosfos notes that in this light, we can understand that matzah is the bread which provokes an answer or response. This shows us that when the children ask a question, the matzah should be on the table. This pshat makes the scenario that much more incredible. When the children ask these questions, the matzah should be on the table in order to instigate the response of the parents, so that they will be able to be mikayem their obligation with the “bread of answers” on the table.

One last inyan which we learn from this sugya is about our original meaning of Lechem Oni - poor man's bread. We know that a poor man would not eat his whole ration of matzah at once. He spreads his food out over as long a time as he is able to, so that it can last him as long as possible. This is one reason why we break the middle matzah at Yachatz, to symbolize how poor men would ration out their supply of food over longer periods of time, and not just eat it all at once. We put away some of the matzah for later, just as a poor man would do with his bread.

This sugya teaches us the tremendous depth contained in every action we do at the Seder, as even as simple an act as bringing out the matzah after Karpas can have levels and levels of meaning. This year, on Seder night, we should look carefully at all of the things that we do and see how we can learn from them! Thank you to my amazing rebbi, Rabbi Kerner, for teaching me this sugya in such a spectacular fashion! Wishing everyone a happy Seder night, and a chag sameach!
Ha Lachma Anya

Avraham Friedenberg ('22)

The passage of Ha Lachma Anya can seem quite perplexing at first glance, but after taking a deeper look, we can find many levels of meaning hidden within this passage. Many meforshim and rabbonim touch upon different ideas and understandings of Ha Lachma Anya.

Rav Yosef Dov Halevi Soloveitchik ("The Rav"): Rav Yosef Dov Halevi Soloveitchik asked a few underlining questions on Ha Lachma Anya. Firstly, how come we are inviting people to our Pesach Seder after it has already begun? We have already drunk the first of four cups of wine (that being kiddush), and the Seder is already well underway, so why are we only now inviting people to join us? Furthermore, if we are truly interested in inviting people, why are we making this declaration in front of the already invited guests? If we are looking to invite those who may not have a Seder to attend, or those in need, why don’t we leave our houses and offer a sincere invitation to those in need, outside? What is the meaning of this passage?

The Rav explains that this invitation is a symbolic manifestation of our new-found freedom. A slave does not have the ability to engage in the mitzvah of hachnasas orchim, inviting guests, because he simply does not own any possessions. Everything a slave owns becomes the property of his master. Furthermore, anything that a slave manages to acquire and hide from his master, is kept to himself, since he worries that if he shares it with others, he will be compromising his own existence.

In this section of Ha Lachma Anya, we make two profound statements: I am free, and I have the inner strength to share with and care for others. I am no longer a slave who is solely focused on survival; I am free and can look out for the needs of others. All who are in need - I can help - I am free.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks: At the start of Ha Lachma Anya, we explain that this bread (the matzah) is the bread of oppression which our fathers ate in Mitzrayim, and continue to say that all who are hungry should come in and eat. Rabbi Sacks brings up the following question: What type of hospitality is offering the hungry the taste of suffering? If matzah is the bread of the poor man, why would we offer it to those who are already downtrodden?

Matzah represents two things: it is the food of slaves, and it is the bread which was eaten by the Bnei Yisroel as they left Mitzrayim into freedom. What transforms the bread of oppression into the bread of freedom, is the willingness to share it with others. Sharing food is the first act through which slaves become free men. One who fears tomorrow does not offer his bread to others. However, one who is willing to divide his food with a stranger has shown himself to be capable of fellowship and faith, the two things from which hope is born.

This is why, explains Rabbi Sacks, we begin the Seder by inviting others to join us. Bread shared is no longer the bread of oppression. Reaching out to others, giving help to the needy and other similar acts of kindness, brings freedom into the world.

Rabbi Yochanan Zweig:
At the beginning of Ha Lachma Anya, we invite whoever is hungry to come and eat, and whoever is in need for a place to eat the Korban Pesach to join. This invitation, however, appears to be presented at the wrong time, as kiddush has already been made, and in the wrong place, as we are sitting in the privacy of our homes. In addition, our invitation to take part of the Korban Pesach is moot, as anyone whom we did not have in mind while the korban was slaughtered earlier in the day cannot fulfil their obligation with our sacrifice. As such, what purpose do these invitations serve?

Rabbi Zweig explains that the Pesach Seder is a celebration of our redemption, and we are all guests of honor. To prevent the guests from feeling beholden to the host, which would inhibit their participation in the Seder, we begin by allowing guests to invite others. The Gemara says “ein oreyach machnis oreyach” - “a guest is not permitted to invite other guests” (Bava Basra 98b). However, a guest of honor has the right to invite whomever he chooses. The message we are relaying to the participants of the Seder is they are not all guests beholden to the host, but rather, they are all guests of honor, celebrating their own cheirus. It is necessary for the guests to feel comfortable, for they too have the mitzvah of sippur yetzias Mitzrayim, telling the story of the redemption from Egypt, which requires speaking freely and engaging in discussions on Seder night. Likewise, the Tosfos Yom Tov had a custom to spill wine on the clean tablecloth to help the guests feel at ease. The purpose of the invitation is not for the guests who are absent, but rather for the guests already at our tables.
The passage of Ha Lachma Anya appears to be constructed of three unrelated sentences. We begin by declaring that the matzah is the bread of affliction, which our forefathers ate while they were in Mitzrayim. We then shift to inviting anyone who needs to come eat and make their Pesach Seder. Finally, we conclude by saying that while this year we are slaves and in galus, next year we will be free in Eretz Yisroel. What is the connection between these three ideas? Additionally, why do we refer to ourselves as slaves on the night of the Seder, which is all about celebrating our freedom from the oppression of Mitzrayim?

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

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

Pesach is a holiday defined by times. Hashem gave beis din the power to declare the months of the year whenever we choose, and all the yamim tovim are placed based on beis din’s decision. However, the one condition is that Pesach must always fall out in the springtime. The yom tov of Pesach is the only time in which the Torah explicitly dictates that a yom tov must fall out in a certain season, and our entire calendar is based around fulfilling this condition. The laws of the holiday itself are also even more time-related than usual; we must bake matzah before eighteen minutes, stop eating chametz at the fourth hour, burn it at the sixth, start the Seder right after tzeis hakochavim, and so on. The yom tov of Pesach is about submitting ourselves to Hashem’s will and following what he wants, not vice-versa.

This is why the Korban Pesach was designed to take the Jews away from avodah zarah. The service of Pesach, with all its time-oriented restrictions, is meant to remind us that our time is not our own. Each of us has a job to do, and it is up to us to utilize all of our strengths to do what Hashem wants of us, not the other way around. Perhaps this is why, when rebuking Bnei Yisroel for worshipping Ba’al, Eliyahu Hanavi said רְדוֹנֵיכֶז תָּכְּנָה הַכְּפִּיר נִכְּבָּשָׁהוּ- Until when will you dance between two ideas? Eliyahu was asking how long the Jews would continue to ignore this idea of Pesach and insist their time was their own. [Incidentally, the Rebbe Reb Bunim once said that this possuk was meant to ask how long the Jews would neglect the two se’ifim, chapters, in Shulchan Aruch, which talk about all of our intentions being for the sake of Heaven].

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

With these ideas, we can answer our original questions. We begin Ha Lachma Anya with a declaration
about the matzah, which must be made hastily, stating that it is “the bread of our affliction”. In truth, it is hard to submit ourselves fully to Hashem and we often feel as though the mitzvos are a burden on us, chas vishalom. We thus extend the opportunity to ourselves; come see how satisfying and fulfilling a life of Pesach, of using our time to serve Hashem, can truly be. We then conclude that we are now slaves, but we will soon be free. A slave is not a master of his own time. He is forced to do his master’s bidding whenever the master wants, and he therefore resents his master. We, at the time of the Seder, are slaves to Ba’al, thinking that we should be able to dictate our own lives and fed up with constantly serving Hashem. However, when we eat the Korban Pesach and draw ourselves away from the mindset of Ba’al, of being our own master, we begin to see that in truth, we are more free than if we were merely slaves to our own desires.
Benny Cohen ('23)

We are all very familiar with the text of Ha Lachma Anya, which concludes by saying "this year we are here, and next year we should be in Eretz Yisroel, this year we are slaves and next year we should be free". Many meforshim ask why the Ba'al Haggadah repeated himself, as these two statements are seemingly redundant. The Chanukas Hatorah (Rav Yehoshua Heschel) gives an ingenious explanation, that we are actually expressing two distinct hopes for the coming year. Rav Heschel explains that there is a well known machlokes in Maseches Rosh Hashanah about when the Moshiach will come. Rabi Yehoshua maintains that Moshiach will come in the month of Nissan, and Rabi Eliezer holds that it will come in Tishrei. Rav Heschel also points out that the slavery in Mitzrayim ended six months before the final redemption took place. Based on this, we can now explain the seemingly redundant phrases in Ha Lachma Anya. According to Rabi Yehoshua, the Moshiach will come in Nissan, and we therefore pray that at this time next year (Nissan), we should be in Eretz Yisroel. However, according to Rabi Eliezer, Moshiach is destined to come in Tishrei, so to fulfil this opinion, we pray that this time next year, we should be free from oppression, as a preparation for the Redemption which will come six months later in Tishrei. Since we are currently sitting at the Seder and the foreign oppression has not yet ended, we are confident that, at least in Rabi Eliezer's view, Moshiach will likely not arrive the next Tishrei. Thus, we pray that if Rabi Eliezer is correct, we should merit to be free from oppression by the time of the next Seder, such that we will be prepared to greet the Moshiach when it arrives in Tishrei. This year, let us all focus with extra concentration during this part of Ha Lachma Anya, so we may merit to have our Seder next year in Yerushalayim, bimheirah biyameinu!
Mah Nishtanah

Dovid Tanner ('18)

We often call Mah Nishtanah “The Four Questions.” Indeed, many haggados translate the opening phrase as “Why is this night different from all other nights?” However, were that to be the intended meaning, the text should have read not “mah”, but “lamah.” Mah does not mean “why,” but “what” or “how.” The Aruch Hashulchan (Orach Chayim 473:22) therefore explains that in this context, mah is an expression of wonder, such as “mah rabu ma’asecha Hashem” - How great are your works Hashem! The correct translation, then, is not “why is this night different...” but “how different this night is from all other nights!” The text continues by noting some of the differences present on the night of Pesach. Implicitly, the same question is being asked—why is this night so different—but it lies in the background, provoked by the amazed observation, “How different this night is!” This should lead us to wonder: what is the answer to the child’s implicit question? Why indeed is the Seder night so very different?

Rabbi Chaim Friedlander, in Sifsei Chayim, explains the symbolism of chametz and matzah. He explains that chametz forms as a result of a natural process. It symbolizes the natural order, whose predictability and orderliness sometimes hides Hashem’s involvement. Matzah, on the other hand, in which leavening is not given time to occur, embodies quickness, almost suddenness—something seemingly beyond time, miraculous, reminding us of the haste in which we left Mitzrayim (Devarim 16:3). It symbolizes the direct involvement of Hashem beyond natural processes, and reminds us that Hashem’s interaction with His universe always lies behind the veil of the natural order.

Based on this explanation of Rabbi Friedlander, Rabbi Tanchum Cohen addressed a glaring question about the symbolism of chametz. The Gemara in Berachos (17a) refers to the yetzer hara as “se’or she’b’isah, the chametz in the dough.” Rabbi Friedlander also quotes the Zohar as associating chametz with the yetzer hara. But if chametz symbolizes the yetzer hara, why is it only forbidden on Pesach? Why are we comfortable with the symbol of the evil inclination the rest of the year?! Perhaps with the Sifsei Chaim’s explanation, we can understand: chametz symbolizes the natural order. While the hiddenness of God in nature can unfortunately lead one to forget Hashem, it need not. With the right perspective, appreciation of the beautiful world we live in can enhance our Avodas Hashem (cf. Rambam Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah 2:2). But Chazal portray chametz as the yetzer hara because all too often, the natural order of things hides our perception of Hakadosh Baruch Hu, and enables our yetzer hara to entice us into sinning by forgetting that “ayin ro’eh vi’ozen shama’as” - an eye [always] watches and an ear [always] hears (Avos 2:1)."

In describing the incredible nature of Kriyas Yam Suf, Chazal comment that “a maidservant saw at [the splitting of] the sea what Yechezkel and all the other nevi’im never saw [in their prophetic visions] (Mechilta Shemos 15:2).” The Mechilta goes on to give a mashal of a king visiting a province, with an accompaniment of warriors to his right and left and legions of soldiers in front of and behind him. All the people coming to see the king ask each other, “Where is the king?” Since he is flesh-and-blood, like them, they cannot immediately make out who the king is. But when Hakadosh Baruch Hu was revealed to Bnei Yisroel at the sea, no one asked “Where is the king?” They all recognized Him and unanimously said “zeh Keili v’anveihu”, this is my God and I will glorify Him” (ibid.). Why does the Mechilta specify that Bnei Yis-
roel at the Yam Suf saw what Yechezkel did not? Why not just say “what no navi saw” (as it in fact does after mentioning Yechezkel)?

Yechezkel's vision of the Ma’aseh Merkavah is one of the most esoteric parts of Tanach, to the extent that the mishnah in Chagigah (13a) says it may not be fully explained even to an individual student. However, the classical meforshim such as Rashi and Radak do not skip it in their commentaries on Yechezkel, suggesting that it is possible to learn it on a basic peshat level. What one notices upon a cursory examination of the pesukim (immediately after noticing that one understands almost nothing) is how it appears to be describing a process. In describing the angels known as the Chayos, Yechezkel says

“...Wherever the spirit was minded to go, they went; they turned not when they went....And when the Chayos moved, the Ofanim went by them: and when the Chayos were lifted up from the earth, the Ofanim were lifted up....When [the Chayos] moved, [the Ofanim] moved; and when those stood still, these stood still; and when those were lifted up from the earth, the Ofanim were lifted up along with them: for the spirit of the Chayos was in the Ofanim:…” (Yechezkel 1:12, 19, 21)

The Rambam in Moreh Nevuchim interprets Ma’aseh Merkavah as detailing the metaphysical functioning of the world including astronomical and elemental entities, while most others understand it as referring to deep Kabbalistic concepts. Either way, the theme of process is clear. There is movement and ceasing of movement, remaining on the ground and being lifted up. It is an intricate and involved process. Perhaps this is why the Mechilta mentioned Yechezkel by name: even the Ma’aseh Merkavah, one of the most detailed and esoteric depictions of how Hashem interacts with the world, was not as great as Kriyas Yam Suf. Because while Ma’aseh Merkavah may have been more detailed, it could only explain the Yad Hashem as part of a process. During Kriyas Yam Suf, however, there was no need for process. There was a singular moment of unparalleled clarity, when Hashem allowed the veil of nature to fall and His omnipotence to be revealed, in which even the shifchah could say, with full confidence, “zeh Keili v’anveihu.”

Maybe this is the answer to the child’s wondrous proclamation of "mah nishtanah!" The rest of the Haggadah recounts the story of our subjugation and redemption from Mitzrayim, culminating in the declaration "And Hashem brought us forth from Egypt, not by means of an angel, nor by means of a seraph, nor by means of a messenger: but the most Holy, blessed be He, Himself, in His glory."

The miracles of the makkos and Kriyas Yam Suf were examples of complete suspension of the natural order of the universe, occasions where Hashem revealed himself not through nature but beyond and above nature. Our mission is to take those moments of absolute clarity and use them to see Hashem the rest of the time, when He allows nature to potentially conceal His involvement. As we say Mah Nishtanah at the Seder, understanding the direct divine intervention exhibited on this night transforms Mah Nishtanah from a question to an affirmation: “How different this night is!”
Avadim Hayinu

Chaim Davidowitz ('21)

Everybody knows how we start off the beginning of Maggid with the paragraph of Avadim Hayinu. In this short passage, we relay the parallel of how we were once slaves to Pharoh in Mitzrayim, and now we are free men. While it is true that Hashem took us out from Mitzrayim and the rule of Pharoh, it is worth considering if we are really free men today. In today's day and age, we are as much slaves as we have ever been. We are slaves to our phones, slaves to our desires, and most importantly, slaves to the yetzer hara.

In Sichos Haran 6, Rav Nachman of Breslov explains how the yetzer hara is able to capture us so easily. He explains that the yetzer hara is compared to a man that walks between other men with his hand closed. This man goes to other people with a clenched fist and asks the men “what am I holding?” Rav Nachman explains that every person that is approached by this man believes that in his fist he has exactly what they have been desiring. Then the man with the clenched fist runs away, and since everyone thinks that he is holding their greatest desire, they chase after him. When he finally reveals what he was holding, the men discover that they have been fooled, and the man has been holding nothing after all. Rav Nachman equates this man to the yetzer hara. He says that the yetzer hara leads everyone to believe that he has the key to fulfill their greatest desire, so people chase after him. When they finally catch up to him, they realize that he has nothing all along. Rav Nachman recognizes this nothingness that is in the hand of the yetzer hara as the fact that a man’s desires can never truly be fulfilled.

The Zohar on Parshas Bo says the reason Mitzrayim is called Mitzrayim is because in Hebrew, it has the same letters as the word mitzarim, meaning “from narrow straits”. In Egypt, the Jews had limited freedom and were stuck under the rule of Pharoh, with no other options. In today’s day and age, we are also still slaves in Mitzrayim. We are stuck in the narrow straits of the yetzer hara's control. We are led to believe, with a closed mind, that the yetzer hara can help us fulfill our desires, whatever they may be, and then end up discovering that the yetzer hara has nothing but an empty hand. So yes, while we may not be slaves to Pharoh in Mitzrayim anymore, we are in the narrowest of straits possible. We are the furthest thing from free men. Rav Nachman understands how difficult it is to defeat this strong force, but he gives a remedy in one of his famous stories from Sipurim Maasos. The yetzer hara is a force that thrives when a person is filled with depression and sadness, as unfulfillment leads us to chase after that which we feel we lack. But when a person fights back with simchah and shirah, joy and song, he can and will win the battle. This Pesach, with Hashem’s help and with our own hishtadlus (effort), may we all have tremendous simchas hashayim and simchas yom tov, and merit to be true bnei chorin, free men, and escape from the Mitzrayim of today.
Avidan Loike ('22) & Max Korenman ('22)

The Seder, literally meaning order, follows an order of progression from slavery to freedom. A dvar Torah on Avadim Hayinu would be lacking if it didn’t speak about the Mah Nishtanah, being that Avadim Hayinu is answering the questions posed in the Mah Nishtanah. The four questions posed have to do with anomalies in the Seder night: why do we eat matzah and not bread, why do we eat marror rather than other vegetables, why do we dip vegetables in various dips two times, and why do we lean while eating? These four questions are ultimately a lead up to Avadim Hayinu which embodies a father’s obligation to teach his son the story of Bnei Yisroel’s experience in Egypt. However, with Avadim Hayinu just being a story, one has to wonder how Avadim Hayinu actually answers the questions which were just posed? The entire paragraph seems to be completely unrelated to what we were just discussing!

The answer to this question lies within the essence of the Haggadah. The main purpose of the Haggadah is to act as a springboard for parents depicting the story of Mitzrayim, helping children understand the significance of the holiday. However, the Haggadah is not meant to be the only thing which is recited at the Seder. The best proof to this is the story which follows Avadim Hayinu in the Haggadah, the story of the five Rabbis who stayed up all night discussing and learning about the story of Yetzias Mitzrayim. This conveys the fact that the Seder these Rabbis had went further, both in physical time and in spiritual connection, than the strict text of the Haggadah would call for. The Haggadah acts as a point of reference for further discussion and expansion on the story of Mitzrayim, not as a textbook to blindly be followed through the night.

This is how Avadim Hayinu is a perfect transition point from the Mah Nishtanah, as it advocates for further discourse, as well as encouraging children to pursue additional questions. The lesson this answer conveys revolves around asking questions and never being satisfied with the bare minimum. Even though Avadim Hayinu loosely answers the question portrayed in the Mah Nishtanah, it encourages the continuation of pursuing those answers to the fullest understanding. So as we begin Pesach, we should realize the importance of trying to fully understand what’s presented to you, and never be satisfied with minimal effort.
Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria

Dov Hochman (’23)

The mishnah of Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria begins with him saying that he “was like seventy years old”. As is well known, Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria was only eighteen years old when he was appointed as a rosh yeshiva, and his wife advised him not to take the job, as nobody would respect him due to his young age. The next morning, he awoke to find he had grown a long beard, such that his colleagues would now differ to his authority. Thus, he declared “I am like seventy years old”. The Siddur HaArizal says that Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria was a gilgul (reincarnation) of Shmuel Hanavi. Shmuel was 52 years old at the time of his death. At the time Rav Elazar Ben Azaria was becoming the head of the yeshiva, he was only eighteen years old, but adding the years of Shmuel Hanavi’s life gives us a total of seventy years old, which is considered a standard lifespan. Thus, when Rabi Elazar ben Azaria said “I am like seventy years old”, he was really saying that Shmuel had now lived out a full lifespan with his additional eighteen year. While this is an interesting story, why is it relevant to the theme of the Seder and the retelling of the story of Yetzias Mitzrayim?

The Haggadah spends a large portion of Maggid explaining the various punishments that the Egyptians placed on the Jews. They forced them to work all day and night, they forced them to cut their own straw to make bricks, they tried to drive a wedge between husbands and wives, and so on. However, one punishment that was a result of the various Egyptian decrees was the loss of Torah learning and the Jewish way of life.

The meforshim tell us that at the time the plagues started, the Jewish people had descended to the 49th level of impurity, and that if they had gone down even one more level they would not have been worthy of redemption. One of the reasons they fell so far was the loss of publicly available Torah learning. When Yaakov and his family went down to Mitzrayim, Yehudah was sent ahead to establish a yeshiva. Yaakov knew that the best way to ensure his family’s continued safety outside of Israel was to have learning available. However, the requirements of slavery meant that only the tribe of Levi had time to learn, as they were considered priests by Pharoh and were exempt from slavery. It wasn’t until Moshe came and saved the Jews that Torah once again became accessible to all, not just an elite few.

As such, Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah is actually the perfect tanna to be quoted in the Haggadah. He was named head of the yeshiva when Rabban Gamliel was replaced for, among other things, limiting learning to the select few who were sincere in his eyes (Berachos 28a). The Gemara also tells us that as soon as Rabbi Elazar was appointed, he removed the door from the bais medrash, and he gave permission for all students who wanted to learn to come and learn. On that day, the yeshiva added as many as seven hundred benches to make space for all the new students. Because of all the new students, the yeshiva was able to answer every unanswered question that came before the students before that day, and they learnt the entire Mishnayos Eduyos as a Gemara, which had never been done. Because Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah made the Torah Sheba’al Peh more accessible to everybody, and by definition more accessible to us, he is the appropriate tanna to learn from on the day we celebrate our freedom to once again have Torah learning available to all, not just a select few.
Baruch HaMakom

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Based On A Shiur Titled Baruch Hamakom Baruch Hu: Why Does the Haggadah Not Use "Hashem"

The Haggadah refers to Hashem consistently in a very unique way as "HaMakom," in contrast to how we refer to Him colloquially. This name is not strange or unfamiliar to us, just not used very commonly. An explanation behind the name (lit. "The Place") is: since Hashem is not only everywhere, but is the source of everything, every "location" in existence is not just inhabited by Him, but is an existential expression of Him directly. Therefore, He is truly the only real "place" where anything can exist. Why, though, does the Haggadah in particular use this interesting name in several times (eg. Baruch HaMakom, Baruch Hu, "Initially, our forefathers were idol worshippers, but the Makom has brought us closer to His service, etc.")? Furthermore, what is the reasoning behind why the Haggadah does not use HaMakom in other places, preferring Hakadosh Boruch Hu (such as in Vehi She'omdah, and later in Maggid, when we say "Hakadosh Baruch Hu calculated the amount of time we were supposed to be in Egypt, and set us free at the end...")?

First, we need to examine the Four Questions. In reality, there used to be a fifth question in the Hag- gada, as well: Why, on the Seder night, is the meat eaten (originally the Korban Pesach) roasted? The Gra writes that, in truth, there are still five questions posed among the four popularly known ones - indeed, it comes in the introduction to the questions: ma nashtana halayla hazeh mikol haleilos? How is this night different from all other nights? While related to the following four questions, this too is a question in and of itself. The Gra explains that this question is really why the mitzvos of Pesach are done exclusively at night, while on other yomim tovim, the mitzvos are performed during the day only (such as shofar and lulav). What sets the Pesach night, halaylah hazeh, from the others?

One answer comes from the Zohar - the night of the Seder is referred to there as the "laylah kayom yair" - the night which shall shine like day. Despite the late hour of the Seder, that night still possesses the characteristics of the day. At the time of the tenth and most severe plague, Hashem brightened Egypt at the midnight hour as if it was high noon. Hashem did this in order to show the Egyptians that their deities were powerless - their most esteemed god, Ra, represented by the sun, was "taken out" at night by Hashem to show Who really holds dominion over nature and everything else. This idea is further reflected in the possuk itself - "vihigadta libinchah bayom hahu," - "and you shall tell your son on that day..." regarding the mitzvah of telling over the story of Yetzias Mitzrayim, which takes place at night. In sum, the mitzvos of Pesach, which represent an enlightenment of Klal Yisroel's future following their geulah from Egypt, are done on a night which, in more ways than one, was bright as day.

To return to the original question - where else do we refer to Hashem as "HaMakom"? At the end of kri- yas haTorah, in the tefillah of acheinu kol beis yisroel, in which we ask Hashem to free our Jewish breth- ren from their bondage. Clearly, a great common denominator exists between these two usages of HaMakom - both involve situations where a person or group of people daven for salvation from imprison- ment and suffering. This stems from the Gemara that uses HaMakom in the context of both bikkur cholim and nichum aveilim. This segues into a point which Rav Soloveitchik z"l made regarding the Ge-
mara in Berachos which explains how Yaakov Avinu, by davening at Har Hamoriah, established the tefillah of ma’ariv. The possuk describes Yaakov’s action as “vayifga bamakom hahu” - “and he happened upon that place” (the Gemara relates the verb lifgoa (to meet) to davening). When did Yaakov daven there? Clearly, based on the pesukim and the Gemara, it was at nighttime, traditionally a time of distress and both figurative and literal darkness. Specifically, relative to Yaakov, it was at a time when he was in “exile” from his home, fleeing Eisav. Thus, in this third usage of HaMakom, we see once more that it involves a situation of peril and a feeling of distance from Hashem.

The Chiddushei HaRim also makes this connection to Akeidas Yitzchak. This was likely the most challenging moment in all of Avraham’s life - as if everything else he accomplished led up to it. How does the possuk describe Avraham’s approach to the mountain on which he would attempt to sacrifice his son? "Vayar es hamakom hahu merachok,” - “and he saw the place from a distance.” The Chiddushei HaRim suggests that this possuk can also be figuratively read as, “and he saw HaMakom (i.e. Hashem) from a distance (i.e. he felt distanced from Hashem in his time of distress).” We also use HaMakom when comforting mourners and visiting the sick, also in situations destined to be extremely challenging and, sometimes, spiritually disillusioning.

Based on all of this, Rav Soloveitchik explains that this is also the idea found in kedushah in Kriyas Shema and Uva Litzyon, where we say baruch kevod Hashem mimkomo - “blessed is the glory of Hashem from His Place.” This possuk is from Yechezkel, whereas the first possuk in kedushah, “kadosh kadosh kadosh, Hashem tzveakos, melo kol ha’aretz kevodo” - “Holy, holy, holy is Hashem, the God of Hosts, the entire land is filled with His glory,” is from Yeshayahu. What was the main difference between the two prophets? Yeshayahu lived in Eretz Yisroel when and where the Beis Hamikdash stood, whereas Yechezkel lived in Bavel, following the destruction of the first Beis Hamikdash. Thus, in the case of Yechezkel, who was physically and spiritually distant from the seat of Hashem’s glory, the word makom is used, once again demonstrating that the word connotes distance.

Rav Soloveitchik continues by saying that this too is the idea conveyed at the Seder. The Jews felt extremely distant from Hashem during their enslavement - to them, He was HaMakom, He who is far away, “someplace” but not anywhere readily identifiable. At our lowest point described in the Haggadah, at the 49th most severe level of impurity and riddled with idolatrous tendencies and urges, Hashem was HaMakom. Yet, still, Hashem redeemed and returned us to Him by Himself, even when He seemed as far away from us as possible. On this night truly, as the Zohar describes, does the darkness shine as light. For at our lowest point, Hashem lifted us up and gave us the Torah, the tool through which we can rise above our base nature - He allowed us to appreciate just how far away from Him and that He promises to redeem us even from the depths. This is the full expression of maschil bigenus umesayem bishvach that underscores Sippur Yetizas Mitzraim.
The Haggadah details four answers given to the questions of four types of children at the Pesach Seder: the chacham (wise son), the rasha (wicked son), the tam (simple son), and the she'eino yodea lishol (the son who does not know how to ask). Each one of the answers is tailored to the specific type of question asked, and is based on pesukim surrounding the story of Yetzias Mitzrayim. Interestingly, the answer to both the rasha and the she'eino yodea lishol contain the possuk "ba'avor zeh asah Hashem li bitzaisi miMitzrayim" - because of this, Hashem did this for me when I left Mitzrayim. Why is it that the rasha and the she'eino yodea lishol are given the same answer to their questions, even though they don't ask questions that even remotely resemble each other?

To answer this question, we must look at the context of the phrase as it is used for each son. The answer given to the rasha is that had he been in Mitzrayim, he would not have been taken out - "asah Hashem li" - that which Hashem did for me, and not you. The she'eino yodea lishol doesn't ask a question, but we tell him the same possuk, with the phrase "ba'avor zeh" (because of this) referring to the Pesach, matzah, and marror which we eat on the night of the Seder. One reason that the she'eino yodea lishol has the same answer as the rasha is because he too is a rasha. According to the Kli Yakar, the she'eino yodea lishol can be worse than the rasha, or, in the language of the Kli Yakar, a "rasha ra" (particularly evil rasha). The Kli Yakar explains that there are two types of she'eino yodea lishol: one who doesn't know how to ask, and one who is sitting at the table and purposefully being silent. This child has no derech eretz, as he wants to be so far removed from taking part in the Seder that he won't even disrespectfully ask any questions. This is also why he is called the she'eino yodea lishol (one who does not ask), and not the she'eino yodea eich lishol (one who does not know how to ask). This child is the worst child at the table. The Kli Yakar therefore says that the reason that the rasha and the she'eino yodea lishol have the same answer is that we do not know why it is that this child is not asking a question. If it is because he is a rasha ra, even worse than the normal rasha, then he will understand the hidden rebuke in the answer "asah Hashem li" - for me, and not for you. And, if the son is truly just ignorant, then the answer will suffice to teach him about the meaning of the night, without any of the negative implications, as he will not understand them.

Furthermore, the Talmud Yerushalmi, when explaining the arba banim, speaks about four sons: the chacham, rasha, tipeish, and she'eino yodea lishol. The tam, the simple son, is replaced with the tipeish, the foolish son. Why would the tam be called the foolish one, and not the she'eino yodea lishol, whom everyone can see is the most intellectually impaired one at the table? The reason is because the Yerushalmi doesn't see the she'eino yodea lishol from being foolish at all - rather, he is the farthest removed from the table in the sense that he isn't participating, not that he does not know how to ask.
The wise son, what does he say? What is this testament, these laws and ordinances which Hashem our God has commanded to us? And you shall tell him the laws of Pesach: one may not eat anything after the Pesach offering, represented by the Afikomen.

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

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

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

This presents us with two questions. Rav Menachem Mendel Schneerson, The Lubavitcher Rebbe, asks (Likutei Sichos Vol. 1 pg. 247) why the four sons are arranged in the order that they are. They are not in order of piety, since the wicked son is second, and it is not the order in which they appear in the Torah, since there the she’eino yodea lishol is first. Rather, answers Rav Schneerson, the Haggadah arranges the four sons in order of their intellectual capabilities; first the wise son, then the wicked son, followed by the simple son and the one who lacks the ability to ask. However, according to the Shemen Hatov, it would seem that the tam should be placed before the rasha, as his question is viewed more positively. In truth, what is the difference between the tam and the chacham?
The answer to this question lies in the specificity of each one's question. The tam asks, “what is this?” He is a passive learner, and cannot be bothered to form a more detailed and pointed question. In truth, his willingness to leave his question until later is not out of respect, but out of laziness; at the end of the day, the tam does not care if he receives an answer to his question, and he will continue to go with the current of things no matter what happens. The chacham and rasha, on the other hand, both ask specific questions about the rituals and practices done; the difference is that the rasha asks to challenge, while the chacham asks to learn. Thus, the rasha does indeed ask a more intelligent question than the tam, but it is asked for the wrong reasons.

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

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

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Growing up, I was privileged to travel with my family to Israel to celebrate Pesach. In our early days of flying to Israel as a large family, early check-in was a big deal. We used to religiously load up the car the night before a trek to someplace in Brooklyn to drop off our bags and collect our boarding passes some 24 hours or so before the flight. The goal was to make the night of our flight as simple as possible – we only needed to show up with our carryon luggage and head straight to the gate. It was worth the schlep the night before if it made the night of the actual flight a little bit easier.

It would seem that the Ba’al Haggadah is suggesting that early check in should, in theory, work for the mitzvah of Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim – save time on the actual night of the Seder by telling the story in the days leading up to Pesach, then skip straight to the matzah and be on your way! The entire paragraph of Yachol Meirosh Chodesh is positing that all the divrei Torah that we’re sharing at the leil haSeder could in theory be done earlier in the month, making our task on the night of the Seder that much simpler.

The logic makes sense if you see Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim as merely preparation for the other mitzvos halaylah – we want our matzah and marror to be meaningful, so we need to provide the context and background before eating them. If that is all that we are doing, by all means – start early and skip the lines. The conclusion that we reach flips everything on its head – our goal is not just to eat matzah and marror, but to use the matzah and marror to tell the story. We are not engaged in preparation for what is to come, but in the midst of the essence of then night. Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim is not simply “checking in”, but the main event itself.

Some texts of the Haggadah introduce the paragraph of Yachol Meirosh Chodesh with the words vihigadeta libincha, making it clear that the Ba’al Haggadah is choosing to be doresh the aforementioned possuk that was cited to the she’eino yodea lishol. In fact, Rashi and others understand the entire derashah in context of the she’eino yodea lishol – mainly, that the obligation to actively teach an uneducated child does not exist from rosh chodesh, nor would it apply earlier in the day. One is only obligated to teach the she’eino yodea lishol (and presumably the other sons as well) at the moment of leil haSeder, with the matzah umarror on full display.

Why is this case? If anything, we would expect that the chiyuv should start earlier than leil haSeder. If the child is in the pitiful state of she’eino yodea lishol, then there is much to teach him, and it does not seem to be effective to try to cram everything into one night. Rather, we should start teaching right after Purim, so that come leil haSeder, we should be able to build upon the previously transmitted knowledge. It seems almost irresponsible to wait until the night of the Seder!

Perhaps we can understand what is being suggested here in light of some of the Rishonim’s understanding of the proposed earlier times for the mitzvah that are later rejected. Ritva and others suggest that one would have thought that the chiyuv starts at rosh chodesh because that is when the mitzvos associated with Pesach begin – we are shoalin bihilchos haPesach already and in the midst of taking the sheep to our homes. The Machzor Vitri suggests that one would have thought that the chiyuv starts while it is still daytime because that is when the Korban Pesach is being brought. In other words, if mitzvos are being done, it only makes sense that there is a parallel obligation to educate our children as to why we are doing them.

The conclusion is that it is only at leil haSeder that there is a chiyuv to fully delve into Sippur Yetzias Mitz-
rayim because of ba’avor zeh – that there are specific mitzvos that we are charged to perform. While the braisa itself only delineates matzah umarror, the Abudraham comments that there are really many more mitzvos that set the stage for vihigadita libincha - the word zeh has a gematria of twelve, representing the twelve mitzvos to be done tonight (Go ahead, try to list the 12...that’s another Dvar Torah for another time). Only when we are fully surrounded by mitzvos like we are at leil haSeder can we effectively educate the she’eino yodea lishol. Only by placing him in an environment that is fully subsumed with structured avodas Hashem will we be successful in delivering to him the critical lessons that we so very much want him to learn. That makes the leil haSeder a truly special opportunity not to be missed.
Yishai Gross ('22)

The paragraph of *Yachol Meirosh Chodesh* discusses when the obligation begins to start discussing the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*. After dismissing the possibility that the obligation applies from Rosh Chodesh Nissan, we find that the obligation can only be fulfilled at the night of the Seder. However, there is no explanation as to why the original assumption for when the obligation begins is Rosh Chodesh. Why not, for example, thirty days before Pesach, which is when we begin to learn about the halachos of the chag?

A popular answer to this question is that Rosh Chodesh Nissan is when Bnei Yisroel were first commanded to prepare to leave Egypt. In fact, Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel said that you should begin learning about a holiday fifteen days in advance because of this (*Pesachim* 6a). However, the paragraph of *Yachol Meirosh Chodesh* comes to teach us that even this opinion is incorrect, and that the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim* must be told on the night of the Seder to fulfill the obligation.
Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim

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Based on a Shiur titled “Gratitude On The Seder Night”

What are we really supposed to gain from the Seder? What is the overarching theme of Pesach night, aside from Yetzias Mitzrayim? The Rambam, in Sefer Hamitzvos (Mitzvas Asei 157) writes that there is a mitzvah to tell over at length the story of Yetzias Mitzrayim, which is what differentiates the relation of Yetzias Mitzrayim on Seder night from the chiyuv to remember Yetzias Mitzrayim any night (as Rav Chaim Brisker famously comments). But, the Rambam ends with an interesting detail easily missed by a scanning eye - the phrase he includes in describing the praiseworthy nature of lengthening and enriching one’s recounting of Yetzias Mitzrayim is, “whoever tells the story at length and greatly expresses gratitude to Hashem….such is deserving of praise.” Clearly, the Rambam places extreme emphasis on gratitude, but what is gratitude’s role in the Seder?

One notable fragment of the Seder which features gratitude, according to one explanation, is the arba kosos (four cups of wine). The Maharsha comments regarding a Gemara in Berachos (54b) that the four cups at the Seder correspond metaphorically to the four types of people obligated to bring a Korban Todah (thanksgiving offering). This is because the Bnei Yisroel themselves satisfied all four obligatory factors in bringing the korban: they traveled by (or through) the sea, through the wilderness, were healed from their ailments (the enslavement was often life-threateningly exhausting), and were freed from prison.

The Tur also brings an interesting, but rather obscure, detail regarding the baking of the matzah. He quotes an opinion which holds that one should use exactly one isaron of flour to make each matzah - corresponding directly to the single isaron of flour used to make the lachmei todah, the loaves of bread brought along with the Korban Todah! Once again, a clear connection between the events of the Seder night and gratitude can be drawn. The Mordechai also adds that the reason we use three matzos at the Seder is to represent the three types of lachmei todah that were unleavened.

Clearly, hoda’ah, gratitude, is a central theme of the Seder night as well. Why exactly is this so? There are three potential explanations as to why this connection exists. First, when someone is openly able to thank Hashem and express gratitude to Him, they similarly confer upon themselves a greater willingness to serve Him. Of course, our ability to perform avodas Hashem is the sole reason that we are considered “free” beginning on the historic first Pesach night - free from the bondage of Egypt to serve Hashem, which is the innate true desire of every Jew. Thus, by cultivating one’s ability to thank Hashem, one is doing the same for their ability and willingness to actually serve Hashem as well, which is the very reason why He redeemed us from Egypt in the first place. Part of being an eved Hashem (servant of Hashem) is enjoying His service as well as taking joy in it, which segues into the second goal of expressing gratitude at the Seder - thanking Hashem and realizing all the good which He has done for someone will bring him joy. Leading psychologists from around the nation have all consistently found that gratitude causes one to exhibit the most elevated mental state when compared to other acts of self-care/attempts to lift one’s mood. On a similar note, and also the third motivation for gratitude constituting a central theme of the Seder, is that gratitude and giving thanks similarly help one weather the storm of
A study conducted by UC San Diego researchers working for the Wall Street Journal found that, among hospital patients suffering from heart disease, those who were instructed to keep gratitude journals suffered from less inflammation, fewer sleep disturbances, and lower levels of clinical depression.

As a final addition to this idea, the *gematria* of *marror* (446) is the same as that of *chessed shebichessed*, the first of the *sefiros* combinations enumerated among the days of *sefiras haomer* - to show that, even in our bitterest of times, by thanking *Hashem* (as we do on the *Seder* night), we can come to understand that we are truly still enjoying the utmost kindnesses from *Hashem*.
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Based on a Shiur titled "Kol Hamarbeh"

The Emek Brachah, a sefer written by a talmid of the Brisker Rov, quotes his rebbi regarding a difference between the chiyuv to mention yetzias Mitzrayim every day and the telling over of the story of yetzias Mitzrayim on the Seder night. Rav Chaim Brisker asks why exactly there is any difference between the everyday-chiyuv and the "special" one generated on the night of the Seder.

Rav Chaim gives three distinctions: 1. The everyday chiyuv is of personal nature - every individual is obligated to remind themselves of yetzias Mitzrayim, whereas by Seder night, there is a chiyuv to be maggid (tell over) the events of yetzias Mitzrayim to one’s household; 2. The everyday chiyuv only involves recounting the singular and generalized exodus from Egypt, whereas the chiyuv on Seder night involves telling over the plagues and miracles which Hashem wrought for the Bnei Yisroel; 3. The everyday chiyuv makes no mention of the specific mitzvos mentioned in the Torah concerning Seder night, such as Korban Pesach, consuming matzah, and consuming the marror, whereas the chiyuv of Seder night includes such themes as centralities.

For these three reasons, explains the Emek Brachah, we also include the mishnah in the first chapter of Maseches Brachos regarding Ben Zoma’s extrapolation from a posuk that yetzias Mitzrayim must also be mentioned every night. For the very reason that this mishnah delineates the ordinary chiyuv of remembering yetzias Mitzrayim does the Ba’al Haggadah include it at the beginning, explains Rav Chaim, to set the stage for the upcoming differences between the ordinary chiyuv and that of Seder night (eventually discussed in the main body of the Haggadah). Rav Chaim then corresponds each of his three distinctions mentioned above to specific instances in the Haggadah. First, that the chiyuv of Seder night involves telling over the story to others - this is why the passage of the four sons is brought, to illustrate that the Seder involves a live conversation, a storyteller and listeners, unlike an ordinary night. Then, that the chiyuv of Seder night involves telling the story of yetzias Mitzrayim replete with the relevant history and miracles - this is alluded to by the main body of the Haggadah, retelling the struggles of our forefathers, the subsequent redemption, and exegetical arguments regarding the plagues. Finally, that the chiyuv of Seder night involves the three principle mitzvos of the Seder (Korban Pesach, matzah, and maror) - this is why Rabban Gamliel’s braisa, which paskens that anyone who doesn’t mention those three vital concepts has not fulfilled his chiyuv of Maggid, is quoted.

The Pri Eitz Chayim, written by the Arizal, famously explains that the word “Pesach” can be broken down into two constituent parts: the words peh (mouth) and sach (speaks). This is clearly in agreement with the explanation of Rav Chaim and the Emek Brachah, that a critical concept involved in the special chiyuv of Maggid by the Seder involves telling over the story of yetzias Mitzrayim to others. Additionally, the other two ideas which Rav Chaim brought are also included, albeit more subtly, in this drush of the Arizal (since they similarly involve thoroughly speaking out the history and details of the Seder procedure).

The Maharal, in Gevuros Hashem, asks: the Gemara in Berachos (33b) writes that once, someone who
davened for the amud in front of the amora Rav Chanina amended the first berachah of Shemoneh Esrei significantly, adding numerous other lofty terms of praise for Hashem in addition to "hagadol (great), hag-ibor (mighty), vihanora (awesome)." Rav Chanina spoke to this individual following davening, and told him that even praising Hashem via the three terms used to this day is only permissible since Moshe Rabbeinu himself used them, as detailed in the Chumash. Only on his account could the Anshei Knesses Hagedolah institute their mention in davening. Thus, anything extra would constitute an improper and inappropriate form of praise for Hashem, since we, as limited humans, are so unable to properly capture the true glory of Hashem in our infinitely insufficient praises. Consequently, we limit our praises to a modest list, only said by he who was closest to perceiving such glory, and who used the terms he felt appropriate. If so, continues the Maharal with his question, why is it not only permissible but indeed praiseworthy (kol hamarbeh, harei zeh meshubach - he who [expounds the concepts of the Seder] greatly, such is praiseworthy) to lengthen one's telling over of yetzias Mitzrayim at the Seder? Shouldn't the same logic as in the aforementioned Gemara apply, that we lack the true ability to capture how great Hashem's expression of dominance and control over the world is through yetzias Mitzrayim? We should therefore minimize our recalling of it, in order not to make it seem as if we are truly describing, in full glory, the nature of Hashem (which we, as humans, simply cannot do).

The Maharal answers by drawing a clear distinction between praising Hashem and telling over the story of yetzias Mitzrayim at the Seder. When praising Hashem, the act of doing Him justice itself constitutes a simple impossibility for a human to accomplish. But, when telling over the events of yetzias Mitzrayim, our primary goal is not to praise Hashem necessarily, but more so to express our gratitude to Him for having performed great miracles for our sake. Thus, by minimizing the extent to which one recounts yetzias Mitzrayim at the Seder, he effectively expresses less gratitude to Hashem for having brought the Bnei Yisroel out of Egypt.

There is a related idea when it comes to the concepts of gratitude as a whole. In truth, there are two forms of "hoda'ah" - giving thanks, and admitting something (in the context of a court case, for example). Really, though, they are truly one in the same, since giving thanks is equivalent to admitting that you needed something from someone, much the same way one admits his guilt. But, in order to convey that intention when thanking someone, a certain very revealed sense of humility must be expressed by the one giving thanks, as he openly admits to the benefactor that he needed something from him that he could not attain on his own. This sort of humility, recognizing that one's abilities are limited (save for Hashem's), finds a place in the Seder through the matzah, which symbolizes, among other things, humility (due to being flat and reserved, unlike the "puffed-up" chametz). Thus, we see that, through eating the matzah and recognizing what it symbolizes, one is able to properly realize that he is dependent on others, and particularly Hashem, consequently giving him the key tool to giving Hashem proper thanks through the telling of yetzias Mitzrayim.
Pharoh, in the mind of Jews for generations, has been a paradigmatic villain. Rabbi Norman Lamm even says this was by design: claiming that we are never informed of Pharoh’s real name so that we avoid giving him any human psychological backdrop to the development of his evil, focusing only on his wickedness. It would then naturally follow that commentaries and common folk alike would try and read the text of the Chumash with a punishing eye, finding only fault and no mercy for Pharoh. Surprisingly, however, this is consistently not always the case.

Moshe’s most famous encounter with Pharoh is perhaps his statement of “Let my people go!” But, as with most catchphrases we remember from childhood, the real details are a little more nuanced. In Shemos 3:18, Hashem charges Moshe with the task of asking Pharoh to send Bnei Yisroel, not to leave for good, but on a three day journey. Moshe then puts forth this exact request to Pharoh (Shemos 5:3). This wording leads to an obvious question. Did Hashem really want us to just leave for three days? Was the goal not to have a geulah shleimah, a full and complete redemption?!

Rav Shmuel David Luzzato (Shadal), in his peirush on the Chumash, explains the request in logical terms. He says, “There is no doubt that this request was a trick. Of course, their intention was never to return to Egypt! After he [Pharoh] tricked and enslaved the people with no justice, one should not wonder about dealing falsely with a wicked one!” (Shadal, Shemos 3:18). Rav Luzzato’s indifference to Hashem, and by extension Moshe, lying to Pharoh, is completely understandable. After all, would any of us judge someone for lying to the Nazis to escape persecution? Pharoh is undeserving of respect, reverence, and certainly honesty.

However, some of the classical commentaries completely avoid this peshat in the request to leave for three days. Rabbeinu Bachya says, “Chas vishalom that one should think this request was trickery.” (Shemos 3:18:3) Rav Metlingberger in his Haksav Vihakabbalah says “This request was not a lie, because Moshe never explicitly said they would return after the journey. Words of falsehood did not emanate from Moshe’s lips.” (ibid.) But why? Why should we be so certain Moshe would not lie to a tyrant like Pharoh?

The same question can be raised regarding the Ramban’s explanation about what it means that Hashem “hardened” Pharoh’s heart (Shemos 14:4). The Ramban goes to lengths to explain that Hashem was in no way limiting Pharoh, but giving him opportunities for real teshuvah (Shemos 7:3). What would be so problematic about Hashem removing Pharoh’s gift of free will (as suggested by Rambam in the sixth chapter of Hilchos Teshuvah)? Was he who was so cruel in his torment above having his own freedom taken away? What caused the Ramban to view this story as Hashem going out of His way to give Pharoh chance after chance at redemption?

Finally, the same issue arises, not with commentators, but with the malachim. The Gemara in Sanhedrin (39b) provides an astonishing account of what was happening in shamayim as the Egyptians were being swallowed by the sea. The malachim, seeing the Egyptians drowning, began to sing in ecstasy! And of course, they should! The persecutors of Bnei Yisroel have now been defeated! The Gemara recounts that Hashem was perturbed by the scene the malachim were causing and said, “The work of my hands is drowning in the sea, and you will sing before Me?!” Hashem was upset at their display, but why? Hashem himself drowned them in the sea! Why should they not celebrate the downfall of such wicked people?

I believe there is a connected idea that can explain the commentaries and Gemara. Pharoh and the
Mitzri soldiers were certainly not deserving of mercy; they certainly did not deserve kindness or compassion. However, just because someone does not deserve mercy, it does not mean you should be turned into someone merciless. If compassion is clearly too high of a prize to give to someone, that does not mean you must act coldheartedly. In the opinion of the commentaries, it can be suggested, Hashem and Moshe were certainly willing to lie to Pharoh, to trick the tyrant, but they were not going to lose who they were in the process. In halachic terminology, their reluctance to lie to Pharoh was a concern of bein adam le’atzmo, and not bein adam le’chaveiro. They were not going to allow their character to be changed over someone like Pharoh. The same could be said for Hashem not wanting to mercilessly strip away Pharoh’s chance at teshuvah, or to have the malachim callously cheer at the downfall of the Mitzrim. To give up one’s own character and middos of those who are not deserving of such sacrifice, would be another victory for the enemy.
Eser Makkos

Yisrael - Dovid Rosenberg (’23)

The mishnah in Maseches Sotah (1:7) says “bimiddah she’adam moded, bah modidin lo” - with the measure that a person measures, with that he is measured. This describes how Hashem acts toward people. He treats them, in punishment or reward, the way that they have behaved. Middah kineged middah, measure for measure, is one way that we can very clearly see Hashem as He rules over the world. And naturally, this trait of Hashem’s, the trait of correspondence, is prevalent in the story of Yetzias Mitzrayim from its beginning to its end.

Before Hashem sends the makkos upon Mitzrayim, He explains in a general statement that the makkos would serve to have Mitzrayim recognize Him (Shemos 7:4). Similar statements are also found before several of the makkos individually. Regarding many of the makkos, Hashem tells Moshe to go to Pharoh and to instruct him to release Bnei Yisroel, or suffer the plague. It is in this warning for makkas arov that Moshe is instructed to tell Pharoh that “ki im eincha meshalei’ach (מְשַׁלֵּחַ) es ami hineni mashlich (מַׁשְלִיחַ) becha...es he’arov”. The message to Pharoh is that if he doesn’t send (מְשַׁלֵּחַ) the people out, Hashem will likewise send (מַׁשְלִיחַ) wild animals upon him. We thus see that Hashem’s punishments to Pharoh were exactly fitting for his crimes. (The Measure for Measure Haggadah pg. 124-125)

When Pharoh was afraid of the growth of Bnei Yisroel, he ordered that the baby boys be thrown into the Nile River (Shemos 1:10-16). Though this was his public reason, Rashi (Shemos 1:16, 22) explains that Pharoh was told by his astrologers that the savior of the Jewish people would soon be born, and water would be his downfall, so Pharoh wanted every baby boy born in Mitzrayim to be thrown into the water to prevent this. For the act of murder done by drowning, the Mitzrim drowned in the sea at Yam Suf. (The Measure for Measure Haggadah pg. 357)

One understanding of the first possuk of Shiras Hayam, “ashira laHashem ki ga’oh ga’ah sus verochevo ramah vayam” (I will sing to Hashem for He is the most elevated, horse and rider He cast into the sea), is that because the Mitzrim arrogantly elevated themselves over Bnei Yisroel, Hashem raised them even higher in their minds, in order to make the fall that much greater. Thus, the possuk reads “I will sing to Hashem for He has made the arrogant (ga’oh) haughtier (ga’ah); horse and its elevated - physically and mentally high-and-mighty - rider are tumbling down into the sea” (Kli Yakar on Shemos 15:1). For elevating themselves, the Mitzrim were punished with a great plunge into the deep.

And finally, if it is not too bold to suggest, during Makkas Arbeh, the possuk describes what the locusts will do and says “ve’achal es yeser hapleitah hanisheres lachem min habarad”; when the locusts come, they will eat all that remains after Makkas Barad. The Ramban (Shemos 10:4) analyzes the pesukim and argues that very little time must have passed between the barad and the arbeh. The events of these two makkos as they unfold appear as follows: There is massive destruction of all Mitzrayim’s land and property as paradoxical burning hail rains down upon Mitzrayim (Shemos 9:24-25). When this stops, there is a short period of time with no makkah, just the rubble left after barad. This lasts only until the trees start to bloom and wheat and spelt crops start to bud. Perhaps there is hope for Mitzrayim; maybe they can rebuild? But this glimmer of hope is extinguished as a dark cloud comes from the east, casting a shadow over Mitzrayim. The locusts descend and devour every last bud - every last hope - for the restoration of Mitzrayim (Shemos 10:13, 15).
Why then was *Mitzrayim* deserving of such a terrible, crushing punishment? Looking earlier in the story, to a crime mentioned above, one might be able to glimpse an answer. The *Mitzrim* took the sons, the children, of *Bnei Yisroel*, and drowned them in the river. What is a child? A child is the future. They are the possibility of continuation. They are potential. *A child is hope.* So, perhaps, for murdering the children of *Bnei Yisroel*, for casting them into a darkness deep enough that a mother would set her son adrift in a basket on a river, *Mitzrayim* was punished *middah kineged middah*, with the destruction, before their eyes, of their own hope and their own future.
As we all know, Hashem is in control of the whole universe, including the nature within, and for that reason, many of the ten makkos cannot be explained easily by natural means. However, the purpose of the makkos was also to show Hashem’s complete mastery over the natural forces of the world, which is why many of the makkos could have been accomplished through the guise of natural phenomena. The first example is the makkah of dam, when the Nile turned red. There is a scientific theory for how Hashem did it. There have been many cases of a red algae that blooms in rivers around a dry climate. This algae spreads quickly but stays together to form a sort of sheet over the river, giving it a look of blood. This algae is also extremely harmful to any living thing that it comes into contact with, which is why the fish died.

The next plague for which we have a theory of how Hashem made it happen was tzefardaiyah, frogs. There are many cases of large amounts of smaller animals being relocated after hefty wind or rain storms, and one thing often found in the desert is wind storms. There are many cases of wild life being transported through storms, such as in Brazil, where spiders have often been rained down during intense storms.

Finally, in Makkas Bechoros, all the Egyptian firstborns died except for Pharoh. The theory for how Hashem made this happen is that after all the animals from the previous plague died, they were buried or disposed of, and when a body decomposes, it releases carbon dioxide which can make people suffocate. Because CO2 is denser than air, it stays on the bottom. In Egyptian culture, the oldest child would sleep on the floor, while the Jews had no such tradition so we slept on beds elevated from the ground. This was also true of the king, as it would not be respectful for a king to sleep on the floor. So, because the firstborns slept on the floor, they suffocated due to the carbon dioxide which had amassed. So, we thank Hashem that he orchestrated nature in such a way that he can truly show His infinite wisdom and power to strategically place the plagues to work perfectly for us.
Kriyas Yam Suf

Shnuer Agronin (’21)

Few among us today have felt what it means to be truly in peril. The source of danger, whatever it may be, encroaching from all sides, leaving no escape. Your skin drained of color as blood is drawn to more vital areas, the fight-or-flight instinctual response in full operation. And, among the faithful, a visceral cry for assistance and salvation issues forth from the deepest trench of the soul. Such experiences constitute anomalies in our time, thankfully, and our ability to envision ourselves in absolute mortal danger is often less than stellar. Yet, our forefathers faced nothing less than the impending ravages of total, immediate, and merciless slaughter by the Egyptians days after their exodus from the nation.

One can only imagine the raw emotions that the Bnei Yisroel felt standing between the visibly endless Yam Suf and the ever approaching Egyptian army. But, the Torah describes only their initial reaction in some depth in Shemos 14:10: “And Pharoh approached, the Bnei Yisroel lifted their eyes to see the Egyptians advancing after them. They were greatly afraid, and the Bnei Yisroel cried out to Hashem.” Unfortunately, the nuance of Hebrew and the meaning which it can convey is lost in translation. A significantly invigorating approach as to how we should view our own struggles and, indeed, times of genuine danger, shines forth in the first phrase of the aforementioned possuk - vihikriv Pharoh. While the possuk literally means that Pharoh himself and his army grew closer to the Bnei Yisroel, this could have been conveyed with the phrase vikorav Pharoh or vihiskareiv Pharoh. The word “hikriv” implies, on some level, that not only did Pharoh make himself closer to the Bnei Yisroel intending to massacre them, but that he brought a separate entity closer to another.

Rabbi Lawrence Kelemen, shli”ta, explains that Pharoh did indeed cause two other beings distinct from himself to come close, and in a much different manner than he did himself to the Jews. He connects the end of the possuk, which describes the Jews calling out to Hashem, to the beginning; Pharoh brought the Jews closer to Hashem, by causing them to sincerely and fervently entreat Him for salvation. More interestingly, Rashi points out that the Jews’ prayer was an act of following in the ways of their forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, who similarly entertained Hashem for help in desperate times.

But, indeed, those illustrious tzaddikim, both the Avos and the ones who stood at the fate-determining shore of the Yam Suf, are our forefathers too. When our individual “Pharoh’s” - our troubles, perils, and seemingly hopeless predicaments - come upon us, it would be worth it to remember the lesson of this possuk, that these times of distress simultaneously serve to bring us closer to our Maker, by causing our lips to align with our hearts in sincere tefillah. This Pesach, may we merit the increasingly strengthened ability to recognize the beauty present in every situation we find ourselves in, both the good and the “Pharoh’s,” all of which constitute calls from Hashem to come closer.
Dayeinu

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In one of the many verses of Dayeinu, we declare that if Hashem had brought us to Har Sinai and didn’t give us the Torah, it would have been enough. This begs the famous question, why would that have been enough? What would have been the point of coming to Har Sinai if not for the giving of the Torah? Rav Chaim Soloveitchik answers that, before Matan Torah, the Jews were equivalent to the rest of the nations of the world as Bnei Noach. Once we got to Har Sinai, we received the special status of Bnei Yisroel, and Hashem even gave us the rest of the 613 mitzvos listed in the Torah. However, this special status of being a separate nation would have been achieved even without the giving of the Torah. As such, we say that this would have been enough. Rav Chaim’s son, the Brisker Rov, gives two more answers. The scene at Har Sinai was more than just the giving of the Torah. It was important in instilling within Bnei Yisroel a certain amount of yiras Shamayim that would have an effect for generations to come. This would have been enough for us, even without the giving of the Torah. Additionally, the Brisker Rav calls attention to the exact language of the song, which is “lanu” - if He had not given us the Torah. The Gemara in Sanhedrin (59a) says that a Non-Jew may not study the Torah, as it is the private property of Bnei Yisroel. Therefore, the Brisker Rav explained that what is meant is that even if Hashem had brought us to Har Sinai and given the Torah, but not specifically to us as a private possession, it would have been enough.

Rav Yaakov Ruderman provides an additional answer to this question. The Avos did not need a physical Torah in order to fulfill all of the mitzvos of the Torah. As a result of their incredible level of kedushah, they were able to derive the mitzvos on their own. When Bnei Yisroel arrived at Har Sinai, they reached the highest levels of spirituality ever achieved by humans. Even if Hakadosh Baruch Hu had not given the Torah explicitly, they were on a high enough level to figure out its contents for themselves. This being established, why was there even a need for a physical Torah? It seems that Bnei Yisroel could have figured out the mitzvos for themselves! Answers Rav Ruderman, that it takes more than being aware of what is right, and what is wrong. People need to have clearly laid out rules and commands in order to follow them. An example of this can be found in the days leading up to the giving of the Torah. Bnei Yisroel were warned not to approach Har Sinai while the Shechinah was there. The warning was repeated a second time when the prohibition was about to go into effect. After this, an additional warning of severe punishment was given. This demonstrates the necessity of not only knowing what is wrong, but fully understanding what the repercussions of our actions are. Rav Yisrael Salanter once said that sins are like stars. We realize that they exist, but when we look at the stars, they look like small specks in the sky. In reality, these same stars are many times the size of Earth. We do not truly comprehend the true nature of sins. For this reason, we need the Torah to list them in detail. As such, we thank Hashem for not only allowing us to intuit the laws of the Torah, but for writing them explicitly as well.

Rav Avrohom Pam presents yet another answer to this question. The Medrash Tanchuma on Parshas Ki Sisa states that during the forty days which Moshe was in Shamayim, he would learn Torah, and then forget it. In frustration, he said “Hakadosh Baruch Hu, I have spent forty days and I know nothing.” Hakadosh Baruch Hu told him that when the forty days were up, he would give the Torah to Moshe as a gift. This is the meaning of the possuk which says (Shemos 31:18), “When He finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, He gave Moshe the two Luchos Habris, stone tablets inscribed with the finger of God.” How do we understand this Medrash? The Alshich Hakadosh explains that in order to receive the Torah
directly from Hashem, Moshe needed to raise his already incredible level of kedushah. This could only be accomplished by studying Torah for forty days. Even though he forgot his learning, this was still enough to raise his kedushah to this level. This, says Rav Pam, is an incredible lesson to us all. Someone could spend a large amount of time and effort involved in learning Torah, yet he may not necessarily be able to retain all the information that he learns. Sometimes, it could be easy for such a person to question why he is putting so much effort in, when the effort put in seems to far outweigh the amount gained from it. But in truth, there is much to be gained from learning Torah, even if one will eventually forget it. This is why we say that it would have been enough if Hashem did not give us the Torah - even if Hashem would not have allowed us to remember the Torah, but only to have the spiritual purification which comes from its study, it would have been enough! When kedushah is gained through learning Torah, the impact is incredible. Even the Torah which one forgets holds the immense power to purify his soul, and uplift him in ways that could lead to incredible advancement in one’s ability to learn Torah.
Amar Rabban Gamliel

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The Pesach Seder is the night of questions and answers, and the first question the Haggadah asks (the first of the Mah Nishtanah’s four questions) is why we eat matzah on Pesach. All year long we eat both chametz and matzah, but tonight we eat only matzah. Why?

That question is asked at the very beginning of Maggid, but if you wait around until the very end of Maggid, the Haggadah provides the answer. We quote a mishnah from Pesachim (10:5,) in which Rabban Gamliel asks this question, and answers “because our forefathers were redeemed from Egypt.” How does that answer the question? We elaborate and explain that on the way out of Egypt we were in a rush, and therefore there was insufficient time for the dough to rise before Hashem redeemed us. The possuk tells us that the Jews had prepared dough (and had planned to prepare other foods) to bake into fresh bread before they left Egypt, but in the rush there was neither time for the dough to rise nor time to assemble any other provisions.

So according to Rabban Gamliel, we eat matzah because it reminds us of the shock of redemption. Even though the Jews had a ringside seat to watch the heavyweight match in which Hakadosh Baruch Hu knocked out Pharaoh, they still couldn’t wrap their heads around the idea that they were truly going to be free. So when the call came to get up and go, they weren’t ready, their dough hadn’t risen, and they had to bake matzah, not bread. And to remember that yeshuas Hashem kiheref ayin, that Hashem’s salvation comes in a blink of an eye, we eat the matzah.

Ramban says this is impossible. Are you telling me, he says, that our fathers intended to have bread and instead, by accident (or Hashem’s plan), they ended up with matzah? It can’t be. There’s no way that our fathers would have intended to bake bread. They intended all along to bake matzah, as it was the first day of Pesach, the Haggadah provides the answer. We quote a mishnah from Pesachim (10:5,) in which Rabban Gamliel asks this question, and answers “because our forefathers were redeemed from Egypt.” How does that answer the question? We elaborate and explain that on the way out of Egypt we were in a rush, and therefore there was insufficient time for the dough to rise before Hashem redeemed us. The possuk tells us that the Jews had prepared dough (and had planned to prepare other foods) to bake into fresh bread before they left Egypt, but in the rush there was neither time for the dough to rise nor time to assemble any other provisions.

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This adds a whole layer of drama to the story of Yetzias Mitzrayim. Imagine the anxiety experienced by the Jewish mothers who had been cleaning their homes, and more importantly their ovens, for two weeks before Pesach (the mitzvos of Pesach were given on Rosh Chodesh Nissan), only to be told by Moshe Rabbeinu on Pesach morning that they were packing up and heading out into the desert. Even more so, imagine the relief they felt when they reached their first rest stop in Sukkos, and upon looking into their bags they discovered that they had experienced the miracle of “kefitzas derachim,” that they had traveled all the way from Goshen in less than 18 minutes, and therefore their dough had not risen. Therefore, as the possuk says, they were able to bake the dough as (kosher for Pesach) matzah, rather than as useless (and assur to own) chametz.

If so, returning to Mah Nishtanah, why do we eat matzah on Pesach? What would the Ramban say? Because Hashem said so. Because there’s a possuk that says shivas yamim matzos tocheilu - seven days you shall eat matzos. And if we were to suggest a reason for the mitzvah, it would not make sense to say that the mitzvah, given to the Jews two weeks before the redemption, should be because of an event
that did not happen until after the redemption. Rather, the simple answer would be to quote the Haggada just before the Mah Nishtanah - ha lachma anya diacalna avhasana bi'ara diMitzrayim. Matzah is to remind us of the poor bread we ate in Egypt, where we had only the most basic of nutrition necessary to continue the backbreaking labor forced upon us.

The Ramban is so compelling that it makes it hard to understand Rabban Gamliel’s version of the story. First, why were the Jews trying to bake bread if they knew that you may neither eat nor own chametz on Pesach? Second, if indeed the Exodus story is the reason for the mitzvah of matzah, then how could the mitzvah have been given before any of that story happened?

In order to explain Rabban Gamliel, one has to begin by realizing that Pesach was not observed that first year the same way it has been observed in all future years. Chazal refer to this difference as “Pesach Mitzrayim” and “Pesach Doros,” and its details are defined in the mishnah in Pesachim (9:5). The mishnah lists four halachos that apply only to one or the other. The first three, that apply only to “Pesach Mitzrayim” are: 1) it was prepared five days in advance, 2) its blood was sprinkled on the doorpost, and 3) it was eaten in a rush. The fourth, which applies only to “Pesach Doros,” is that it lasts seven days.

What does this mean? It means two things. First, it means that there were special halachos which were part of the Exodus process, and therefore relevant only that first year. It was not necessary, for example, to sprinkle blood on the doorpost in future years, because firstborn sons were not afterward in danger. Makkas Bechoros, which was coincident with the first Seder, was a one-time event. Second, it means that the character of Pesach changed after that first year and therefore was extended to seven days. And this change was anticipated in the formulation of the original presentation of Pesach, in Perek 12 of Shemos. There, in the first thirteen pesukim, the details of “Pesach Mitzrayim” are described. But then, in possuk 14, the Torah introduces “Pesach Doros” by name, and then proceeds to define its character. Its primary characteristics, twice emphasized in the pesukim and picked up by the mishnah, are the obligation to eat matzah and to avoid chametz. In fact, the very possuk that Ramban cites as his proof that the Jews were concerned about the prohibition of chametz is 12:15, just after the possuk about Pesach Doros.

So Rabban Gamliel is saved. He will say that in fact, there was no mitzvah of matzah or prohibition of eating chametz in “Pesach Mitzrayim” other than at the Seder itself (or perhaps for the whole first day of Pesach), that the Jews absolutely intended their dough to be chametz, for consumption either that day or the next, and then events as they transpired caused matzah to assume a new character, leading to the halachah we now observe. And so, indeed, the reason why we eat matzah on Pesach is because of the story.

And to the question of how could the mitzvah of matzah precede the events that it memorializes, that shouldn’t bother us so much. After all, Hashem certainly knows the future and therefore plans for it in advance. In fact, the Abarbanel points out that this is exactly what happened regarding the Korban Pesach. The word “pesach” itself refers to the fact that Hashem "passed over" the houses of the Jewish firstborn and only attacked the Egyptians. But that too had not yet happened when the mitzvah of Korban Pesach was given, the same day as the mitzvah of matzah! So, we see that Hashem is okay with anticipatory mitzvos.

Now, back to the Ramban. Doesn’t he know the mishnah? How could the Ramban base his whole version of the events on a halachah that the mishnah says was inapplicable at the time? The answer is that the mishnah is only one version of the story. In the Tosefta in Pesachim (8:8), we discover that the mishnah is actually a “da’as yachid,” a sole opinion held by Rabbi Yosi HaGelili, whereas the Chachamim disagree and believe that the mitzvah of matzah (and therefore presumably the prohibition of chametz) applied to the whole of Pesach even the first year.
This leaves us with an interesting situation. Normally, when there is some doubt as to how events transpired in the Torah, the halachah will reflect that doubt. Here, we have the reverse. Depending on how you understand the halachah, that will lead you to a different version of how events transpired. This is not just a historical curiosity, however. This goes to the essence of our obligation at the Seder, namely Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim. We are obligated to tell the story, so we need to get our story straight. Or, if we cannot, we should at least present to our children these possible versions of the story and put the question to them – why might Hashem have wanted the story to come out one way or the other?
One of the most famous and well known lines of the Pesach Seder is that of Rabban Gamliel, who says that one’s chiyuv is not fulfilled until they speak about “Pesach, matzah, and marror”. The reason Rabban Gamliel singles out these mitzvos and expounds on them to such a degree is because he held that a person needs to understand these mitzvos in order to fulfil their chiyuv (Berachos 13a). But according to Rabban Gamliel, these mitzvos carry an additional level of status. These three mitzvos specifically require both internal kavanah, and an external declaration of intent and purpose before their completion (Baruch She’amari on the Haggadah). It is for this reason that Rabban Gamliel continues that one who does not explain these terms has not fulfilled his obligation.

There is a famous question asked on this statement in regards to the order of the mitzvos here. If matzah is meant to remind us of the freedom that the Jewish people got once they left Egypt in haste, and the marror is meant to represent the bitterness of slavery, why do we have the matzah, which came afterwards, before we have the marror? The Ephod Bad answers with the idea that if a person remembers tragedy before salvation on what should be a happy day, the focus on the tragedy without the preempts of looking at that salvation will cause people to become very upset on what should be a very happy and positive day. Therefore, we mention the matzah first, a reminder of the God’s kindness and love and our gaining freedom, before we mention marror, which represents the painfulness of slavery. The Haggadah should be a story about triumph and rejoicing, and not just a story about oppression. When we opt to tell the story of Mitzrayim through use of symbols, we are not just retelling the story that happened long ago with no relevance to us now, but rather, we are giving ourselves the chance to relive what our ancestors went through and aspire to grow to the same levels of kedushah that our ancestors achieved. The Kos Shel Eliyahu points out that these three mitzvos represent the essence of Yetzias Mitzrayim and through these, we get the chance to understand and fulfill the mitzvos of telling the story of Yetzias Mitzrayim.

Naftali Seva Ratzon addresses the same question by utilizing a yesod developed by the Shach on the mishnah which says “In every generation, one should see himself as if he personally went forth from Egypt”. The Shach there says that this means more than just imagining oneself in Mitzrayim, but also seeing the redemption from Mitzrayim in the light of the future redemption of the Jewish people. The order of Rabban Gamliel’s statement is a fundamental part of bringing this redemption. The matzah coming before the marror teaches that only through the freedom of matzah, freedom from sin, can we avoid the marror, the bitterness of the galus. We begin with matzah because we are supposed to see ourselves among those who went out of Egypt and are free. We then receive a warning; if our actions are not proper, we will experience bitterness and marror. If we keep this in mind and remain free from sin, then we will merit yet another redemption with the coming of Moshiach, Bimheirah Biyameinu.
Korban Pesach

Shua Feigin ('21)

On the tenth day of the first month, Nissan, the Jewish people are commanded to take possession of one lamb per household. They are to watch over it until the fourteenth, slaughter it at midnight, eat its roasted meat, and smear it’s blood along their doorposts and lintels. The reason for this is so that Hashem knows to pass over the Jewish households, so that He delivers the plague of Makkas Bechoros to only the Egyptians. Thus, in smearing the lamb's blood, the Jewish people are committing an act of faith in both the seemingly abstract rulings of God with regards to the specifics of the korban, as well as the fact that He will keep his promise to pass over their houses and spare them from death. Twice, the Torah stresses that this is a communal celebration by using the word "kol adas Yisroel" - the entire assembly of Yisroel (Shemos 12:6, 12:47). This episode, a communal demonstration of faith in Hashem, is the first instance of the Korban Pesach. Hashem then commands that these rituals be observed lidoroseichem, for all generations (Shemos 12:14). However, throughout Tanach, there are other instances where the Korban Pesach is specifically mentioned. Why is this so, if it is known that this is a mitzvah that lasts forever? A deeper analysis can reveal what is special about emphasizing specific instances of the offering of the Korban Pesach.

The next mention of the Korban Pesach, which takes place during the subsequent year in the desert, is recorded in Sefer Bamidbar. However, this particular mention of the Pesach is not so difficult to understand, because it contains some new rules with regards to the procedures - namely Pesach Sheni. In the event that someone is impure on the 14th of Nissan, they can offer it the following month. However, if they don’t offer it at all, they are committing a grave sin (Bamidbar 9:3).Thus, the importance of this offering is stressed, so much so that the halachah is that even women, children, and slaves are obligated to eat from the korban. This mention of the Korban Pesach is therefore understandable, as it teaches the severity of not participating in the mitzvah, as well as alternative methods to do so if one is impure.

So far, the Torah has established the communal aspect, the faith aspect, and the importance of this mitzvah. Additionally, we already know that this mitzvah must be performed every year. Thus, why mention a Pesach offered in Gilgal during the times of Yehoshua (Yehoshua 5:10)? Why bother telling us this story; didn’t they offer the korban every year? The mystery thickens when Divrei Hayamin tells us that Chizkiyahu wrote letters to the people telling them to bring the Korban Pesach (Divrei Hayamin II 30:1). Similarly, it is written that Yoshiyahu offered a Pesach, which had not been done with the same quality as his offering since even the times of the Judges (Melachim II 23:23-25). The fact that this mitzvah was not properly observed can begin to answer the question. However, that answer only works for this specific mentioning. Also, during the days of Ezra, it is again written that a Pesach was offered (Ezra 6:19).

Understanding the contexts of these mentions of the Korban Pesach can help answer the question of their necessity. (While the full pesukim are too long to quote, deeper insight can be gained by learning the pesukim quoted in the context of the Sefer). During the days of Yehoshua, the nation was just entering the land of Israel. The nation, fresh out of the desert and having just received the Torah, was suddenly tasked with conquering their promised land. Times were a bit uncertain. Similarly, the kings Chizkiyahu and Yoshiyahu, while being just and valuing Hashem, ruled during a time of political and religious turmoil. Hundreds of years of schism between the kingdoms of Yehudah and Yisroel, various dynasties who came into and out of power by coup or divine punishment of evil, monarchical supported worship of avodah zarah even in the Beis Hamikdash itself, prophecies of exile and destruction, and
the overarching threat of invasion by foreign powers had weakened the stability of the Jewish nation. Chizkiyahu and Yoshiyahu tried to reverse these trends by destroying idolatry and restoring faith and service of Hashem. Ezra also lived during a period of uncertainty, as he led a movement of exiled individuals back to Israel, where he spread Torah once more and worked on rebuilding the Beis Hamikdash.

The Chumash already established the importance of the Korban Pesach, that all must participate, and how it is a communal act whose basis was rooted in faith in Hashem during Makkas Bechoros. When the Torah recounts an offering of the Korban Pesach, it is during times of distress, when a strong leader is attempting to rally the people. The instances where it is mentioned can be seen as continuations of the themes of the Korban Pesach that are developed upon its first instance. Thus, as the Korban Pesach is mentioned many times throughout trying narratives, it develops into a symbol of a restoration and affirmation of communal faith in God. Understanding this idea behind the Korban Pesach should therefore serve as a lesson to us. During these trying times, eating the afikomen, which is a reminder of the Korban Pesach, should inspire us to come together as a community, united by our faith in Hashem and his ultimate plan.
Lifikach

_Shua Pariser ('20)_

We have reached the end of _Maggid_. We are about to wash for _matzah_ and then eat _marror_, have the _seduah_, and finish the _Seder_. But first, we have a few more paragraphs to say; “_lefikach_,” part of _Hallel_, and a _berachah_. What is the paragraph beginning with _lefikach_, and why is it said at this point?

The Rashbam considers this paragraph to be a transitional step. Having just declared our recognition of the fact that we consider it as if we ourselves have actually left _Mitzrayim_, we proclaim that it is our duty to sing _shirah_ to _Hashem_ just as our ancestors did, and we proceed to recite _Hallel_.

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

Why is _Hallel_ at this part of the _Seder_? Rabbi Taubes once gave a _shiur_ in the MTA/Zysman _Beis Medrash_, in which he said that the _Hallel_ of the _Seder_ is recited because we were freed, so when something good happens to you, you break into _shirah_. But why isn’t the whole _Hallel_ recited here? Why is it split?

The Abudraham says that the purpose of this _Hallel_ is to embellish the second cup of wine with some words of praise. The rest of the recitation of _Maggid_ would be merely “storytelling” if not for the inclusion of at least part of _Hallel_.

The Maharal suggests that the division of _Hallel_ was originally intended to precede and follow the eating of the _Korban Pesach_ with _Hallel_, to make it clear that _Hallel_ was being said in honor of the _korban_. If all of _Hallel_ were said before or after the meal, this point would not have been sufficiently highlighted. Today this practice is continued, because the _matzah_ we eat as _afikoman_ takes the place of the _Korban Pesach_. May we be _zocheh_ that this year, we will recite the _Hallel_ around the _korban_, and we shouldn’t have to see ourselves as _if_ we are free, but rather as truly free.
Motzi Matzah

Rabbi Hershel Schachter ('58)
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The Torah mentions several times that the purpose of all the miracles connected with Yetzias Mitzrayim was to demonstrate the existence of God, his power, and all the principles of our faith to the Jewish people. Pesach was designated as the yom tov of emunah, and the matzah is called, "the food of emunah" by the Zohar. Shavuos is the yom tov of receiving the Torah.

The Kedushas Levi points out the contrast between the two yomim tovim: one, on Pesach we may not even possess any chametz, as opposed to Shavuos which is the one and only time in the year that a korban is brought from chametz, The Talmud considers the "shtei halechem" brought on Shavuos as a more elegant korban because of the fact that it consists of chametz. Two, the "minchas ha’omer" brought on Pesach is most unusual, as it consists of barley grain, as opposed to almost all other menachos, including the "shtei halechem", which all come from wheat. Barley is usually used to feed the animals, as opposed to wheat, which is traditionally used for human consumption.

It may well be that these contrasts are due to the differences between the themes of the two yomim tovim. Pesach represents emunah, and regarding our understanding of God we must all have the attitude that, "if I really understood Him, I would be Him" (Kuzari). None of us can really understand any aspect of Elokus. Our understanding is compared to that of the animals (see Tehillim 73:22, and 42:2; Tanya Chapter 18). The "omer" korban on Pesach must consist of ma’achal beheimah to emphasize this idea. No chametz is permitted at all, since matzah represents elementary simplicity, while chametz represents sophistication. On Shavuos, when we celebrate Torah learning, the "shtei halechem" korban should be ma’achal adam, representing the idea that we were commanded to use our human intelligence to the best of our ability to delve into the study of the Torah. That korban must be made into chametz, representing the sophistication one should attain in Torah learning.

But, sophistication is not necessarily a trait that we want to develop in regards to emunah. The Chasid Yavetz (who was among the Jews who were expelled from Spain in 1492) wrote that he noticed the percentage of Jews who converted to Christianity to save their lives was much higher among those who were philosophers than among the peshutei ha’am, the simplefolk, who adhered to an emunah peshutah, a simple faith.

If one delves deeply into Torah learning, his faith will neither remain simplistic nor primitive. Our tradition teaches us that the Torah is a description of Elokus. (This is the meaning of the concept of "mashal hakadmoni"; see Rashi on Shemos 21:13.) Moshe Rabbeinu was the only prophet to whom the Torah was revealed, and this is referred to by the Torah as his, "having had a glimpse of the image of God." (Bamidbar 12:8). The best way to develop a love of God is by learning His Torah. (See Rashi on Devarim 6:6). By gaining Torah knowledge and developing a sophisticated approach to Torah, which is a description of Elokus, we come to understand Him better, and our emunah becomes enhanced.
We all have very fond memories of the Pesach Seder, from the Karpas to looking for the Afikoman, but there is one thing that appears to be out of place: the egg. Why, of all things, do we have an egg at the Seder table, and why do we eat it? There isn’t really even any importance given to this egg, except for a seat on our Seder plates. So why?

There are two parts to this answer, the first being why we have it, and the second being why we eat it.

Why do we have this egg, this beitzah at our Seder table? Why do we need it? In the times of the Beis Hamikdash, in addition to the Korban Pesach, there was a korban called the Korban Chagigah. The Korban Chagigah was brought on each of the Shalosh Regalim, because it wouldn’t be right to come to the Beis Hamikdash for the chag empty-handed, so we would bring a special korban just to be enjoyed during the chag. For Pesach, the Korban Chagigah was customarily given along with the Korban Pesach on the 14th of Nissan. The Chachamim thus decided that there should be not one, but two cooked foods at the Seder, because there were two korbanos given. Other opinions say that these two cooked foods actually correspond to the two messengers that Hashem sent to take the Jews out of Mitzrayim, Moshe and Aharon.

So, we now understand why we have two cooked foods at the Seder table. We know that one is the chicken bone, but why is the other an egg? Some opinions explain that it is simply because eggs, beitzim, are easy to cook, but there are other opinions that provide a deeper explanation. The Talmud Yerushalmi explains that one customarily uses a zero’a (shankbone) to represent the Korban Pesach, because of the possuk that states: "I (Hashem) will redeem you (Bnei Yisroel) with an outstretched arm". The other food, representing the Korban Chagigah, should be an egg, because in Aramaic, the word for egg is bei’ah, which can also mean "pray" or "please". By choosing to use an egg and a shankbone, the foods will be “praying” to Hashem that: "May it please the Merciful Hashem to redeem us with an outstretched arm". Another explanation is that the egg, which is a food of mourning for its round shape which represents the "Circle of Life", shows our mourning of the loss of the Beis Hamikdash and that we cannot bring these korbanos. Another explanation is that it shows our freedom from the idol worship of the Mitzrim. The Mitzrim had beliefs that would not let them eat meat, fish, and eggs, so to proudly express our freedom from Mitzrayim, we eat eggs at the Seder. One more explanation is that when we use an egg that has no opening, we are remembering that many years ago “the mouths of our enemies became sealed shut”, much like an egg is closed, with no opening. It was then, when the world was witnessing the many great and amazing nissim that Hashem was performing for us, Bnei Yisroel, that it became clear to them all, that we were His chosen nation and that He would protect us from all harm.

We have yet to answer, though, why we eat the egg at the Seder. After all, we don’t eat the shankbone, the other food that represents one of the korbanos that were brought around Pesach. Rabbi Moshe Isserles (Rema) explained that eating the egg at the Seder is a way of mourning the tremendous loss of the Beis Hamikdash and not being able to bring the Korban Pesach. Rabbi Isserles also makes note of a unique connection that the Seder has to the actual destruction of the Beis Hamikdash, as they will always fall out on the same day of the week. Others have the explanation that we eat the egg because Avraham Avinu was niftar on the first night of Pesach, and the egg is a sign of mourning for him. There is a
more happy and optimistic explanation than these, and that is that the egg is actually a symbol of hope for our future. When an egg is laid by a chicken, it looks like a completed object, but in truth it is only the beginning of the formation of a baby chick. So too, the redemption by Pesach, while it may look like it is the end, is only the beginning and preparation for the greater redemption that will come with Moshiach.

It is amazing how something that seems as small as an egg can be the roots for mass amounts of Divrei Torah. Have a wonderful Pesach and a Chag Sameach!
Kos Shel Eliyahu

Rabbi Shimon Schenker
Associate Principal, YUHSB

Every year at the Seder, my father would look down into the Cup of Eliyahu and say, “see, look - it is lower, Eliyahu Hanavi did come and drink it!” I think many of us grew up with that same joke. However, I think many of us still have a view of the cup in a simplistic and childish perspective that robs us of appreciating this beautiful and meaningful minhag of pouring a fifth cup.

The Mishnah Berurah (480:10) writes that this fifth cup is to show that we believe that just like Hashem redeemed us from Mitzrayim, so too he will redeem us from this long bitter exile, and he will send us Eliyahu Hanavi to herald the coming of the Moshaich and the ultimate redemption. While that is a truly beautiful and inspirational idea, where in halachah is the cup rooted, and what are its origins?

The Gemara (Pesachim 118a) writes: On the fourth cup we say the whole Hallel, these are the words of Rabbi Tarfon. This is the text of Rashi, Tosfos, and the Rashbam there. However Rav Tzvi Rimon points out in his Haggadah that Seder Rav Amram Gaon has the text of, one who drinks the fifth cup, completes the Hallel (the Maharam Chalava and Maharam also have this text). Shulchan Aruch (481:1) paskens that we can’t add a fifth cup; however, the Rama adds from the Mordechai that one can add a fifth cup as long as he says full Hallel on it. Rav Rimon explains that this is why the cup is called Kos Shel Eliyahu, because it is based on the possuk of viheiveisi (“and he will bring us”, the fifth language of redemption, see Rashi Pesachim 99b), in that Eliyahu Hanavi will herald the ultimate redemption.

The common custom is to pour the cup but not to drink it. However, Rambam (Hilchos Chametz Umatzah 8:10) writes that one should pour the fifth cup and say full Hallel; however, one shouldn’t drink it, as it is forbidden to drink after the fourth cup. The Raavad in his commentary to the Ba’al Hama’or (Pesachim ibid.) takes this one step further, that even though the mishnah (Pesachim 99b) tells us we cannot have less than four cups, one can certainly add a fifth, and this is praiseworthy.

As noted earlier, Rav Rimon writes that it is called the cup of Eliyahu because of the fifth possuk that Hashem will bring the Jews into Israel, viheiveisi. Due to this cup’s importance and what it represents, the Mishnah Berurah (480:10) notes that the leader of the Seder himself should pour the cup. However, the Vilna Gaon in Kol Eliyahu (page 5) writes that since it is a dispute in the Gemara whether or not we need a fifth cup, we await the coming of Eliyahu Hanavi and Moshaich to resolve the dispute of how many cups are required.

Hashem should bless us all to see the coming of Moshaich and Eliyahu Hanavi, so that we will no longer have to sing “lishanah haba biYerushalayim”, and to for once and for all, resolve how many cups we should actually have at the Seder.
Shefoch Chamaschah

Dovid Wartelsky ('20)

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

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

Now, back to Shefoch Chamascha. If we look at the wording, the first phrase reads: “Pour out your wrath unto the nations of the world that don’t know you, and on the kingdoms that don’t proclaim your name, for they have devoured Yaakov and laid his name to waste”. We are asking Hashem to smite all the nations of the world! How is this any different than what the Christian priests did in 17th century Europe?

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

The next phrase reads, “pour out your anger and overtake them”. Again, this varies from the Christian approach. Whereas the Christians poured out their anger on the Jews on their own accord, Bnei Yisroel consult with Hashem first.

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

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

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

*Isaac Cohen* (’23)

When you think of a memorable part of the *Seder*, what comes to mind? Perhaps *Maggid*, *Yachatz*, or maybe even *Shulchan Orech* all emerge as highlights of the night. However, out of all the various parts of the *Seder*, I find the recitation of *Hallel* to be out of place. The *Seder* is a time to tell the story of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, and *Hallel* is there to give praise to *Hashem*. However, I find it strange that *Hallel* is placed towards the end of the *Seder*, the part we all *shlep* through before heading to bed. What is the reason for this placement of *Hallel* as almost an afterthought?

The recitation of *Hallel* is broken into two parts. The first two chapters are recited before the meal, and the rest after *Birkas Hamazon*. It may seem strange that we split it up, but understanding the different parts of *Hallel* answers this question. Before *Birkas Hamazon*, we are focused on the story of our slavery and redemption from Egypt. As such, it is at this point that we recite the first two chapters of *Hallel*, which deal with the story of this *geulah*. The second chapter (Tehillim 114) is an obvious representation of the Exodus, as it starts with “when Israel went forth from Egypt”.

After *Birkas Hamazon*, we move on to the redemption from our current exile. In the second half of *Hallel*, it is clear it relates to the ultimate Redemption, as evidenced by the references to the future: “not for our sake, O Lord, not for our sake, but for your Name’s sake give glory”; “*Hashem* who has remembered us will bless - He will bless the house of Israel”; “I love Him for *Hashem* hears my voice, my supplications”; and so on.

In the *Talmud Yerushalmi* (*Megillah* 2:1) these distinctions are made clear. The *Yerushalmi* says that the passage beginning with “when Israel went forth from Egypt” refers to the past; the one beginning “I have loved *Hashem* for He hears the voice of my supplications” refers to the time during *Moshiach*; the passage “bind the festival offering with cords” refers to the days of Gog and Magog; and the one beginning “You are my God, and I shall thank you” refers to the days ahead of us in the future.

We therefore understand why the second part of *Hallel* is placed after the bulk of the *Seder* has concluded. After we have finished telling the story of our past redemption from slavery, we recite *Hallel* and ask *Hashem* to save us from our current exile.
Nirtzah

Rabbi Shimon Kerner ('77)
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The beauty and depth of the Zman Cheiruseinu is multi-faceted. The Seder concludes with lishanah haba biYerushalayim - next year in Yerushalayim. Why is this hope expressed specifically at Yom Kippur at the end of Neilah, and Pesach at the end of Seder? Furthermore, why is it said as a statement with confidence, rather than a prayer? Why not say yehi ratzon milfanecha... shetivianu lishanah haba biYerushalayim - may it be Your Will that we be brought next year to Yerushalayim? Rav Soloveitchik z’t”l explained that these are the two times of the year that we most miss the Beis Hamikdash. On other yamim tovim, although we certainly miss bringing the appropriate korbanos, we retain the main flavor of the chag. We still shake the lulav and sit in the sukkah on Sukkos, and blow the shofar on Rosh Hashanah. But Yom Kippur without the avodah is like a professional team playing in a playground instead of a stadium. It’s a joke! True, we re-enact the avodah in Mussaf, and we pretend to transport ourselves to the Beis Hamikdash, but when it’s over and we wake up from our dream, we say meirav avoneinu – because of our sins we don’t have it anymore. Similarly, Pesach without the Korban Pesach is missing the centerpiece. Kindergartens and nursing homes often conduct mock Sedarim to get children and residents ready for the holiday, but we all realize it’s not the real thing. In fact, our real Seder is a mock Seder!

When we speak of geulah, what comes to mind? For some, Pharoh in pajamas in the middle of the night; for others, triumphantly leaving the next day with dough on our shoulders; for others, the splitting of the sea- indeed shirah chadashah shivchu geulim; while others will say the ultimate goal was to march on to Sinai and receive the Torah. All of these are correct. But Ramban famously explains in his introduction to Sefer Shemos that the book Exodus is called “Sefer Hageulah”, because although all those were important and necessary steps, the construction of the Mishkan with hashra’as hashechinah is the real culmination of geulah.

When reflecting over the beauty and depth of the Seder, we should realize that the Ba’al Haggadah was very much cognizant and keenly aware of this definition of geulah. In fact, if we look carefully, much of the Haggadah is focused on the theme of the Mikdash. To list but a few examples:

a) Ashkenazim wear a kittel according to Netziv because when they ate kodshim and the Korban Pesach they did so in royal fashion

b) The “Hillel sandwich” is a zecher liMikdash, a reminder of the Beis Hamikdash

c) The eating of the afikoman is a reminder of the Korban Pesach, which was eaten at the end of the meal

d) The song of Dayeinu, with its fifteen aspects of hakaras hatov, ends with banei lanu es beis habecharah - build for us the Beis Hamikdash

e) The Hallel of the Seder is not only for the Exodus, as Gra explains that the different phrases of Hallel refer to different stages in Jewish history, culminating with the binyan Beis Hamikdash

g) The words zeh Keili vi’anveihu said at the Yam Suf are rendered by Onkelos as “zeh Keili vi’avnveh lo bayis” - this is my God, and I will build for Him a house.

h) At the end of the Seder, we sing “adir Hu, bnei beiso bikarov” - he is exalted, build His house speedily
j) Some have the minhag of eating an egg (a food of mourners) at the beginning of *Shulchan Orech* - Rama explains that the first day of Pesach is the same day of the week as Tisha B’av. We simply can’t sit at the Seder oblivious to the Churban.

k) In the berachah of asher ga’alanu, Rabbi Akiva adds the phrase “visasim bi’avodasecha” - and we will rejoice in Your service.

We recently completed the book of Shemos. Rav Yissocher Frand quoted Rav Isaac Bernstein, who related a beautiful homiletic interpretation on the last possuk. The possuk states that the cloud of Hashem was on the Mishkan by day and fire on it at night, “l’eini kol Bnei Yisroel bikol maseihem” - before the eyes of Bnei Yisroel in all their travels. This is imprecise, because when they traveled the cloud was not on the Mishkan. The cloud rested only when they camped. Rashi answers that *makom chaniyasan af hu karei masa* - when they camped that was part of their travels. They knew they would move on from there. Even when they were stationary, it was considered their travels!

R. Bernstein says: Judaism is unfortunately replete with a mindset (and we are as guilty as any other generation) that wherever we are, this is “our place”. Jews were in Poland for a thousand years. They would quip that *Polin* meant *po lin* - here we shall sleep. Jewish history is a testament that wherever we are, be it Poland, Spain, Germany, or other lands, and no matter how comfortable we get, we’re not home! America is no exception. This country is the greatest *malchus shel chesed* and the most hospitable place we’ve ever been in our long exile, but we have certainly not come *el hanachalah*. Even when we are comfortably camped – it is *bikol maseihem*. We need to have our eyes on living a normal life with the Shechina in its proper place - the Beis Hamikdash.

We conclude with a story from Rav Yechiel Spero about what it means to take the Seder and really internalize the message of longing for the Beis Hamikdash and a “real” Seder.

Rav Spero arrived home from yeshiva on one of the days leading up to Pesach, tired from all the cleaning and teaching. He looked forward to a quiet lunch when the doorbell rang. It was a meshulach from Eretz Yisroel collecting for Machon Rus, an institution for the physically handicapped. He wrote him a check, and the man began saying a vort on the Haggadah. He finished, but before he turned to leave he said “im yirtzeh Hashem, I’ll see you soon in Yerushalayim”. Rav Spero nodded and said he hoped to see him as well. The meshulach persisted. “You know, Moshiach is coming very soon.” Again Rav Spero nodded. Then the elderly Jew took hold of Rav Spero’s hand with firm grip, stared into his eyes and said, “You know last week I went down to a farm in Komemiyus and I bought a sheep for the Korban Pesach”. Rav Spero thought he was joking, and asked him if he really had a sheep walking around in his backyard. He promised that he did. Rav Spero thought to himself, “this guy is the real deal!” He asked him if he could participate with his family in his chaburah for the Korban Pesach. The man looked down and began to count on his fingers as if he were calculating whether he could in fact accommodate Rav Spero’s family. Then he said, I can only accommodate this many adults who will eat a full kezayis, but the children who are only obligated because of chinuch will have to eat less. With that, Rav Spero walked the meshulach to the door.

This is what it means to say “Next year in Yerushalayim” as a statement of confidence, not merely a *yehi ratzon*. It’s the beauty and depth of the Seder and Zman Cheiruseinu! This is the geulah that we pine for. This is the geulah we will merit if only we can be as sincere as that meshulach!
Sugyos in Maseches Pesachim

This year, the Yeshiva has been learning Maseches Pesachim as the formal Iyun limmud. To celebrate a year of growth in learning, we asked talmidim of the Yeshiva to write out sugyos in the masechta, which they studied in Shiur or on their own, to give a glimpse into the Torah we learn every day at MTA. We hope that these sugyos will enhance your understanding and enjoyment of Pesach!

-The Shema Koleinu Staff
Bedikas Chametz of a Rented House (*Pesachim* 4a)

Yitzchak Hagler (*’22*)

Executive Editor, *Shema Koleinu*

Our sugya begins in the first *mishnah* in *Pesachim*, which reads: On the night of the fourteenth [of Nissan we check for chametz [and destroy any chametz which we find]. Rashi explains that the purpose of this bedikah is “shelo ya’avor alav bebal yira’eh ubal yimatzei” so that he will not transgress the prohibitions of bal yira’eh and bal yimatzei. What is this transgression of bal yira’eh ubal yimatzei? Rashi helps us out once again with this question. He explains (*Pesachim* 6b, d’h vedaito aleih) that if one were to find chametz on Pesach, and hesitate regarding what to do with it for even one moment, they would be in violation of bal yira’eh ubal yimatzei. To use the language of the Ramban (4a be”d elah), bal yira’eh ubal yimatzei is being rotzeh bikiyumo, wanting the chametz to continue to exist.

The first question we have to tackle is what does that first Rashi mean? How does bedikah prevent bal yira’eh ubal yimatzei? The Bartenura (1:1) comments that some explain that the purpose of bedikah is because we’re concerned that you will find chametz on Pesach, think of it as valuable, and thereby violate bal yira’eh ubal yimatzei. My rebbi, Rabbi Baruch Pesach Mendelson, explained that we can be certain that this ‘some explain’ refers to Rashi (See *Tosfos Yom Tov* (1:1) and Rashi (4a, d’h chovas hadar). This interpretation of the Bartenura assumes that the mishnah, when it talks about the obligation to do bedikah, is talking about someone who already did bittul. In other words, the mishnah is saying that even after one has dealt with any dioraisa concerns by doing bittul, they still have the obligation to do bedikah, because the Raban were worried that one might find chametz and give it value. The Ran (1a bidapei haRif, d’h ela), on the other hand, explains that bedikah is a dioraisa command to search out and destroy chametz for the sake of precluding oneself from transgressing bal yira’eh ubal yimatzei. He holds that our mishnah is not written under the assumption that its subject already did bittul, or will in the future do bittul. Rather, it is teaching that bedikah by itself is enough to make one avoid the transgressions of bal yira’eh ubal yimatzei.

The Ran finishes his piece by commenting that this is his view on the matter, and it is “along the lines” of Rashi.

The Tosfos understand bedikah differently than Rashi. They explain that our mishnah is saying that even after a person does bittul, and in doing so avoids any dioraisa concerns, they are still required to do bedikah. Why? Because the tana’im were concerned that even after doing bittul, a person might find the chametz in their house and eat it. With these three opinions- Rashi as explained by Bartenura (that the decree of bedikah was created because of the concern that you’ll up coming across chametz on Pesach, revaluing it, and thereby violating bal yira’eh ubal yimatzei), Ran “along the lines” of Rashi (that bedikah is one way, on a dioraisa level, to avoid bal yira’eh ubal yimatzei), and the Tosfos (that the decree of bedikah was created because of the concern that you’ll end up eating the chametz) in mind, we can now attempt to unravel the Gemara on 4a which serves as the subject of this article.

The Gemara on 4a reads, on the most simple level, as follows:

They asked Rav Nachman Bar Yitzchak: one who rents out his house to his friend (on)/(for the sake of) the fourteenth [of Nissan], upon whom is the obligation to do bedikah- is it the landowner, because chamira didiei hu (the chametz is his), or is it the tenant, because issura bereshusei kai (the prohibited item is in his domain)? Perhaps it is similar to mezuzah, where the chiyuv is upon the tenant to erect a mezuzah. But, Rav Meshrashya explains that this case is different, as mezuzah is a
chovas hadar, an obligation of whoever lives in the house. Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak quotes a Tannaitic statement which says that if one rents their house to their friend, if the landlord gives the keys to the tenant during the fourteenth [of Nissan], the obligation to do bedikah falls on the landlord, but if the landlord gives the keys to the tenant before the fourteenth [of Nissan], the obligation to do bedikah falls on the tenant.

Rabbi Mendelson, in analyzing this Gemara, went a few steps deeper into this passage. The first step Rabbi Mendelson took in this was to determine how each of the three aforementioned rishonim would understand the Gemara. The simplest way to follow this discussion is through the use of a chart to determine how each of these three opinions would learn the Gemara's dilemma, as seen below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Should the obligation to do bedikah be:</th>
<th>Tosfos (that bedikah protects you from coming to eat the chametz)</th>
<th>The Ran “along the lines” of Rashi (that bedikah avoids bal yira’eh ubal yimatzei on a dionara level)</th>
<th>The Bartenura explaining Rashi (that bedikah protects you from coming to find the chametz, revaluing it, and thereby violating bal yira’eh ubal yimatzei)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On the landlord, because the chametz is his</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the tenant, because the chametz is in his domain</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Let us start with Tosfos' approach. Rabbi Mendelson explained that according to Tosfos, we can understand 2 pretty easily. If the whole decree of bedikah is because of a concern of finding the chametz and eating it, it makes a lot of sense that this obligation would fall on the tenant, because, after all, the chametz is in his domain, meaning that he is the one who has access to it, and therefore might come to eat it. But, how, according to Tosfos, would we understand 1? If the decree of bedikah is because of a concern of finding the chametz and eating it, why do I care who owns the chametz- shouldn’t it all go based on access to the chametz? The Tosfos themselves deals with this question, and they quote the Ri, who answers that the reasoning behind 1 is that since at the beginning of the fourteenth of Nissan, when the obligation of bedikah first took effect, this obligation fell on the landlord, therefore the obligation doesn’t leave him [even when he rented the house to the tenant].

Now, what about the Ran? The Kovetz Shiurim gives a beautiful explanation based on a comment from the Biyur HaGra. The Biyur HaGra on Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 443:2 d’h vi’im lo machro) writes that, at least according to the Shulchan Aruch, one can violate bal yira’eh ubal yimatzei even for chametz which is not theirs (as long as it belongs to another Jew). Therefore, reasons the Kovetz Shiurim, even though the Ran understands that bedikah is the prevention of the violation of bal yira’eh ubal yimatzei, since bal yira’eh ubal yimatzei is a concern for any Jew who would want this chametz to continue to exist, the two...
sides of the Gemara play out as follows: do we say 3, which is that the person who most wants the chametz to continue to exist is the owner of the chametz, and therefore in this case the obligation to do bedikah falls on the landlord (because he owns the chametz); or do we say 4, which is that the person who most wants the chametz to continue to exist is the one who has access to it, and therefore in this case the obligation to do bedikah falls on the tenant (because he has access to the chametz).

Lastly, and perhaps most difficult, what about the Bartenura? Rabbi Mendelson quoted from Rav Mayer Twersky, one of the RIETS Roshei Yeshiva, that based on the abovementioned Biyur HaGra, it seems that if one Jew were to come across chametz of another Jew and, even for one second, want it to continue to exist, this would be a violation of bal yira’eh ubal yimatzei. Based on this, Rabbi Mendelson suggested that the reason why, according to box 5, the obligation of bedikah is on the landlord is because it is his chametz, meaning that he is the one responsible to make sure no Jew comes across it and wants it to exist. In other words, just like the normal obligation of bedikah (which, according to the Bartenura, is to make sure no one comes across the chametz and wants it exist) falls on the owner, so too here- despite the fact that the owner doesn’t need to worry that he himself will find this chametz- since he owns the chametz, he still has to worry about another Jew finding the chametz. On the other hand, in the world of box 6, the obligation of bedikah is a “selfish” obligation, meaning that only someone who might come across the chametz himself needs to do the bedikah, and thus the obligation in this case would fall upon the tenant, as he is the one with access to the chametz. To summarize what we have so far:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Should the obligation to do bedikah be:</th>
<th>The Tosfos (that bedikah protects you from coming to eat the chametz)</th>
<th>The Ran “along the lines” of Rashi (that bedikah avoids bal yira’eh ubal yimatzei on a dioraisa level)</th>
<th>The Bartenura explaining Rashi (that bedikah protects you from coming to find the chametz, revaluing it, and thereby violating bal yira’eh ubal yimatzei)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On the landlord because the chametz is his</td>
<td>Remains landlord’s obligation, because landlord had initial obligation</td>
<td>Obligation of bedikah falls on the landlord, since he owns the chametz, and he wants it to exist the most.</td>
<td>It is on the owner of the chametz to do bedikah so that no one finds his chametz, wants it to exist, and thereby violates bal yira’eh ubal yimatzei.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the tenant because the chametz is in his domain</td>
<td>Tenants obligation, because tenant has access to the chametz, and may come to eat it</td>
<td>Obligation of bedikah falls on the tenant, since he has access to the chametz, so he wants it to exist the most.</td>
<td>It is on the one who has access to the chametz to do bedikah so that he won’t find his chametz, want it to exist, and thereby violate bal yira’eh ubal yimatzei.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now comes the fun part. How do these different explanations of the two sides of the question of the Gemara understand the Tannaitic statement Rav Nachman bar Yitzchak quotes to answer the original question?

That statement talks about two cases. In case number one, the keys were given over to the tenant after the fourteenth began, and the obligation of bedikah falls on the landlord. In case number two, the keys were given over to the tenant before the fourteenth began, and the obligation of bedikah falls on the tenant.

Let’s start, once again, with the Tosfos. The Tosfos (4a,d”h im meshamasar hamaftei’ach) conclude that the
obligation to do bedikah in this case is determined based on who had that obligation at the beginning of the fourteenth, regardless of what happens after that point. In other words, they hold that 1 beats 2. Therefore, when the keys (and with them the access to the house and ability to do the bedikah) are given to the tenant before the fourteenth, the obligation is on the tenant, for he had the keys at the beginning of the fourteenth. And if the keys are given to the tenant after the fourteenth, the obligation is on the landlord, since he had the keys at the beginning of the fourteenth in this case. However, even though the obligation is, according to the Tosfos, almost completely based on ability to do the bedikah, there is one more factor which must be considered—connection to the house. What constitutes this connection to the house? According to the Tosfos, it is defined by the tenant not just gaining the keys of the house, but also having the intention to acquire the house. So, it comes out that according to the Tosfos, for the obligation of bedikah to be on the tenant, he must A) have the keys when the fourteenth of Nissan begins, and B) have intention to use those keys to acquire the house.

Now, what about the Ran? The Ran (1b bidapei haRif d’h hamaschir bayis lechaveiro biyud daled) explains that both cases of our Tannaitic statement are assuming that the tenant made a separate kinyan on the house (in addition to the giving over of the keys). He holds that for the tenant to have the obligation to do bedikah, he needs two factors, access and acquisition of the house. I believe, l’aniyas da’ati, that (assuming that the Ran understands the two sides of the Gemara as the Kovetz Shiurim explained it) the Ran here is concluding that the one who has access to the chametz most wants it to exist, and therefore the obligation of bedikah falls on him. Furthermore, I would assume, l’aniyas da’ati, that the Ran agrees with the Tosfos about the obligation of bedikah being completely based on who was obligated when the fourteenth began.

Therefore, I think that the two cases would play out as follows: if the keys were given before the fourteenth, since—when the fourteenth began—the tenant had the keys (and through them access to the house) and the pre-assumed acquisition of the house, he is obligated to do the bedikah. But if the keys were given after the fourteenth had already begun, since—when the fourteenth began—the tenant did not have the keys (and therefore he didn’t have the access to the house), the obligation is on the landowner (even though the tenant acquired the house before the fourteenth). This works well, but the question is: why does the Ran need to add in the whole kinyan discussion? Can’t he hold completely like Tosfos, since after all, they both conclude that the obligation for bedikah is based on access? I would answer based on the Chiddushei Basra, that although the Ran and the Tosfos are very similar, they argue about one thing—what constitutes sufficient connection to the house. While the Tosfos seem to hold that it is enough for the tenant to simply intend to acquire the house, according to the Ran, it seems that the tenant needs to do the actual acquisition to be considered connected to the house enough that he is obligated in bedikah. Thus, the Ran did not completely agree with Tosfos.

Last but not least, how would the Bartenura understand the conclusion of this Gemara? The Bartenura does not explicitly address the end of this Gemara in his commentary. However, l’aniyas da’ati, we can speculate that the Bartenura would conclude that the obligation of bedikah is a “selfish” obligation which falls on the one who has access to the chametz, and it could be that he would agree with Tosfos’ logic that this evaluation of who is obligated is based solely on access to the chametz when the fourteenth began. Therefore, he would explain the two cases very similarly to the reading’s of the Ran and the Tosfos—if the landlord gave the tenant the keys before the fourteenth, the obligation is on the tenant, since he had the keys (and therefore the access) when the fourteenth began. But if the landlord gave the tenant the key on the fourteenth, since—at the beginning of the fourteenth—only the landlord had access, the obligation is on the landlord. As for the connection to the house, I don’t see any way to figure out how much, if any, connection to the house he thinks is necessary.

In conclusion, this is my understanding (based on Rabbi Mendelson’s shiurim) of the three opinions in re-
gards to *bedikah*, how they would read the question of the *Gemara*, and how they would read the Tana-
itic statement the *Gemara* brings to answer its question.
Destruction of Chametz (Pesachim 4b)

Ezra Schechter (‘22)

We have a mitzvah to destroy our chametz for Pesach, as learned from the possekuach bayom harishon tashbisu se’or mibateichem - but on the first day you shall destroy the leaven from your houses (Shemos 12:15). The question is, how do we fulfil this mitzvas asei of destroying our chametz? Can this be fulfilled in a passive manner, or only as an active physical action?

The Minchas Chinuch discusses whether this mitzvah can be fulfilled passively, that is, whether or not you can fulfil the mitzvah by simply not owning chametz in the first place. For example, the mitzvah of resting on Shabbos (which comes from the same root as the word tashbisu, literally meaning “rest”) is fulfilled merely by abstaining from performing melachah, so it could be that tashbisu could be fulfilled by simply “resting” from owning chametz, whether or not there was anything to destroy. Alternatively, the mitzvah of tashbisu may be an active mitzvah, in which case one would need to buy chametz in order to destroy it to fulfill their chiyuv. This could be compared to the mitzvah of tzitzis, which only exists if one wears a garment of four corners, but if one does not wear such a garment, they do not fulfill any mitzvah. Thus, tashbisu would also be a mitzvah to acquire and destroy chametz.

The Minchas Chinuch answers this question the following way. The Gemara (Pesachim 4b) quotes Abaye as bringing two different pesukim: one, shiva’as yamim se’or lo yamitzeh bibateichem (seven days you shall not find leaven in your house), and two, the posseku we quoted earlier, that one must destroy their chametz on the first day. Based on these two pesukim, Abaye attempts to prove that chametz must be destroyed on the 14th of Nissan, the day before Pesach. Rashi points out that the proof from these pesukim is that they would appear to contradict one another - how can one not have chametz for seven days, if they are obligated to destroy it on the first day? Rashi explains that therefore, it must be that the second posseku, which says “the first day” must refer to Erev Pesach, the 14th of Nissan. The Minchas Chinuch uses this Rashi to answer the aforementioned dilemma as to whether tashbisu is passive or active. If tashbisu was truly passive, then there would be no contradiction, as indeed, the was to fulfil tashbisu on the first day would simply be to have no chametz at that point, which would be perfectly in line with the commandment not to have chametz for seven days. Since Rashi says there is a contradiction, we see that according to Abaye, the mitzvah of tashbisu must be an active one.

Rashi holds that the main mitzvah of tashbisu is to make the chametz valueless in your heart, from the fact that the posseku does not say “tiva’aru”, meaning to destroy, but only tashbisu, meaning to remove. Rambam agrees with Rashi (Hilchos Chametz Umatzah 2:2), and holds that the way to fulfill the mitzvah is by making the chametz worthless in your heart like dust. Tosfos, however, holds that to fulfill tashbisu, what is needed is a physical destruction such as burning. Tosfos also holds that bittul chametz (nullifying the chametz is needed, but not because of tashbisu, but because of concerns of bal yira’eh ubal yimatzei (the prohibition to own chametz on yom tov).

The Ran holds that on a diraraban level, there are two ways to fulfill the mitzvah, and you can do one or the other. One can either destroy the chametz physically, or mentally nullify it and deem it out of one’s property. On a diraraban level, to fulfill the mitzvah both forms of destruction are necessary. This is because people can not be trusted to truly be mevatel the chametz without any second thoughts, and even if he does, one could come to eat the chametz if it remains lying around. Thus, the rabban required both bittul bileiv and physical destruction of the chametz.
Shitas HaRambam On Bittul And Bedikas Chametz (Pesachim 6b)

Shimi Kaufman ('21)
Editor-In-Chief, Shema Koleinu

I. The Gemara (Pesachim 6b) brings a discussion as to why it is necessary to do both bedikas chametz (searching for chametz) and bittul chametz (nullifying the chametz in one’s heart) before Pesach. The Gemara says:

Rabbi Yehudah said in the name of Rav: one who does bedikah must also do bittul. Why is this so? If we will say it is because of crumbs which may not be found through bedikah, this cannot be, because crumbs are not significant enough to count as chametz…. Rava said: this is a gezeirah, lest one find a nice piece of chametz “and his mind is on it”. But, why can he not simply do bittul at the moment when he finds the chametz? But, he may find it after the time when it is assur, at which point he can no longer do bittul, as Rabbi Eliazar taught: there are two things which are not in a person’s reshus (legal ownership), but which the Torah considers to be in his reshus anyway. These are a pit in a public area (for which one is held accountable for damage caused even though he does not technically own it), and chametz on Pesach (which is removed from a person’s legal ownership once the holiday starts, but which is still considered his in regards to the aveirah of owning chametz). Since the chametz is no longer in his legal possession once it becomes assur, he cannot do bittul when he finds the chametz, and thus must do bittul beforehand.

Most of the Rishonim understand the phrase “a piece of chametz which his mind is on it” (gluska yafeh vida’ato ale’ah) as meaning that the ba’al habayis needs to do bittul lest he find chametz in the middle of Pesach and have a desire to keep it around, causing him to violate the issur of bal yira’eh ubal yimatzei (owning chametz). This is certainly the opinion of Rashi (ibid. d’h vida’ato ale’ah) who explains that the concern of the Gemara is that upon finding chametz which he missed in his original bedikah, the owner of the chametz will delay burning it for a moment, and thereby violate bal yira’eh ubal yimatzei in that moment. However, the Rambam (Hilchos Chametz Umatzah 3:8) has a rather unique way of reading this Gemara. He writes:

...therefore, if one did not do bittul before the sixth hour [on Erev Pesach], and he finds chametz which his mind had been on previously, and which he forgot about during the time of burning, he violates the prohibition of bal yira’eh ubal yimatzei, since he did not destroy or nullify the chametz. And now, the bittul is ineffective, since the chametz is not really in his domain, but the possuk makes it as though it is in his domain to obligate him in bal yira’eh ubal yimatzei. And he is obligated to destroy the chametz whenever he finds it. If he found it on yom tov, he should place a vessel atop it until evening (chol hamoed) and burn it then. However, if the chametz is hekdesh (sanctified for the Beis Hamikdash), then this is unnecessary, as everyone naturally separates from it.

The Rambam’s psak here includes a radical reading of the aforementioned Gemara, as he renders the phrase “da’ato ale’ah” as meaning that he knew about the chametz, and forgot about it when he was
burning his chametz. (The source for this explanation would appear to be rooted in the text of Rabbeinu Chananel, who renders the Gemara with the words “glaska yafeh dida'atei alah”, meaning a piece of bread which his mind was on in the past.) This is strange for several reasons. One, this implies that according to the Rambam, the only reason why bittul is necessary when bedikah was already done is because of this extremely specific case, as this is the case which the Gemara concluded was the reason why one who did bedikah must also do bittul. Why does the Rambam not require bittul for any other reason other than this? And two, why would the Rambam understand the Gemara in this far-out manner, when it would be perfectly feasible to understand in a similar vein to Rashi, that the concern is that you will desire a certain piece of chametz and violate bal yira'eh ubal yimatzei?

Additionally, there is another question we can ask on this Rambam. The end of the Rambam brings the halachah that if one finds chametz on the first day of Pesach, they should cover it with a kli and wait for nightfall, at which point they should burn it. This ruling comes from a Gemara (Pesachim 6a), and the point is that since the chametz cannot be moved due to the issur of muktzah, it should be covered so that nobody will come to eat it. Rashi, commenting on this Gemara, explains that this is dealing with a case where the owner already did bittul and bedikah, such that there is no concern of bal yira'eh ubal yimatzei. Rashi’s language implies that the reason this must be the case is because the thing which is preventing the movement of this chametz is the issur of muktzah, a dirabanan. If there were to be bal yira'eh ubal yimatzei in this case, this dioraisa concern would certainly override the dirabanan of muktzah. Thus, the case must be one where bedikah and bittul were performed, and the only concern with this chametz is that someone may eat it. However, the Rambam implies that the case in which one would cover the chametz with a kli is the same case mentioned earlier in the halachah, namely, where one did bedikah and not bittul. Thus, we are left with a question: if bittul was not done in this case, why would we stop at covering the chametz with a kli? At the very least, we should destroy the chametz to fulfil the dioraisa obligation of tashbisu (destroying chametz), which should override the dirabanan of muktzah? Why is the Rambam not forced, like Rashi, to establish the case of this Gemara as one without concerns of tashbisu and bal yira'eh ubal yimatzei?

II. In regards to the first question, what emerges from the Rambam is that the Rambam has no concern that you will come to violate bal yira'eh ubal yimatzei upon finding chametz, as if he did maintain that this was a concern, then it would be sufficient to say that bittul is needed because one may find the chametz and violate bal yira'eh ubal yimatzei. Since he does not understand the Gemara in this manner, it implies that he does not believe the reason for bittul is to prevent future bal yira'eh ubal yimatzei violations. Rather, we must say that the Rambam maintains that the reason why bittul is done is not to prevent future bal yira'eh ubal yimatzei violations over, but for bal yira'eh ubal yimatzei on chametz which is hidden in your property. This is why the Rambam understands the Gemara’s phrase as speaking about chametz which the owner knew about and forgot about - since the Rambam holds that bal yira'eh ubal yimatzei is violated by being mekayem biratzon, purposefully keeping chametz in your property, the Rambam maintains that bittul must be done lest you violate bal yira'eh ubal yimatzei on chametz which you forgot about, but did know about at one point, making its existence a violation of kiyum biratzon.

However, this understanding presents another problem. The text of the Gemara, after stating that bittul is needed for chametz which is da’ato ale'ah, asks that if this was the case, then it would be sufficient to perform bittul upon finding the chametz. If we understand the Gemara like Rashi, this makes sense; the Gemara is asking why it would not be possible to do bittul upon finding the chametz, thereby making sure the owner will not have a moment in which he is mekayem biratzon. However, according to the Rambam, this presents a difficulty - if the reason bittul is needed is to avoid bal yira'eh ubal yimatzei on chametz which was forgotten about at the time of burning, then what help is it to do bittul upon finding the chametz - at
that point, you have already violated bal yira’eh ubal yimatzei for the entire time that you didn’t know about the chametz! The Gemara’s question would thus seem illogical according to the Rambam.

One potential way to answer this question would be to suggest that the Gemara’s question was why one cannot do bittul upon finding the chametz in order to be menatek (rectify) the bal yira’eh ubal yimatzei which occurred while the chametz had yet to be found. This would be based on another Gemara (95a) which says that bal yira’eh ubal yimatzei is a lav hanitak le’aseih, a lav which can be rectified by fulfilling an aseih, namely tashbisu. However, the Rambam does not bring down the rule that bal yira’eh ubal yimatzei is a lav hanitak le’aseih! (This is likely based on an alternative text of the Gemara on 95a found in the Rabbeinu Chananel, which replaces the phrase “lav hanitak le’aseih” with “lav she’ein bo ma’aseh” - a lav which has no action involved). Thus, according to the Rambam, the question once again returns - what was the intention of the Gemara in asking this question, that one should just do bittul upon finding the chametz?

To answer this question, we must first look at why it is that the Rambam does not rule that bal yira’eh ubal yimatzei is a lav hanitak le’aseih. Rav Eliyahu Baruch Shulman shlita, one of the RIETS Roshei Yeshiva, explained based on the Rambam (ibid. 2:2), which rules that the main tashbisu prescribed by the Torah is when you are mevateh the chametz in your heart, with the bedikah and physical destruction of the chametz only being necessary midirabanan. Since the Gemara says that bittul no longer takes effect after chatzos on Erev Pesach, it emerges that tashbisu cannot be fulfilled during the time when bal yira’eh ubal yimatzei is in effect, since even if one was to physically burn the chametz, they would be lacking the bittul bileiv which is needed to fulfill the mitzvah. In other words, it is not that the Rambam holds bal yira’eh ubal yimatzei is not nitak le’aseih, but rather, that the aseih cannot be accomplished which bal yira’eh ubal yimatzei is in effect!

In this light, Rav Shulman brilliantly explained the Gemara’s question and answer according to the Rambam. After the Gemara states that bittul is needed in case there is chametz which the owner knew about and forgot about, the Gemara asks why it is not sufficient to do bittul upon finding the chametz, in order to be menatek the lav through the mitzvah of tashbisu. In response, the Gemara responds that bittul cannot be done from chatzos of Erev Pesach and onwards - the exact reason why the Rambam maintains that tashbisu is not menatek bal yira’eh ubal yimatzei. Thus, the Gemara reads perfectly according to the Rambam.

Based on this, we can also answer our second question. According to Rashi, tashbisu can be fulfilled before yom tov as well as during it. Thus, for the case where the Gemara mandates placing a kli atop the chametz to prevent it from being eaten, Rashi is forced to understand the case as one where bittul and bedikah were already done, such that there would be no reason to override the preexisting issue of muktzah. However, according to the Rambam, even if bittul was not done, there would still be no reason to permit muktzah to be overridden, as the mitzvah of tashbisu can anyways not be fulfilled during Pesach! Thus, the Rambam rules that even in a case where bittul was not done, the only solution to finding chametz on Pesach is to cover it with a kli. III. However, this understanding presents more difficulties based on another ruling of the Rambam. The Rambam (3:5-6) rules that if one did not perform bedikah before yom tov, they may do so on yom tov. Based on what we have explained in the Rambam, one would expect that the purpose of this bedikah is solely in order to remove future violations of bal yira’eh ubal yimatzei, since the mitzvah of tashbisu cannot be fulfilled on yom tov in any event. However, the Rambam also says that one would make a
berachah on this bedikah, whether or not it was done on yom tov. If the purpose of this bedikah was simply in order to remove bal yira’eh ubal yimatzei, then there would be no reason to make a berachah, as we do not make a berachah on simply removing issurim from our homes! (As the Maggid Mishnah points out, we do not make berachah on the bedikah done after yom tov, since the purpose of that is just to remove chametz which was kept on Pesach, which is forbidden.) It is implied therefore, that a mitzvah is accomplished with this bedikah. But if tashbisu cannot be fulfilled on yom tov, what mitzvah is there?

Lifi aniyas da’ati, perhaps the answer is based on the fact that for the Rambam, tashbisu still technically exists on yom tov, just that it is impossible to fulfill because of the fact that bittul cannot be done. However, in a hypothetical world in which bittul could be performed on Pesach, the mitzvah of tashbisu would still be in full force on yom tov. The Rambam implies (ibid. 2:3) that bedikah and biyur is itself a dirabanan form of tashbisu. Thus, even if the dioraisa version of tashbisu cannot be performed on yom tov due to the fact that bittul cannot be done, there is no reason why this should bear on the dirabanan form of tashbisu. In other words, both the dioraisa and dirabanan versions of tashbisu exist on yom tov, just that the lack of bittul prevents us from doing the dioraisa one. It therefore makes sense why we make a berachah before the bedikah done on yom tov, since this still fulfills a mitzvah of tashbisu, albeit a dirabanan one. (This dirabanan version of tashbisu would presumably not be sufficient to be menatek the dioraisa of bal yira’eh ubal yimatzei).

However, all of this presents another question. If it is true that there is a dirabanan of tashbisu on yom tov, done through bedikah, then the Rambam should allow a person to destroy chametz which they found on yom tov, overriding the muktzah issue. Before, we assumed there was no mitzvah to be accomplished in destroying the chametz, so muktzah could not be overturned. But once we see that there is a mitzvah involved in destroying the chametz on yom tov, why do we only allow covering the chametz with a klii?

There are two potential answers to this question. We can suggest that because in the case of covering the chametz with a kli, bedikah was already done, and it is only bittul which is lacking, the bedikah done on yom tov is no longer considered a mitzvah, as the mitzvah of bedikah is based on whether the house had bedikah done, not on whether all the chametz was found. This can be proven by a logical sequence: if this was not the case, no berachah should ever be permitted on bedikah, as one runs the risk of a berachah livatalah if they miss one piece of chametz. Rather, the mitzvah must be to do a bedikah on the house as a whole. Thus, since bedikah was already done before yom tov, there is no additional mitzvah of bedikah ubiyur when the chametz is found on yom tov. Thus, all that is permitted is to cover the chametz with a kli, as there is no dirabanan of tashbisu to fulfill anymore. (This is also implied in the Rambam, who says that a berachah is made on bedikah during yom tov only if you did not do bedikah beforehand.)

Alternatively, my chavrusa, Yeshurin Sorscher, suggested that such a bedikah could be similar to a case of a milah shelo bizmanah. Normally, a bris milah on the eighth day would override Shabbos. However, if the milah is done after the eighth day, it no longer overrides Shabbos, since it could have been fulfilled earlier. Similarly, we can suggest that even though there is a mitzvah of bedikah on Pesach, since it could have been fulfilled before Pesach, it cannot override the issur of muktzah.

There is much more to this sugya to be discussed, and much more which has not been written here. I would invite any questions or comments to be sent to my email (skaufman@yuhsbstudents.org). Chag Kasher Visameiach to all!
Can You Be Yotzei With A Child’s Matzah? (Pesachim 38a)

Akiva Kra (’21)

At the Seder, when matzah is distributed for matzah, korech and tzafun, everyone, including children at the Seder, are given matzah to fulfill their required amount. Often, a child will eat part of their matzah, and then decide they do not want all of it. When this happens, can the child’s matzah be given to someone else to fulfill their required amount? In Pesachim (38a) it is taught that the matzah one uses to fulfill the mitzvah must belong to them (codified in Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim 454:4 and Mishnah Berurah ibid. 15). However, a problem arises from a Gemara in Sukkah (46b). There, the Gemara says that “a child is able to acquire possession, but not transfer it”. If the child has acquired matzah at the Seder and no longer wants it, can someone else have it transferred to them?

Rav Yitzchok Zilberstein brings down a related question in the Chashukei Chemed. A Jewish soldier had a brief break on Pesach night in 1948, and was able to quickly visit a Seder. There was no extra matzah available, but there was a piece of matzah that had been given to a child. Can the soldier fulfill his obligation if he’s given the matzah from the child? Rav Zilberstein demonstrates the potential problem based on a Beis Yosef (Orach Chayim 454). In his time, people used to all bake their matzos in the same oven. In the rush before Pesach, people would sometimes end up with matzah that would not belong to them. The Beis Yosef quotes the Rokeach that to avoid any issues, everyone would declare that if someone else got their matzah, it can be kept as a gift. The Magen Avraham quotes this as halachah. Rav Zilberstein notes this leniency cannot be extended to a child, since there is no mechanism to transfer ownership from the child.

To answer our question about using leftover matzah from a child or the question about the soldier who crashed a Seder, one has to determine at what point one has acquired food at their meal. In other words, does the child truly own the matzah given to him? There are two different approaches that lead to differing halachic conclusions.

The first is that of the Rama (Even Ha’ezer 28:17), who rules that if a guest sits at the table of someone else, takes the portion which was served to him, and uses it to sanctify a marriage, the marriage is valid. According to this understanding, one has claimed the food when they take it. If this is the case, then presumably one may not use the leftover matzah of a child, as it is already part of the child's possession, and the child cannot give it to someone else.

However, a second approach can be found in the Ba’er Heiteiv on the same page as the opinion of Rama. He quotes (28:32) from the Maharit (Vol. 1, siman 150) that if one is a guest, the food only is considered their possession when it goes into their mouth. He even says that if a host puts food on the table in front of a guest and then sees someone he wants to marry, the host can take the food off the table and use it as a kinyan to marry the person! With this understanding that possession happens when the food enters one’s mouth, any leftover matzah does not belong to the child. (However, our case is not exactly analogous to the case addressed by the Ba’er Heiteiv. If the child started consuming part of a piece of matzah, perhaps at that point, he acquires possession of the whole piece. If so, the leftover portion of his piece would be problematic for an adult to use according to all opinions.) Accordingly, an adult would be able to use the matzah to fulfill his obligation.
However, the Rama would presumably agree that the \textit{ba’al habayis} can retain ownership if he verbalizes explicit intent that he will retain ownership until the \textit{matzah} is consumed. Therefore, to avoid our question, when there are children at the \textit{Seder}, perhaps the \textit{ba’al habayis} should declare that any \textit{matzah} given to a child does not enter the child’s possession until the child consumes that portion of the \textit{matzah}.

If the \textit{ba’al habayis} did not make this declaration when the \textit{matzah} is placed in front of the child, the child possibly acquires the \textit{matzah} immediately. While it may be problematic for an adult to then use the leftover \textit{matzah} for his \textit{mitzvah}, this issue may not apply if another child takes the leftover \textit{matzah}. Generally, a child must properly fulfill a \textit{mitzvah} to fulfill the obligation of \textit{chinuch}. Nonetheless, it is possible a child may not be required to own \textit{matzah} in order to fulfill his \textit{mitzvah}. We can derive this concept from a comment of the \textit{Hagaos Ashri} (to the Rosh \textit{Sukkah} 4:6) regarding the \textit{mitzvah} of \textit{chinuch} for \textit{lulav}. The \textit{Hagaos Ashri} quotes the \textit{Or Zarua}, who says that \textit{chinuch} is about showing a child the proper practice of \textit{mitzvos} with objects that satisfy all the physical requirements for the \textit{mitzvah}. However, one need not satisfy non-physical elements to fulfill the \textit{mitzvah} of \textit{chinuch}. Therefore, he maintains one may lend to a child a \textit{lulav} that is \textit{kosher}, since an adult must have ownership of a \textit{lulav} to fulfill his obligation, but this requirement does not apply to a child. The child must experience shaking a \textit{lulav} with all required physical attributes, but ownership of the \textit{lulav} does not matter for \textit{chinuch} according to the \textit{Hagaos Ashri}. Similarly, it seems that a child should be able to fulfill his \textit{mitzvah} of \textit{matzah} even if another child had previously taken possession of that piece and is unable to transfer ownership.

May it be the will of Hashem that we will soon merit to fully fulfill the \textit{mitzvah} of \textit{matzah}, together with the \textit{Korban Pesach}, when we are zocheh to be \textit{oleh laregel}. 
Tashbisu When Erev Pesach Falls On Shabbos (Pesachim 49a)

Yonatan Burns ('22)

This year is a unique year in which Erev Pesach falls out on Shabbos. This of course comes with many implications and complexities in regard to the realm of chametz. In addition to the commandments of not eating chametz and not possessing it during Pesach, there is a separate mitzvah of biyur chametz, to remove and destroy the chametz. This is evident in the pesukim of Sefer Shemos. In Parshas Bo, it is written "on the first day, you should remove leaven from your houses." (Shemos 12:15) The Gemara in Pesachim (5a) clarifies that "the first day" really means Erev Pesach, as opposed to the first day of Pesach itself, as to not conflict with the melachah of lighting a fire on Yom Tov.

In the Gemara elsewhere in Pesachim (21a), Rabbi Yehuda notes that "ein biyur chametz ela sereifah" - there is no biyur chametz except through burning. According to him, the only way to accomplish biyur is through burning the chametz. The Chachamim hold that biyur can also be accomplished via crumbling up any chametz to get blown by the wind or dispersed into the sea. This machlokes between Rabbi Yehuda and the Chachamim can be used to explain another machlokes later in the masechta. On Daf 49a, there is a disagreement between Rabbi Meir and the Chachamim regarding what to do with chametz when the 14th of Nissan falls out on a Shabbos. Rabbi Meir holds the position that one must burn all his chametz before Shabbos starts (Rashi clarifies that one may keep what they need for their Shabbos meal). On the other hand, the Chachamim believe that one should remove his chametz at the normal time, the morning of the 14th of Nissan.

These two machloksim are connected. Rabbi Meir clearly understands the mitzvah of biyur chametz like Rabbi Yehudah. Because he believes that chametz needs to be burned, and one may not light a fire on Shabbos, the only way one can burn the chametz when Erev Pesach falls on Shabbos is to burn the chametz beforehand. (The Rashash on Daf 21b even supports Rabbi Meir’s exclusion of chametz for Seudas Shabbos, as he points out that one can fulfill burning through eating. He says that body heat is like a fire, and that the possuk compares man to a forest, thus making eating equivalent to burning.) The Chachamim are consistent with their own argument. Since they believe that biyur chametz can include methods that are allowed on Shabbos, they hold that one should remove chametz at the normal time of biyur.

Rav Chaim Soleveichik, in his sefer Chidushei Rabbeinu Chaim, suggests that the machlokes between Rabbi Yehudah and the Chachamim is not only about the method of disposal, but about the inherent relationship between chametz and the mitzvah of biyur. According to Rabbi Yehudah, the mitzvah lies in the chametz itself, and therefore the chametz needs to be actively destroyed, thus one must burn it. The Chachamim believe that the mitzvah is simply to ensure that the person no longer has chametz, and therefore any method which removes the chametz from one’s reshus is valid.

The Steipler Gaon addresses this active versus passive distinction. He comments on the discussion pertaining to whether or not one needs to go out of their way to acquire chametz for the sake of the mitzvah, stating that biyur can be fulfilled passively. (Kehilas Yaakov) It is possible that we also can learn from the Torah’s wording “on the first day you should remove” (Shemos 12:15) that the mitzvah is passive, as the Torah saying that one should not have chametz by the time the first day comes. This seems
to support the Chachamim and the view that chametz does not need to be burned to count as the mitzvah of biyur.

Although we have established that biyur does not require burning the chametz, it is best to try to fulfil both shittos by taking the approach of Rabbi Meir when Erev Yom Tov falls out on Shabbos. Burning all chametz other than what’s needed for Seudas Shabbos has become the custom over time, and is the approach taken by the Shulchan Aruch (444:1) and the Rambam (Hilchos Chametz Umatzah 3:3). If one did not burn his chametz before Pesach or has much left over after his Shabbos Seudah, there are still multiple ways to still get rid of the chametz without violating Shabbos. One option is to eat the chametz (which the Rashash even likens to burning.) Another option is to follow the Chachamim and crumble up the chametz, and throw it to the wind or sea, or even to flush it down a toilet. If there is too large a quantity of chametz to be disposed of in this manner, one can pour chemicals or bleach to make the chametz inedible. Alternatively, if one lives within an eiruv, he can dispose of the chametz in a public garbage bin and announce that it is hefker (ownerless).
Spending Money For Daled Kosos (Pesachim 99b)

Elisha Price ('23)

The Gemara in Maseches Pesachim (99b) quotes a mishnah which states that even a poor person (afilu ani biyisroel) who is allowed to take from the soup-kitchens (the tamchoi) must obtain four glasses of wine for the mitzvah of daled kosos. The Rashbam (d’h vi’afilu) comments that an ani must spend every penny he has to get the wine, and if he doesn’t have money to spend, he is obligated to rent himself out, borrow money, or sell the clothes off his back to obtain the means to purchase the proper amount of wine for the daled kosos.

However, this Rashbam seems incongruous with a Gemara in Maseches Sukkah (41b) which relates a story about Rabban Gamliel: Rabban Gamliel was on a ship and had no access to an esrog, so he bought one from a fellow passenger for one thousand zuz (a measure of currency). The Gemara asks how he was allowed to spend this much on a mitzvah? Shouldn’t there be a cap, since esrogim never cost that much? The Gemara answers that Rabban Gamliel was especially rich, so he could spend that much on an esrog. This implies that one who isn’t rich would not be required to do so. Furthermore, the Gemara praises this act as something uniquely special. If one was required to do what he did, this would have been perfectly ordinary. Clearly, something about this purchase was indeed extraordinary. Additionally, the Gemara in Megillah (27b) says that R’ Zakkai’s mother sold her head covering so that they would have money to purchase wine for kiddush. This would be a support for the Rashbam’s opinion, except that the Gemara doesn’t say this is required, but lists it as an attribute of R’ Zakkai (and his mother) through which he merited a long life. In light of these Gemaros, why does the Rashbam frame it as an obligation to spend money beyond one’s means to afford daled kosos, if this is seen only as something extraordinarily praiseworthy and not obligatory in other contexts?

Furthermore, it seems like we don’t pasken like this Rashbam. The Rama comments on the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chayim 656:1) that one is not permitted to spend more than one fifth of his total assets on a mitzvas asei (positive commandment).

However, the Rashbam is not without support. The Gemara in Kiddushin (29b) says that one is required to spend their last five sel’aim to fulfill the mitzvah of pidyon haben (redemption of the firstborn son). This would imply that mitzvos do require you to empty your bank account to fulfill them. Therefore, the Rashbam is no longer under attack; he can rely on this Gemara for backing.

But now we have a stirah (contradiction) between Gemaros! The Gemara in Kiddushin states that a person needs to spend every penny to fulfill a mitzvah should it be needed. The Gemara in Sukkah and Megillah states that one does not have to spend everything; there is a limit to how much one is required to spend on a mitzvah. How can we resolve these two seemingly conflicting ideas?

The Biyur Halacha (O.C. 656:1) presents an answer to this seeming contradiction. He suggests two possibilities. His first answer is that there is a distinction between the two Gemaros in the form of pricing. In Kiddushin, the price of a pidyon haben is five sel’aim, a set and fair price. Therefore, you would be required to spend your last five sel’aim on it. However in a case of unfair pricing, you would be liable to pay only one fifth of your assets to attain the mitzvah. Therefore, in the story in Maseches Sukkah, Rabban Gamliel was buying a ridiculously overpriced esrog, and he was therefore not required to purchase...
As a result, the Gemara views his action as one of self-sacrifice which was not strictly necessary. This explanation would support the Rashbam's view that an ani must sell his clothing to buy daled kosos, since it would fall within the category of "fairly priced items." For the most part, when an ani buys wine, they will buy the cheapest bottles they can find, which will therefore be fairly (or at least cheaply) priced.

The Biyur Halacha also records a second answer, namely, that one is only obligated to spend all of his assets when he has the ability to earn more money (i.e. he has a job). However, if one has no source of income and has only a certain amount of money, he is not required to spend more than one fifth of it on any given mitzvah. The simple reading of this Biyur Halacha seems to go against the Rashbam, because an ani who lives off the soup kitchen obviously does not have a job! But perhaps, this second opinion in the Biyur Halacha can fit according to the Rashbam too. The Rashbam says that if one doesn’t have enough money to buy wine for the daled kosos he has to do one of three things: rent himself out, borrow, or sell their clothing. If he rents himself out, he now has a job, and is now obligated to empty his pockets to purchase the wine. If he borrows, which - while not ideal - is a source of income as well, he is also technically getting money. And lastly, if he sells his clothing, this is also a short-term form of income, and as such, he would also be obligated to spend his last cent on daled kosos.

The Avnei Nezer gives an alternate answer. Perhaps daled kosos would require you to sell your clothing or borrow money because it is a kiyum of pirsumei nisa (spreading God's miracles) and therefore, it is a completely different case from all other mitzvos. If you are unable to don tefillin because you cannot afford to purchase a pair, Hashem understands, and you aren't liable to sell the shirt off your back to buy a pair of tefillin. However, by pirsumei nisa, the whole mitzvah is to spread the nissim of Hashem to other people. So if (for example) you can’t afford Chanukah candles, no one will know that you couldn’t light them for monetary reasons; all they’ll see is that there are no candles, and therefore no pirsumei nisa. Hashem is able to take our thoughts into account, but other people cannot; therefore, for mitzvos of pirsumei nisa, including daled kosos, you must spend everything you have and more, because you absolutely must do this mitzvah, since it is based on the perception of others. If we use this approach, then perhaps even the Rama (who says that for all positive commandments one isn’t permitted to spend more than twenty percent of his assets) would agree that because of pirsumei nisa, an ani would have to sell his clothing to be able to acquire daled kosos.

For all of these reasons, it makes sense according to the Rashbam that you must sell your clothes or borrow or work to obtain the funds necessary to procure wine for daled kosos.
Shitas HaRambam On Eating Charoses (Pesachim 114a)

Yosef Weiner ('23)

The mishnah states (Pesachim 114a)

They bring before him matzah, lettuce, charoses, and two dishes, even though charoses is not a mitzvah. Rabbi Elazer ben Tzadok says that charoses is a mitzvah.

The Rambam in his Peirush Hamishnayos writes that according to Rabbi Elazer ben Tzadok, one would be required to recite a birchas hamitzvah upon eating the charoses, and then states that the halachah does not follow this opinion. Two things emerge from the Rambam’s statement: one, that he paskens like the Chachomim, and that Rabbi Elazer ben Tzadok is of the opinion that charoses is a full mitzvah, just like marror and matzah.

However, the Rambam in his Mishnah Torah (Hilchos Chametz Umatzah 7:11) writes that charoses is a mitzvah dirabanan, followed by instructions on how to make it, and then writes that we bring the charoses to the table on the nights of Pesach. Thus, the Rambam in the Mishneh Torah appears to rule like Rabbi Elazer ben Tzadok, unlike his ruling in the Peirush Hamishnayos.

There is another contradiction that emerges between the Rambam’s Peirush Hamishnayos and Mishneh Torah. In the Peirush Hamishnayos, the Rambam writes that according to Rabbi Elazer ben Tzadok, charoses is a mitzvah, and thus one recites a berachah of al achilas charoses. However, in the Mishneh Torah, the Rambam writes that one only recites a berachah on matzah and marror, implying that charoses does not have its own berachah.

Rabeinu Manuach answers that the reason why the Rambam in his Mishneh Torah does not write that charoses has its own berachah is because it is never eaten alone, but rather is always secondary to something else. However, the question still remains as to why the Rambam did not say this in the Peirush Hamishnayos, and instead wrote that according to Rabbi Elazer ben Tzadok one must recite a berachah.

Rav Yoshe Ber Soloveitchik answers that the two contradictions are connected. According to the Rambam’s understanding in the Peirush Hamishnayos, the Chachamim are of the opinion that the purpose of the charoses is to be used as a dip, whereas according to Rabbi Elazer ben Tzadok, charoses is a mitzvah in and of itself, just like matzah and marror, and the main way to fulfill that mitzvah is by eating the charoses. Consequently, one recites a berachah upon eating it.

However, in the Mishneh Torah, it seems that the Rambam holds that the mitzvah of charoses is an independent mitzvah, as he states that charoses is a mitzvah dirabanan, as a remembrance of the mortar which the Jews worked with in Egypt. Looking at the text of the Rambam, he concludes by stating that we bring the charoses to the table on the night of Pesach. The question arises as to why the Rambam...
specifies that we bring it to the table, as this seems superfluous. Furthermore, why doesn’t the Rambam write that it is a mitzvah to eat the charoses on the night of Pesach, like he does when discussing the halachos of karpas, matzah, and marror? Here, where the main discussion of charoses is, the Rambam only says that charoses is a mitzvah dirabanan, not that there is any mitzvah to eat it. This problem is magnified when one compares the Rambam’s wording by charoses to his wording by marror. Regarding marror, the Rambam writes that it is not a mitzvah dioraisa to eat it by itself, but rather it is a mitzvah dirabanan to eat it without the Korban Pesach. Notably, the Rambam does not say that it is a mitzvah to bring the marror to the table, but that it is a mitzvah to eat it. Accordingly, the Rambam’s expression that the mitzvah is to bring the charoses to the table requires an explanation.

Rav Soloveitchik explained that according to the Rambam in the Mishneh Torah, Rabbi Elazar ben Tzadok holds that there is not a mitzvah to eat the charoses, but rather that there is a mitzvah to bring the charoses to the table. Thus, it emerges that the machlokes is that according to the Chachamim, the reason for bringing the charoses on the table is to serve as a dip, while bringing it to the table is not a mitzvah, whereas Rabbi Elazar ben Tadok is of the opinion that it is a mitzvas dirabanan to bring it to the table, but there is no mitzvah in eating it at all. According to him, we only dip the marror and matzah into it, thereby attaching it to the other mitzvos of the night, in order to avoid bringing the charoses to the table for no practical application. However, the main mitzvah is simply to bring the charoses to the table.

In conclusion, it emerges that the Mishneh Torah and Peirush Hamishnayos contradict each other regarding whether according to Rabbi Elazar ben Tadok one would need to recite a berachah on the charoses, because in the Peirush Hamishnayos the Rambam thought that Rabbi Elazar ben Tadok was of the opinion the mitzvah of charoses is eating it, just like matzah and marror, and thus requires a berachah. However, the Rambam in the Mishneh Torah holds that the mitzvah of charoses is bringing it to the table. Therefore, he holds that no berachah is needed, as there is no reason to make a berachah upon eating it, as that is not a mitzvah, and the bringing of it to the table is not an action that would warrant a berachah. (This would not work according to the Rabbeinu Manoach quoted earlier, that the berachah is not recited on the charoses since it is eaten with other foods.)

Rav Soloveitchik explained that this distinction also explains the contradiction between the Peirush Hamishnayos, where the Rambam rules like the Chachamim, and the Mishneh Torah, where he rules like Rabbi Elazar ben Tadok. The reason why the Rambam ruled like the Chachamim in the Peirush Hamishnayos is that it is clear from the practice of the entire world that a berachah is not recited upon eating the charoses. Therefore, in the Peirush Hamishnayos, where the Rambam thinks that Rabbi Elazar ben Tadok’s opinion is that there is a mitzvah to eat charoses, and thus a berachah must be recited, he is forced to rule like the Chachamim, as we find there is no berachah for charoses practically. However, in his Mishneh Torah, where the Rambam is of the opinion that the mitzvah of charoses according to Rabbi Elazar ben Tadok is bringing it and not eating it, the fact that there is no practical berachah is not relevant, as Rabbi Elazar ben Tadok would agree that no berachah is recited upon bringing the charoses. Thus, the Rambam is free to pasken like Rabbi Elazar ben Tadok.

Therefore, it emerges that the two contradictions are in fact intertwined, and are predicated upon an evolution in the Rambam’s understanding of Rabbi Elazar ben Tadok’s opinion.

(Based upon Sefer Hararei Kedem)