



Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

PESACH SEDER COMPANION

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A man who epitomized the values of Torah uMadda.

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In loving memory of our dear wife and mother,

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Dedicated with love by the families of Irwin, Jim and David Diamond

In memory of our dear uncle Bill Rubinstein z"l,

and in honour of our cousins Eli and Renee Rubinstein,

You are an inspiration to us all.

A heartfelt "yasher koach" to Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner.

May Hashem give you the strength to continue your tireless efforts for our community.

Yaakov and Aviva Eisenberger

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Dedicated by Mimi and Byron Shore

in memory of our parents

Naftali Ben Mendel z"l and Chaya Dabrusa bat Shneur Zalman z"l

Dedicated in memory of our beloved mother

& grandmother, Rosalie Wenner z"l

אסתר רחל בת צבי הערשל וזלאטא ז"ל

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In memory of our dear parents and grandparents, Alfred and Erika Zauderer z"l

Ricky and Dianna Zauderer and Family

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שִׁדּוּךְ: KADESH

The Mother of All Kiddushes

Hillel Horovitz, hillel.michal@gmail.com
Avreich; Rabbinic Assistant, Bnai Torah, 5772-5773
Currently: Shaliach, Bnei Akiva Schools, Toronto, ON



Our Seder begins with kiddush, in which we highlight the sanctity of Israel as well as the sanctity of time associated with Pesach. Normal iterations of kiddush, whether on Shabbat or Yom Tov, highlight “a commemoration of the exodus from Egypt.” However, the night of Pesach, when we left Egypt and we are obligated to tell our children the story of that departure and to re-experience it ourselves, must imbue that commemoration with far greater meaning than those other occasions.

The kiddush of the Seder is included as one of the fifteen Seder “signs”, indeed the first: *Kadesh*. This list has appeared at the start of most Haggadot for centuries, published in texts as diverse as the 13th century German *Hagahot Maimoniyot* commentary to Rambam’s Haggadah and the 16th century Israeli *Pri Eitz Chaim* of the mystic Rabbi Chaim Vital. But the inclusion of kiddush in this list of signs is surprising. We recite kiddush on every Shabbat and Yom Tov; in what way is it a function of the Seder? Would the list not be more correct to begin with *U’Rchatz*?

But in truth, we can see a number of differences between the kiddush of Pesach night and the kiddush of other occasions. The differences include:

- On Shabbat and some days of Yom Tov, one may recite kiddush before dark, accepting the sanctity of the day early. On the night of the Seder, though, we may not recite kiddush before dark. (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 472:1) As explained by Rabbi Avraham Gombiner (Magen Avraham ad loc.), this delay is because kiddush is one of the Four Cups, which we drink only at night.
- On Shabbat and other days of Yom Tov, one may recite kiddush on behalf of other people, and those others need not even drink, even though it is preferable for them to do so. (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 271:14) On the night of the Seder, though, all must drink at least a cheekful of wine, and preferably a *revi’it* (approximately four ounces). (ibid. 472:9) One who has already recited kiddush may say the words on behalf of others, but those people must drink, themselves. (ibid. 484:1)

This demonstrates that the kiddush of the Seder is different from other recitations of kiddush. [Of course, one could still contend, as Rabbi Gombiner indicated above, that these legal eccentricities extend from its second role as part of the Four Cups of the Seder. As kiddush, it is no different from any other kiddush. One way to determine whether this kiddush is truly unique as the “opening shot” of the Seder would be to determine whether it must take place after dark even if one has no wine, and instead recites kiddush with matzah. This would separate kiddush from the Four Cups entirely. See Eishel Avraham to Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 472:1.] Perhaps we may explain why this kiddush is different from the others.

On our holidays, we declare in kiddush that these days serve as “a commemoration of the departure from Egypt,” for at the time of the exodus from Egypt we were granted the power to consecrate months. (Shemot 12:1, brought in Rosh HaShanah 22a) Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook, in comments brought in his Haggadah, elaborates that the departure from Egypt elevated Israel to the level at which we could consecrate time. In our prayers, too, we bless G-d “who sanctifies Israel and the calendar,” demonstrating that the sanctity of our holidays depends upon Israel, the consecrators of the calendar. (Berachot 49a)

On every Shabbat, we add a second consecration to kiddush. We mention the Divinely granted sanctity which traces to the six days of Creation, as well as the sanctity which traces to our departure from Egypt. Mentioning this in our kiddush of Shabbat demonstrates that Shabbat shares in this Exodus-based sanctity, and that our act of kiddush even increases that sanctity, at the start of Shabbat.

If the sanctity associated with our exodus from Egypt is the means by which we invest sanctity into time, actively adding sanctity to the festivals and Shabbatot of our calendar, then this act of consecration must be expressed on the night of our Seder. This is an integral part of the events of the evening, in kiddush – and it certainly deserves a place atop the list of the fifteen “signs” of the Seder. We mark this on the night itself, no earlier, and we certainly must have every Jew participate, drinking from kiddush and not relying on the drinking of others. When we recite this special kiddush, each of us testifies that we, personally sanctified by G-d, have chosen to once again consecrate our calendar, and to invest sanctity in our world.

Did you know?

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ורחץ: U'RCHATZ

When Questions Matter More Than Answers

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, torczyner@torontotorah.com

Rosh Beit Midrash, 5770-5781

Nobel Prize-winning physicist Dr. Isidor I. Rabi and his parents, Polish Jews, immigrated to the United States at the end of the 19th century and settled in Brooklyn. When asked why he had made the then-unusual choice of a career in science, **Rabi explained**, “My mother made me a scientist without ever intending it. Every other Jewish mother in Brooklyn would ask her child after school: ‘So? Did you learn anything today?’ But not my mother. She always asked me a different question. ‘Izzy,’ she would say, ‘did you ask a good question today?’ That difference - asking good questions - made me become a scientist!”

Our Haggadah highlights questions. In the time of the Beit HaMikdash, the text included prepared questions: Why only matzah, why marror, why dip twice? (Mishnah Pesachim 10:4) Two thousand years ago, the Haggadah already showcased the questions of Four Children, modeled on biblical verses which depict Jewish parents teaching their children about our exodus from Egypt. (Shemot 12:26, Shemot 13:8, Shemot 13:14, Devarim 6:20) The Talmud (ibid. 116a) even instructs that two Torah scholars who are alone together at the Seder must ask each other questions.

Beyond the text, the Seder activities are designed to inspire questions. The Talmud instructs parents to distribute toys to keep children involved and curious (Pesachim 108b-109a), and it describes the practices of dipping twice (ibid. 114b) and “grabbing” the Afikoman (ibid. 109a) as customs implemented in order to inspire children to ask. The Code of Jewish Law (Orach Chaim 473:6-7) adds the practices of removing and returning the Seder Plate, and having a second cup of wine before our meal, as further catalysts for curiosity.

The very first ritual introduction of questions is in the *U'Rchatz* portion of the Seder, when we wash our hands before handling the *Karpas* produce. Washing for produce is routine in a time when Jews observe laws of ritual purity, but that has not been the case in two thousand years; why do we wash at *U'Rchatz*? Some suggest we wash because eating the *Karpas* produce fulfills a mitzvah. (Levush 473) Others suggest that we wash to commemorate the way *Karpas* would have been consumed in the Beit HaMikdash. (Netziv, Haggadah Imrei Shefer, Introduction) But Rabbi Yechiel Michel Epstein wrote that we wash “because we perform various unique actions on this night.” (Aruch haShulchan Orach Chaim 473:18) Per Rabbi Epstein, we add **an entire section to the Seder** just to induce questions. Why is this question format necessary?

One explanation for our Seder format is that questions express curiosity, and so lead to good pedagogy. As the Maggid of Dubno wrote, “Just as food will not be sweet without prior hunger, so an answer will not be sweet unless it follows a great question.” (Sefer haMidot, Chapter 6) Further, responding to questions is a good way to convey complicated information. Rabbi Tzvi Elimelech Shapira of Dinov observed, “Many authors, who wished to write of a broad subject and feared that their words might not be accepted by the ear and the mind because of the limitations of the listener as well as the depth, length and breadth of the subject, dealt with this by writing of the subject in the form of question and response.” (Derech Pikudecha 21: Chelek haMaaseh 3)

A second approach is that these inquiries are meant to correct the questions which marked our time in Egypt. When G-d told Avraham that he would receive the Land of Israel, Avraham responded by asking how he could know that this would come to pass. According to one talmudic view (Nedarim 32a), this skeptical question is the reason we were sent to Egypt. The questions continued with Moshe's repeated challenges to the Divine decision to send him to rescue the Jews, and then with the questions asked by the Jews with every obstacle they encountered in the wilderness. At our Seder, we re-live the Exodus (Mishnah Pesachim 10:5), and we put a positive spin on our history of questions: again we ask, but as a means of building our faith.

Finally, questions are a robust means of connecting people; indeed, telephone marketing experts advise their proteges to begin a solicitation by asking a question, in order to create connection. (For example, see <http://tiny.cc/kpeltz>.) So it is that we refer to questioning as *interrogation*, from the Latin *inter* and *rogare* – “asking **between**”.

The very first biblical questions were of this interrogative model. When the serpent wished to enter into conversation with Chavah, he asked, “Has G-d indeed said that you may not eat of any tree in the garden?” (Bereishit 3:1) As Rashi explained, the serpent knew that only one tree was prohibited, but he wished to draw Chavah into dialogue. The next biblical question occurred when Adam ate of the prohibited fruit and then sought to hide from G-d. G-d asked, “Where are you?” (ibid. 3:9) G-d knew Adam's whereabouts, but He wished to initiate a connection. The link between the one who asks and the one who responds is embedded in the start of Judaism's most fundamental text.

Perhaps this desire for connection drives the Seder's model. A child who asks a question of the previous generation makes a connection with the history of our nation, recognizing herself as part of the chain of Jewish history, and of a family whose collective numbers, across the millennia, are greater than the grains of sand at the sea. With these questions, the Torah tells us that we are not simply to aim words at our children in reporting the events of our Exodus. We use this night of communication to create a link, inspiring our children to see themselves as part of our people, and so we extend a bridge to the future.

כרפס: KARPAS

The Food of Creation and the Seder



Nadav Gasner nadavgas@gmail.com

Director, OU-JLIC McMaster / First year medical student, McMaster Medical School

There is a classic saying that all Jewish holidays can be summed up with the line, “They tried to kill us, they failed, let’s eat!” One might argue that Pesach is the most extreme illustration of this model. For a holiday that often leads to the complaint that “there’s nothing to eat,” it contains an extensive number of mitzvot and customs that revolve around the consumption of food. This is especially true on Seder night. Most obviously, we feature the Korban Pesach and matzah, the stars of the Pesach story. There is also marror, which is mentioned in the biblical account and popularly represents the bitter enslavement of the Jews. A classic point of discussion during the Seder is whether or not the *Koreich* sandwich was originally more of a laffa. There is also a strategy mentioned in the Talmud (Pesachim 108b) to keep children engaged by giving out nuts and seeds (today, some distribute marshmallows). Even seemingly trivial details from the Exodus story, such as the mortar used to lay bricks and the springtime departure, are immortalized in the foods of *charoset* and *karpas*, respectively. And finally, after a few hours of teasing our stomachs with these small acts of eating, we have a full, lavish Yom Tov meal. How can we understand the strong emphasis placed on eating during the Seder, and what does it add to our understanding of the Exodus?

A cursory answer could be to link the emphasis on food with the strategy used for children: food is an effective means of keeping us engaged in the telling of the story. Similar to how expert storytellers use multiple mediums to engage as wide an audience as possible, the Seder utilizes different strategies, ranging from show-and-tell, to songs, to in-depth textual analysis, and, of course, to food to involve everyone present. [For an in-depth treatment, see Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon, *Haggadah Shirat Miriam*, The Structure of the Haggadah, Section G.]

Another way to gain a deeper perspective on the role of food is to analyze the connections between the Exodus story and the story of Creation. The fifth chapter of Pirkei Avot starts by listing important sets of ten in the Torah, which include the ten statements with which G-d created the universe, and the ten plagues brought upon the Egyptians. In fact, the plagues parallel the statements of Creation such that one can match them to one another, demonstrating that G-d utilized all of Creation, so to speak, to show His might and redeem the Jewish people from Egypt. We can take this a step further and understand that the process of the Exodus symbolizes a second Creation, this time of a corrected and revised version of humanity, through the formation of a unified Jewish people. On Pesach, the holiday when we relive this redemptive process, we also celebrate this transformation.

How does this Creation connection relate to food? According to Sanhedrin 38b, one of the final components of the Creation story was the sin of Adam and Chavah, where they partook of forbidden food. A midrash (Bereishit Rabbah 19:12) notes that when questioned about his actions, Adam said “Va’ocheil” (Bereishit 3:12), which may mean either “and I ate,” or “and I will continue to eat.” Taking the latter read, the act of eating in Gan Eden was the catalyst for a life replete with primal desires tempting us to giving in, which we will do time and again. This desire for the forbidden had become part of man’s nature.

Coming back to Pesach, we can now explain why food and eating play a significant role in this holiday, in particular. If the Exodus story parallels that of Creation, the key elements of the Creation story should be reflected in the Exodus narrative. We have noted the connection between the ten statements of Creation and the ten plagues, which accounts for the Heavenly role in both events. But to rectify and elevate the human component of the Creation story, namely, eating from the Tree of Knowledge, it is necessary for the Jewish nation to play their part as well. Since contamination via food was the original catalyst for darkness in the world, the rectification is performed through taking food and, this time, using it for a lofty purpose, thereby elevating the food to a state of holiness. It is through this act of eating that we are able to complete this second version of Creation and initiate a life geared towards elevating the mundane and working to avoid giving in to our negative desires.

As we move through the Seder night, eating various foods which signify different aspects of the Exodus experience, building up to *Shulchan Oreich* and the Afikoman, we can all think about how we are working to correct and redirect our base desires, and to establish a life where even mundane actions are performed with the intention of elevating and improving the world.



היא לחמא עניא: THIS IS THE BREAD A Night of Anticipation

Rabbi Ezra Goldschmiedt rabbi@shaareitorahcincy.org
Avreich; Rabbinic Assistant, BAYT, 5772-5773
Currently: Rabbi, Sha'arei Torah, Cincinnati, Ohio

The *Maggid* section of the Haggadah begins with the curious text of *Ha Lachma Anya*:

This is the bread of destitution that our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. Anyone who is famished should come and eat, anyone who is in need should come and partake of the Pesach sacrifice. Now we are here, next year we will be in the land of Israel; this year we are slaves, next year we will be free people.

Many questions could be asked:

- Why is this paragraph in Aramaic instead of Hebrew, the language of the rest of the Haggadah?
- Doesn't matzah, as we note towards the end of *Maggid*, symbolize our hasty exit to freedom? Why emphasize its status as a bread of destitution?
- We don't have a Pesach sacrifice – and even if we did, we wouldn't be able to invite others to join us in it, as the Pesach sacrifice requires registration prior to its slaughter (Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Laws of the Korban Pesach 2:1). What then is meant by this invitation?
- Those who are in Israel also say at the Seder: "This year we are here, next year we will be in Israel" – why?
- Are we indeed slaves, as this text suggests?

These questions can be summarily answered by seeing *Ha Lachma Anya* as a statement that Pesach, in the way we are celebrating it, is far less than ideal. As we begin *Maggid*, the Haggadah reminds us that our Seder is a strange one – we show our comfort speaking in a foreign language (Aramaic, the vernacular of our first exile). We emphasize the negative aspect of our matzah: its use as a staple food during our enslavement. We ironically note that anyone can join us for this "Pesach", when ideally that wouldn't be the case. We declare that despite appearances otherwise, we are not in Israel, and we aren't free – we, including Israelis, aren't yet a people who have fully realized our religious aspirations, living our lives the way G-d wants us to in our land.

But appreciated in this light, *Ha Lachma Anya* still begs the following question: Why emphasize these rather depressing observations? And why do so now, at the beginning of *Maggid*?

As we do with the topic of slavery in the Haggadah, focusing on the negative aspects of our story – including those of the present – allows us to better appreciate, look forward to, and aspire towards their resolution. A nation that doesn't dream of a rebuilt Temple and the bringing of a Pesach offering is far less likely to ever see such developments. On the other hand, a nation that thinks about what is wrong with their Sedarim – reciting *Ha Lachma Anya*, refraining from pointing to the *z'roa* when describing the Pesach offering, remembering the original Hillel sandwich, and so much more – such a nation has hope and a will to one day have a true Pesach Seder.

Many aspects of Jewish life focus on an ideal Messianic future, but when it comes to Pesach this is especially the case. Shemot 12:42 describes tonight as follows:

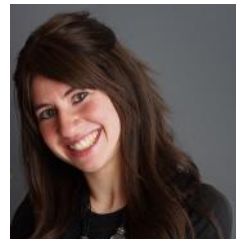
*It is a night of **shimurim** for Hashem to take them out of the land of Egypt, this was the night for Hashem; one of **shimurim** for all the children of Israel for their generations.*

What is the meaning of *shimurim*? We often assume it means some sort of extra security – hence the common practice to abridge the bedtime Shema tonight (omitting the unnecessary verses of protection), and for some, to leave the doors to the house unlocked. Rashbam (ad. loc) however, sees *shimurim* as a term indicating anticipation, as it is used to describe Yaakov's anticipating the realization of Yosef's dreams. (Bereishit 37:11) For so long, G-d looked forward to the day when we would leave Egypt as a nation enriched by its experience there; this same verse tells us that for all generations, tonight is a night in which we look forward to a brighter future. Doing so first requires dwelling on what's wrong, but that ultimately leads to a more optimistic attitude with which we will conclude our Sedarim: *Leshanah haba'ah b'Yerushalayim*, next year in Jerusalem!

The past year or so has brought with it much upheaval. We see how things can change so quickly, how a different kind of existence can come out of nowhere. Among the many lessons we have all learned, perhaps all of what we have experienced can encourage our sense of anticipation – a sense of *shemirah* for a full redemption and a very different Pesach.

MAH NISHTANAH: מה נשתנה

Questioning to Learn, and Learning to Question



Mrs. Judith Hecht, judithhschwartz@gmail.com
Speech-Language Pathologist

Anyone who has ever interacted with children knows that they love to ask questions. In fact, according to an *Independent UK article*, some children ask an average of 73 questions each day. It therefore makes perfect sense that the *Mah Nishtanah* questions are customarily recited by children at the Seder in order to initiate the retelling of the exodus from Egypt. Not only do the children get the important role of launching the *Maggid* portion by reciting *Mah Nishtanah*, but throughout the entirety of the Seder there is a focus of encouraging the children to ask questions. Why is there such an emphasis on asking questions? Additionally, why do we have this goal specifically on Pesach and not any other holiday? Other holidays throughout the year similarly have seemingly strange and different rituals, yet there is no custom of having children ask their parents about them. Why do we not encourage our children to ask on Succot, “Why on this day do we shake a citrus fruit and a tree branch?” or “Why on this night do we get to eat cheesecake?” on Shavuot?

The vital role that children play in retelling the story of the Exodus is seen in the biblical command. The Torah teaches, “And you shall tell your child on that day, saying, “Because of this, the Lord did [this] for me when I went out of Egypt.” (Shemot 13:8) Additionally, “And it will come to pass if your child asks you in the future, saying, ‘What is this?’ you shall say to him, “With a mighty hand did the Lord take us out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.” (Shemot 13:14) We see that the mitzvah of retelling the story of the Exodus at the Seder is for the purpose of teaching the next generation. Therefore, the Talmud teaches the importance of ensuring that children participate during the Seder. For example, Rabbi Akiva would give nuts to the children to keep them awake and encouraged to ask questions. (Pesachim 109a)

The Sefer HaChinuch (Mitzvah #21) expands upon why at the Seder it is so imperative to involve the children. He explains that the exodus from Egypt is the foundation of our faith in Hashem because it is proof that even after creation, He remains actively involved in the world and our lives. We must therefore impart this knowledge to the next generation so that they too can have a firm belief in Hashem’s providence and then pass that along to their children as well. As Rabbi Isaac Breuer eloquently states, “[E]very year anew, a father has to speak to his children, to make them fully aware of their beginnings and to add them as new links to the unbroken chain of our national tradition...In retelling what has been passed down through the generations, the father is no purveyor of a legend, but the witness to historical truth and national experience.” (*ArtScroll Haggadah*)

It is then clear that the focus of retelling the Exodus at the Seder is not merely to impart knowledge but rather to instill faith in the next generation to continue to serve Hashem. However, why is there an emphasis on doing this through questioning? Can’t we just simply tell our children the story? The Maharal suggests that the best way to educate our children in a meaningful way is to first to make them curious about the topic. (Gevurot Hashem Chapter 52) Piquing the children’s interest at the Seder inspires their active involvement and inquiry. Only then will parents succeed in imparting the story of the Jewish people.

Scientific research similarly concludes that when children ask questions to gather information, it enhances their cognitive understanding of the topic (Chouinard MM. *Children’s questions: a mechanism for cognitive development*. Monogr Soc Res Child Dev. 2007;72(1):vii-ix, 1-112;).

Nevertheless, we might suggest that not only is the act of questioning an integral part of the Seder for the children’s benefit in learning, but also for the adults. **Rabbi Shraga Simmons** quotes the Maharal who suggests that generally when a person asks a question, it is due to some lack of knowledge. Therefore, people might be less willing to question, as it is an admission of not knowing something. We therefore ask questions at the Seder to remind us not to be bashful in seeking a fuller understanding of the topic.

The Maharal’s idea can further elucidate why children are such an integral part of the Seder. Children have no qualms about admitting their lack of knowledge while inquiring on a topic. They yearn to learn more and more about the world around them, and to hear stories of how things came to be. Perhaps, another reason for the emphasis on encouraging the children to ask questions is so that the adults will learn from them to ask, too. Like the children, the adults at the Seder can recognize that there is still so much yet to learn and explore. And just as the purpose of having the children inquire is to instill faith in Hashem, when adults inquire and explore, their emunah in Hashem will similarly be inculcated each year.

Did you know?

Even in lockdown, we offered live and asynchronous *chaburot* for Bnei Akiva Schools students.



עבדים היינו: WE WERE SLAVES Reliving the Exodus: An Activity

Rabbi Chaim Metzger, cmetzger@torontotorah.com
Avreich; Rabbinic Assistant, BAYT, 5781

In every generation, a person is required to view themselves as if they had left Egypt, as it says (Shemot 13:8) “And you shall explain to your child on that day, ‘It is because of what G-d did for me when I left Egypt.’”

How did the Jews feel as they left Egypt? Try asking the following questions to the participants at your Seder. Hopefully, these questions will spark meaningful discussion, and allow each person to develop an appreciation for the feelings of the Jewish People as they left Egypt and ventured through the wilderness:

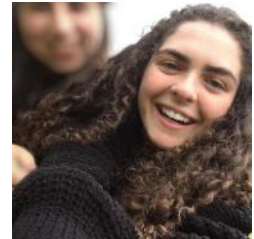
1. How do you think the Jews felt while they were in Egypt?
2. Why did the Jewish officers complain to Moshe that he was ruining their relationship with Pharaoh after the Jews’ workload was increased (Shemot 5:20)? Why did the Jews say right before the Splitting of the Sea, “are there not enough graves in Egypt, that you took us to die in the desert?” (Shemot 14:11)
3. How many stages of change would you say there were in the Exodus? Was the transition from “enslaved” to “free” the only change that happened to the Jewish People?
4. Were all of the Jewish People always enthusiastic about leaving Egypt?
5. Did anything bad happen to the Jews because of their attempts to leave Egypt?
 - a) Were the Jews affected by the plagues?
 - b) Midrashim state that only one-fifth of the Jews left Egypt and the rest were killed during the plague of darkness. Why were these people killed? How would that affect the rest of the Jews’ morale?

Here are some data points to use as we explore the Jews’ feelings during the Exodus: The Jews’ first reaction when Moshe tells them they will be leaving Egypt is to believe in G-d and Moshe. But after that point, we are told very little about how the Jewish People felt. We are only told that the Jewish officers complained after the slaves had to begin to gather their own straw and were required to complete the same building quota. The Jews perform the mitzvot of Korban Pesach and smearing the blood on the doorpost exactly as G-d commanded. Finally, right before G-d splits the sea, we hear the nation complain “why did you take us out of Egypt to die in the desert?”

Using our limited data, the following table lists the different stages of the Exodus, and what the Jewish people may have felt at each stage:

	Timeframe	Reaction/Emotion
Stage 1	They are enslaved with back-breaking labour	Many think there is no hope, but pray anyway
Stage 2	After they are told by Moshe that G-d has sent him to free them	They feel that their prayers have been answered and they will be freed by G-d through Moshe
Stage 3	After Pharaoh refuses to let them go and their workload drastically increases	Their hopes are dashed when their workload increases and there is no obvious progress towards their redemption
Stage 4	During the first nine plagues, which affect the Egyptians and not the Jews	Things seem more positive, since Pharaoh and the Egyptians are punished. Jews have varied reactions: ~Some see this as Divine redemption ~Others are frightened by G-d’s harsh punishments
Stage 5	After they are told to prepare the Korban Pesach and get ready to leave	Although everyone follows G-d’s directives, some may be fearful or hesitant
Stage 6	During the night of <i>Makkat Bechorot</i>	They begin to anticipate the redemption, but may also feel nervous about their impending freedom
Stage 7	During the morning after <i>Makkat Bechorot</i> (15 Nisan), when they leave Egypt	They all feel very positive
Stage 8	While they wait at Yam Suf (the Sea of Reeds), with Egyptians chasing them	They feel very scared, both of G-d and the Egyptians chasing them
Stage 9	While crossing through the Sea	They are in awe and fear of G-d
Stage 10	After seeing the Egyptians drown, as they stand on dry land	They sing <i>Az Yashir</i> , now able to reflect and appreciate all that G-d has done for them

רבי אלעזר בן עזריה: **RABBI ELAZAR BEN AZARYAH** **The Democratization of Learning**



**Sofia Freudenstein, sofiayfreudenstein@gmail.com
Women's Beit Midrash, 5777-5781**

The beginning of the *Maggid* section of the Haggadah is the outline for why we are doing what we are doing at the Seder table. It is the answering of the *Mah Nishtanah*, the four questions that help define what the Seder is really all about. We describe how we were slaves in Egypt and the labour we endured.

Then, the answers and storytelling completely shift. We zoom out of the specific storytelling of leaving Egypt, and see another time in history in which this story is being re-told. We become spectators to the Seder conversations of Rabbi Eliezer, Rabbi Yehoshua, Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah, Rabbi Akiva, and Rabbi Tarfon, who were reclining in Bnei Brak in the post-Temple time period. We hear not about the storytelling itself, but instead how it went: all-night, captivating, and lively. Then, we are privy to one specific piece of Torah and storytelling shared:

Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah said, "Behold I am like a man of seventy years and I have not merited [to understand why] the exodus from Egypt should be said at night until Ben Zoma explicated it..."

Why is this the Torah shared with us, and how does it help us with our own storytelling of *Yetziat Mitzrayim*, in order better to understand the true purpose of this holiday?

In order to better understand this piece of Torah, I think it is important to note initially how it is shared. Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah describes himself as being "like a man of seventy years." What exactly does this mean? Close readers of the text might recognize this description - it is a direct reference to an *aggadah* in Berachot 27b-28a. Rabban Gamliel has just been exiled from the Beit Midrash, after repeatedly shaming Rabbi Yehoshua. Who would be able to replace such a Torah giant, and not only that, but teach a completely different ideology of Torah learning? Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah is chosen.

At first glance, it might seem unclear why he is chosen. However, Rabbi Benny Lau in his analysis of Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah's succession suggests that he is chosen due to his more accessible stance on Torah. This is exemplified in the detail presented in the Talmudic text that Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah is a direct descendant of Ezra the Scribe, one of the greatest democratizers of Jewish text. Ezra wrote the Torah in the more colloquially understood Aramaic script and enforced weekly Torah readings in addition to the Shabbat readings. (*The Sages, Volume II*)

The only flaw in Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah's fresh leadership style is that he is too young! His wife expresses concern that at his young age of 18 years old, the other Rabbis would look down on him. In response, a miracle occurs and white hairs appear in his hair and beard. The Talmud continues with our statement in the Haggadah: "This explains why Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah said, 'I am as one who is seventy years old,' and he did not say, 'I am seventy years old,' because he looked older than he actually was." (Berachot 28a)

What is this reference to the story in Berachot coming to teach us about the Seder? The Seder is about a story of freedom from slavery. One of the most important parts of becoming a free nation is ensuring the education of the people through empowering younger generations to be interested in learning the story, as seen through the built-in structure which invites children (or any Seder participant!) to ask questions. Implicit within this empowerment comes the value of democratization of knowledge. *Anyone* is able to ask questions, and thereby gain knowledge, even the bad children and the children who do not even know how to formulate questions properly! This is a value truly embodied in Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah's appointment to the head of the Beit Midrash due to his lineage from Ezra. It returns further along in the Talmud's story, when Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah decides to admit more students than Rabban Gamliel ever did. (Berachot 28a) It is even exemplified in the dialogue in the Haggadah itself - Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah is not afraid to admit that even he has more to learn about the story of the Pesach Seder, as Ben Zoma points out to him!

No matter one's age or learning background, Pesach is a time of free people, and free people must, as Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l said, "never forg[et] that freedom is a never-ending effort of education in which parents, teachers, homes and schools are all partners in the dialogue between the generations." (*Covenant and Conversation*, Parshat Bo 5773, <https://rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation-bo-freedoms-defense/>) Through the example of Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah's approach - as Ezra's descendant, opening the Beit Midrash doors and displaying unabashed curiosity to continue learning and growing - may we be blessed with a Pesach that is educational and open to all those coming to join.

Did you know?

We engage in internal learning until 12:30 PM daily; this year, we are studying Shemitah.



כנגד ארבעה בנים: THE FOUR CHILDREN An Innocent Question

Ezer Diena ediena@bastoronto.org
Avreich; Rabbinic Assistant, BAYT, 5779-5780
Currently: Bnei Akiva Schools, Toronto, ON

A particularly interesting aspect of this part of the Haggadah is that while the text of questions asked by three of the four children is found in the Torah, we don't have any obvious clues as to what type of child may have posed each question. How did the author of this passage know to assign each of these questions to the "appropriate" child? Let us begin by examining the question ascribed to each child:

- Wise child: What are these statutes, rules and laws which Hashem our G-d has commanded you? (Devarim 6:20)
- Wicked child: What is this service to you? (Shemot 12:26)
- Innocent child: What is this? (Shemot 13:14)

One need not have a wild imagination to realize the alternative assignments that are possible here. For example, perhaps the emphasis on detail (statutes, rules and laws in Devarim 6:20) indicates a dissatisfaction with the tedious requirements of the Seder! Alternatively, perhaps the question "What is this?", ascribed to the innocent child, was actually said in a disparaging, dismissive way? [Indeed, the Talmud Yerushalmi (Pesachim 10:4) matches the questions and children differently!]

While many possible answers have been suggested, Rabbi Ephraim of Luntschitz, in his *Kli Yakar* commentary (see especially Shemot 13:14), points out an interesting pattern. In Devarim 6:20 and Shemot 13:14, the Torah writes, "And it will be when your children ask you the **next day**," whereas in the case of the wicked child, there is no such introduction. Additionally, notes *Kli Yakar*, in the answer that we give to both the wicked child and the child who does not know to ask, the Torah writes, "And you shall tell your child **on that day**", whereas no such qualification is present in the answers to the wise and innocent children.

Kli Yakar suggests that the timing of the questions and answers in the Torah served as the impetus for the assignments to particular children. Those children who asked after the fact must not have been looking to avoid performing the mitzvot, but rather, they simply wanted to understand what they were doing, and why Hashem commanded us to engage in such strange behaviours. However, the children who require answers immediately, because otherwise they will not participate in the performance of these G-dly rituals, are clearly not innocently doing so. They demand answers, as a prerequisite for engagement. This explains the assignment of specific verses as questions and answers to each of these children.

While these questions appear in the Torah in regard to performing the mitzvot of Pesach and redeeming the firstborn, as the Jews leave Egypt, this distinction between general inquiries and questions which need immediate responses gains central importance as the Jews cross Yam Suf (the Sea of Reeds), reach Mount Sinai and accept the Torah. In the Yam Suf story, the parallels are there (see Shemot 14:10-16) but are less striking; when the Jews reach Mount Sinai, they repeatedly affirm their commitment not to question, but to **act** in accordance with Torah laws. (Shemot 19:8, 24:3, 24:7)

This point emphasizes the wide gap between Torah-observant Jews, and others who refuse to follow G-d's Torah. The Talmud (Shabbat 88a-b) relates the following story, which accentuates the already powerful distinction of *Kli Yakar* (Davidson Edition translation)

The Gemara relates that a heretic saw that Rava was immersed in studying halakha, and his fingers were beneath his leg and he was squeezing them, and his fingers were spurring blood. Rava did not notice that he was bleeding because he was engrossed in study. The heretic said to Rava: You impulsive nation, who accorded precedence to your mouths over your ears. You still bear your impulsiveness, as you act without thinking. You should listen first. Then, if you are capable of fulfilling the commands, accept them. And if not, do not accept them. He said to him: About us, who proceed wholeheartedly and with integrity, it is written: "The integrity of the upright will guide them" (Proverbs 11:3), whereas about those people who walk in deceit, it is written at the end of the same verse: "And the perverseness of the faithless will destroy them."

As Rava explains from the verses in Proverbs, those children and adults who refuse to do anything until they fully understand it will eventually destroy themselves, because they cannot trust others. However, even though there is a risk that the wise and innocent children might be taken advantage of, ultimately, their respect for others and their integrity will allow G-d to save them from this too. May we merit to follow in the paths of our wise and saintly ancestors, who took this message to heart, and lived their lives accordingly, asking only after they had done what they knew was right.

ברוך שומר: BLESSED IS THE ONE WHO GUARDS The Purpose of Egyptian Exile, per Netivot Shalom



**Rabbi Moshe Yeres, PhD myeres@torontotorah.com
Director, Adult Seder Boker, 5779-5781**

Usually we view *Galut* (Exile) and *Geulah* (Redemption) as consequences of the Jewish people's abandonment of religious practice. When we neglect the Torah's commandments, Hashem punishes us by evicting us from the land of Israel and sends us into Exile. When we completely follow the mitzvot, we will merit the Final Redemption and the restoration of all Jews to Israel.

However, Rabbi Sholom Noach Berezovsky, the Slonimer Rebbe, in his *Netivot Shalom*, notes a fundamental weakness in this approach, based on his understanding of the story of *Galut Mitzrayim* (the Egyptian exile) and our Exodus from it.

Hashem revealed the Egyptian exile to Avraham at the *Brit Bein HaBetarim* (Covenant Between the Parts) in Bereishit 15. The Almighty told Avraham in words quoted in the Haggadah, "Thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them." Nowhere is sin mentioned as a cause for this. In fact, at that point no sin had occurred. The Nation of Israel did not yet exist.

In addition, a midrash (Bereishit Rabbah 44:17) says that Avraham was not only shown *Galut Mitzrayim*, but also the four exiles that span the breadth of Jewish history. The intense darkness that fell upon Avraham at that covenant – described biblically as "*eimah gedolah nofelet alav*" – alluded to these four exiles: *Eimah* is Babylon, *gedolah* is Persia, *nofelet* is Greece, *alav* is Rome and later exiles. Hence the various exiles of Jewish history are a necessary, built-in component of Jewish existence and peoplehood. Similarly a midrash (Bereishit Rabbah 2:4) understands that the primal darkness and confusion described in the opening two verses of Bereishit – "*tohu vavohu vechoshech 'al pnei tehom*" – refers to these same four exiles.

If *galut* is merely a punishment for sinfulness, why did the Torah predict it prior to any sin? Why did Avraham not plead with the Almighty, as he did for Sodom, to prevent these decrees? Why did the Israelites deserve the difficult Egyptian exile and bondage? Most significantly, a cursory study of our people's history shows that with the exception of relatively short periods, we have lived mostly in a world of *Galut*. Has our sinfulness warranted constant punishment? Why is the defining moment of the Jewish people found in the slavery of Egypt and our Exodus from it?

The Slonimer Rebbe, in *Netivot Shalom* (Shemot, first section), offers a different understanding of *Galut* and *Geulah*. He explains that *Galut* is an integral part of the Divine plan of the world. Quoting the Maggid of Koshnitz, he says that the Almighty planned the calendar of the universe from the beginning to the end of time, and inserted the exiles into the Divine global plan. This world was created as a habitation for Hashem among finite beings. The Jewish nation was created as its nucleus. The Jewish people's role in this world is like the soul's role in the body. It may be hard to identify our soul, but the soul gives our much larger and visible body its purpose. So too, the work of the Jewish people gives this world its purpose.

The true purpose of the Jewish people is not only to perform Hashem's mitzvot. Mitzvot are merely the means to accomplishing our real purpose, uncovering the Almighty's presence in this world. The greater the challenge becomes; the harder we need to work at it. The more we succeed we have; the closer we move toward our real purpose. We live in a world in which we struggle to find Hashem, because our connection to Him depends on the effort we put in.

The Slonimer Rebbe explains that *Galut* is not a punishment. It's not characterized by Egyptian taskmasters beating helpless Hebrew slaves or marauding Cossacks pillaging Jewish *shtetlach*. Rather, *Galut* means the world exists with the hiddenness of *hester panim*, where the Almighty's presence is not clearly visible, miracles are rare, the Sea does not normally split, and we experience events which challenge our sense of justice. The bondage and injustice we experience are simply the effects of a world without Hashem's visible presence. *Galut* is the default state of Jewish people in this world. Our job is to work to find the Almighty's hidden presence and make it visible.

When we work to uncover His role in the world and in our lives, we move from *Galut* to *Geulah*. When the Jewish people reveal Hashem's presence through their *emunah* in Him, they are naturally redeemed from Egypt, witness manna coming from the heavens and drink the waters of the well of Miriam. When we all reveal Hashem's presence in this world, we can move from a world of *Galut* to the world of the final *Geulah*.

Retelling the story of *Yetziat Mitzrayim* (the Exodus) on Pesach night helps us remember to develop our *deveikut* (attachment) to Hashem in this world of hiddenness, and bring about Hashem's immanence for the entire world. Each of us can create our own *Yetziat Mitzrayim* by drawing closer to Hashem and by using His mitzvot as guideposts to help bring the ultimate final day of redemption.

Galut Mitzrayim therefore is not a punishment; it is the template for our past, our present and our future. Celebrating Pesach is a recreation of the Jewish people learning to uncover Hashem in this world.

Did you know?

We held 7 CE-eligible ZOOM Business Ethics sessions in COVID, with more than 250 registrants.



וְהִיא שְׁעַמְדָּה: V'HE SHE'AMDAH Leo Tolstoy and Jewish Survival

Rabbi Alex Hecht ahecht@torontotorah.com
Avreich; Rabbinic Assistant, Clanton Park, 5779-5781

Russian author Leo Tolstoy marveled about Jewish survival: “What is the Jew?... What kind of unique creature is this whom all the rulers of all the nations of the world have disgraced and crushed and expelled and destroyed; persecuted, burned and drowned, and who, despite their anger and their fury, continues to live and to flourish?... The Jew – is the symbol of eternity.” (*Tageblatt*, March 1920)

In the Haggadah, we almost find the answer to Tolstoy’s question:

*And it is **this** that has sustained our ancestors and us. It is not only one that has stood [against] us to destroy us. Rather, in each generation, they stand [against] us to destroy us, but G-d, rescues us from their hands.*

However, the author of the Haggadah does not specify what has enabled us to survive persecution throughout the generations. To whom, or to what, does “this” refer?

G-d’s Promise

In his *Haggadah Kimcha d’Avishuna*, Rabbi Yochanan Treves (16th century Italy) explains that “this” refers to the promise of redemption. He supports this contention from the fact that our passage immediately follows the declaration, “Blessed is He who keeps His promise to Israel,” which refers to the promise that G-d made to Avraham at the *Brit Bein HaBetarim* (Covenant Between the Parts), that He would rescue Avraham’s descendants from subjugation in Egypt. (Bereishit 15:13-14) Rabbi Treves says that this promise did not apply only to the Egyptian exile; it applies to all of our exiles, including those of Babylon, Greece, and Edom (in which we currently find ourselves). This promise that G-d will ultimately rescue us from persecution endures forever, and has allowed us to withstand our adversaries in every generation.

According to Rabbi Yedidia Weil (18th century Germany), “this” refers to G-d’s protection from spiritual adversaries, specifically. He references the talmudic statement that the *Shechinah* (Divine Presence) has accompanied Israel into all of her exiles (Megillah 29a), and protects us from the “forces of impurity” that seek to rule over us and drive us away from our spiritual mission. (*Haggadah Marbeh l’Saper*) This interpretation is supported by Rabbi Naftali Ginzburg (17th century Poland), who notes that the Hebrew word *v’he* literally means “she,” and that on a mystical level, the *Shechinah* represents the feminine manifestation of G-d. (*Naftali Seva Ratzon* on the Haggadah)

Repentance and Prayer

In a second interpretation, Rabbi Weil suggests that **we** may be the subject, and that “this” refers to our repentance and prayer. Even though we may veer from the path G-d desires, making us vulnerable to persecution, if we repent and cry out sincerely to G-d, He will protect us from our enemies. G-d heard the cries of the Jews in Egypt (Shemot 6:5), and has continued to be receptive to our efforts to come close to Him, in all times and in all places.

G-d’s Love

Alternatively, “this that has sustained” may be connected to the end of the paragraph, which states that G-d rescues us from our adversaries in every generation. Rabbi Eliezer Ashkenazi (16th century Poland) notes that G-d has enabled us to overcome our enemies without the need for us to kill them. If G-d had allowed us to overcome our oppressors, but required us to physically eliminate them, it would have appeared that the Jewish people were merely the means that G-d employed to punish other nations. Since G-d Himself has saved us in every generation without - generally - requiring us to defeat our foes militarily, He has shown the world that He loves His chosen people. Thus, it is G-d’s love for us that has sustained us in every generation. (*Haggadah Maaseh Hashem*)

The Story of the Exodus

Perhaps “this” refers to the story of the Exodus itself. By remembering the Exodus, and telling its story, we ensure that our faith will not be diminished. When we remind ourselves of G-d’s deliverance of our ancestors, we become confident that G-d will redeem us as well. (Rabbi Binyamin Rabinowitz, *Haggadah Ephod Bad*) We invoke this confidence when we recite the blessing over the second cup and declare that G-d redeemed our ancestors and redeems us.

Answering Tolstoy

Through these different understandings of what, precisely, “this” refers to, we can assure Tolstoy that the survival of the Jewish people is not an accident or curious twist of fate. According to standard patterns of history, a persecuted people, exiled to all corners of the world, would have surely been wiped out or assimilated into the societies in which they found themselves. It is only because we have a unique relationship with G-d - whether resulting from His covenant with Avraham, protection from physical and spiritual threats, His receptiveness to our prayer and repentance, His love for us, or the lasting impact of the Exodus story - that we have been able to survive and thrive in all times and places.

ורב: “AND GREAT” Blood of Identification



**Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, torczyner@torontotorah.com
Rosh Beit Midrash, 5770-5781**

Early in the story portion of *Maggid*, we describe how our ancestors initially thrived in Egypt. We cite a verse, Yechezkel 16:7, describing our nation at its birth as young, plentiful and growing. And then we cite the preceding verse from Yechezkel, “And I passed over you, and I saw you immersed and embedded in your blood. And I said to you, ‘In your blood you shall live.’ I said to you, ‘In your blood you shall live.’”

We quote this prophecy not only for its description of G-d “passing over us,” but for its double references to blood in which we live. As a midrash explains, this verse is saying that we live not **despite** this doubled blood, but **because** of it: “With two bloods Israel was saved from Egypt: the blood of the Korban Pesach and the blood of Brit Milah.” (Shemot Rabbah 17:3)

Two Acts of Identification

The Korban Pesach and Brit Milah are not only two mitzvot that happen to have blood in common:

- They are a halachic pair, the only commandments regarding which one who fails to fulfill them receives the Divinely inflicted penalty of *kareit* (ex-communication);
- They are connected for Pesach; an uncircumcised man is disqualified from participating in the Korban Pesach; and
- **Rabbi Michael Rosensweig** notes that these two mitzvot share a theme: both involve shedding blood for the sake of identification. Circumcision identifies us as descendants of Avraham (Bereishit 17:12), and the Korban Pesach identifies us as part of the nation that was born on the night we left Egypt (Shemot 12:14).

These acts of identification are the blood by which we live as Jews. The child of a Jewish mother is automatically Jewish, but these rituals afford us the opportunity to elect to join that covenant, as our ancestors did long ago.

These twin acts of identification are also important for anyone who would join the Jewish nation by choice. As Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein noted (*Brother Daniel and the Jewish Fraternity*, Leaves of Faith Vol. 2), we inform a prospective convert of personal mitzvot, and we also inform the prospective convert that she would be joining a nation which currently endures persecution. (Yevamot 47b) One must accept both in order to join, and so these two sheddings of blood live on in the process by which every newcomer joins our fraternity.

Korban Pesach: Communal and yet Personal

However, our neat presentation of fraternal twin rituals – one personal, one communal – is incomplete. The Korban Pesach – and therefore our commemorative Pesach Seder – is more than a statement of communal identification. The Korban Pesach is simultaneously communal **and** personal.

We would not deny the communal element. An individual is not supposed to bring a solo Korban Pesach unless all other options are exhausted. (Kesef Mishneh, Laws of the Korban Pesach 2:2) We sacrifice the Korban Pesach en masse at the Beit HaMikdash. (Yoma 51a). We bring the Korban Pesach even when the nation is ritually impure and even on Shabbat, rule-bending empowered by the ritual’s communal status. (Pesachim 65b-66a, 79a, 95b)

But it is also personal and private. In Egypt, each family brought the Korban Pesach in the home, not stepping out the front door. (Shemot 12:22) Only pre-registered members participate in the Korban Pesach, and they may not share it beyond the group. (Pesachim 61a, 71b) And even though in the time of the Beit HaMikdash we sacrifice the Korban Pesach en masse, we don’t share a single, national korban, as happens with true communal korbanot like the daily Korban Tamid. (Tosafot Yoma 6b) For this reason, Rambam (Introduction to Mishnah Zevachim) described the Korban Pesach as, “a personal korban which is like a communal korban.”

This idea of the Korban Pesach as personal and communal is uniquely relevant this year, when so many who normally participate in the Seder together with others – family, friends, in Pesach programs - will instead observe it alone, and for a second consecutive year. A table with empty chairs seems alien and unsuitable for this celebration. But we should remember that this is the nature of the Korban Pesach – it also owns this fundamentally personal aspect, like the Jews in Egypt in their individual homes.

This is not to say that we must resign ourselves to an entirely personal experience; the Korban Pesach retains its communal aspect, and there are ways to preserve that: Preparing the recipes of our friends and relatives. Setting up photographs of others at the table in advance. Scheduling Pesach celebrations by Zoom for chol hamoed. We shall live by the blood of our Korban Pesach, on both of its levels.

Even as we sit down to our personal Pesach Seder this year, let us contemplate a beautiful idea expressed by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson. **He pointed out** that the Divine act of leaping over our homes may be viewed as invalidating the walls which separate us from each other, thereby unifying neighbours, blocks and neighbourhoods, and drawing us into community. May we, and therefore G-d, break down the barriers between our homes this Pesach, remembering that even if we are celebrating the Seder as individuals, we remain a unified community and nation.

Did you know?

We teach in the broader Jewish community, including Adath Israel, Beth Emeth and Beth Tikvah!



רבי יוסי הגלילי: RABBI YOSI HAgELILI Plagues and Love

Netanel Klein, nklein@torontotorah.com
Avreich, 5780-5781

In the heart of *Maggid*, just as the marror is starting to look like a tempting choice to satisfy our hunger, we arrive at the commemoration of one of the most important events of our entire exile in Egypt: the ten plagues. We begin simply, mentioning each plague and dipping our finger in our cup of wine. However, we don't end there. We then proceed to read three teachings from the mishnaic sages, Rabbi Yosi HaGelili, Rabbi Eliezer, and Rabbi Akiva. Analyzing verses in the Torah, they endeavour to prove how many plagues there were in Egypt, and how many plagues were inflicted upon the Egyptians at Yam Suf (the Sea of Reeds). Rabbi Yosi HaGelili says there were fifty plagues at Yam Suf, five times the number of plagues in Egypt. Rabbi Eliezer argues that each plague in Egypt was comprised of four, bringing the total to forty. Therefore, according to him, there were two hundred plagues at Yam Suf. Finally, Rabbi Akiva contends that each plague in Egypt was made up of five plagues, totaling fifty plagues in Egypt, and two hundred and fifty at Yam Suf.

Two questions always occur to me when I read these sections:

1. What does it mean, that each plague was comprised of several plagues?
2. More importantly, why go to such lengths to bring various opinions regarding the number of plagues? In other words, why does it matter if there were ten, forty or fifty plagues?

To address the first question, several answers are suggested. Rabbi Yehudah Rosenberg, a Polish rabbi who emigrated to Canada in the early twentieth century, explains in his *Haggadah Divrei Negidim* (s.v. *Rabbi Eliezer said*), that each plague caused several layers of harm. This can be compared to hitting someone with a stick, which can cause several different ailments, including broken bones, fever, abscess, etc. Therefore, the meaning of "comprised of several plagues" refers to the many ways that each plague affected the Egyptians.

Rabbi Yaakov Lorberbaum, a prominent rabbi in Eastern Europe in the early nineteenth century, writes in his commentary *Maaseh Nisim* (s.v. *Rabbi Eliezer asked*), that the disagreement between Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Akiva concerned the source of the plagues. Rabbi Eliezer maintained each plague was created from the four basic elements of the world (air, fire, water, and earth). On the other hand, Rabbi Akiva believed there was a fifth, spiritual element added to the plagues in Egypt, demonstrating the power of G-d to combine all four elements into one. This may explain their disagreement about how many "plagues" comprised each plague.

Regarding our second question, of why the number of plagues should matter to us, here are a few possible answers. The Vilna Gaon, in his *Haggadah Kol Eliyahu* (p. 99), explains that the reason these sages tried to prove that there were many plagues was because of the promise that G-d communicated through Moshe after the splitting of the sea. "He said, 'If you will heed the Lord your G-d diligently, doing what is upright in His sight, giving ear to His commandments and keeping all His laws, **then I will not bring upon you any of the diseases that I brought upon the Egyptians**, for I the Lord am your healer.'" (Shemot 15:26, JPS tr.) These sages were attempting to prove a greater number of plagues, so that more types of disease and danger would be included in G-d's promise to never inflict upon the Jewish nation, if they follow His law.

Another answer is suggested in the Pesach Haggadah of Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon (pp. 216-217), in the name of his father-in-law, Rabbi Eliyahu Blumenzweig. He cites Ramban, who contended that Bnei Yisrael weren't affected at all by the various plagues. (Shemot 8:18 s.v. *I will set apart*) Thus, the plagues highlighted the difference between the Jews and the Egyptians. They demonstrated G-d's commitment to stamping out evil from the world, and more importantly, they **demonstrated His love for the Jewish people**. The more we emphasize the multitude of plagues that were in Egypt, the more we emphasize how much G-d protects us, guards us, and loves us. Therefore, the reason we read the multiple passages that discuss the number of plagues inflicted upon the Egyptians isn't just for the sake of adding more suffering to them, but **to illustrate and inspire us to contemplate the unique bond between G-d and His nation**, who weren't affected by the plagues.

פסח, מצה, מרור: PESACH, MATZAH AND MARROR

Emotional Labour



Orly Aziza orlyaziza@gmail.com

Psychology student, York University; Women's Beit Midrash, 5779-5781

The Pesach Seder is centred around experiential learning. Rabban Gamliel's statement about the trio of Pesach, Matzah, and Marror exemplifies this focus. He points out that these components in the Seder serve as a reminder, to help us connect to the experiences of our ancestors, by placing ourselves directly in their shoes. Today, thousands of years later, neuroscientists and psychologists study the connection between the area of the brain which recognizes familiar tastes, and the area of the brain that encodes the context and location in which that taste is first experienced (Chinnakkaruppan et al., 2014; Gallo, 2005). Experiences such as taste are linked to our memory of when they happened. It is no wonder that we are required to use taste to help place ourselves in our people's collective memory.

The idea that these components of the Seder serve as evocative tools runs throughout many different texts. The Torah explicitly mentions that the purpose of the mitzvah of matzah is to have the same taste experience of our ancestors as they left Egypt:

You shall eat unleavened bread, bread of distress, for you departed from the land of Egypt hurriedly. (Devarim:16:3)

Similarly, the Or HaChaim in his commentary on Vayikra 23:5 writes:

"Pesach For G-d" - This is a reminder of the first Pesach Sacrifice, the one the Jews slaughtered in Egypt...

Apparently, even though we ourselves were not alive during the time of the exodus from Egypt, we need to use our empathic abilities, aided by these cues, to evoke the feelings of redemption. The Rambam put great emphasis on placing ourselves in our ancestors shoes, stating that the mitzvah of retelling the Exodus story encompasses feeling as though you yourself were redeemed from Egypt:

And in each and every generation, a person is obligated to show themselves as if they had left Egypt. Not only our ancestors did the Holy One, blessed be He, redeem, but rather also us [together] with them did He redeem. (Mishneh Torah, Laws of Chametz and Matzah 9:37)

Why is it so important to our very national existence to evoke such strong feelings about the experience of being enslaved and being freed, such that if you do not take the steps to do so, you have not fulfilled your obligation? Is it not enough to pay homage to our history, and give thanks to G-d? Why are we so focused on trying to evoke feelings of slavery and personally experiencing freedom?

Rabbi Menachem Leibtag answers by examining how the central story of slavery and exodus is meant to shape us as a people. He posits that the purpose of this fundamental experience was to make us a kind, empathetic, nation and to make caring for others essential to being part of the Jewish people. By creating a society that has experienced the pain of oppression, and the joy of freedom, we would seek to help save others from that pain, and do our best to help others feel that joy of redemption. The Torah expresses this idea when it commands us to help those who are disadvantaged or more isolated in society; the text reminds us of our experience in Egypt, for example:

*You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for **you were strangers in the land of Egypt*** (Shemot 22:20)

*The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him as yourself, for **you were strangers in the land of Egypt**: I, the Lord, am your G-d.* (Vayikra 19:34)

As we read this passage of the Haggadah and perform these three acts, it is important that we not only focus on fulfilling the technical obligation, but the emotional one as well. These components of the Seder, and the Seder as a whole, are meant to be a touchstone for us to reconnect with experiences of our ancestors, and to place ourselves in the nation's collective memory. Pesach, matzah, and marror serve not only as a reminder for the holiday of Pesach itself, but as a visceral, national reminder of who we are, and of what we value.

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בכל דור ודור: IN EVERY GENERATION Leaving Egypt Today!

Mrs. Michal Horovitz hillel.michal@gmail.com
Shlichah and Educator, Netivot HaTorah Day School, Toronto, ON

In every generation, one must see himself as though he had left Egypt

With these words, our sages commanded us that every year, on the night of the Seder, we must feel as though we, personally, had left Egypt. But in truth, a careful reading of the Torah shows that this is not a Pesach-specific command; it applies all year. For example, Devarim 16:3 calls directly to each of us to observe Pesach “so that you will remember the day **you** left the land of Egypt, **all of the days of your life.**”

In another example, Devarim 5:14 commands, “**You** shall remember that **you** were a slave in the land of Egypt, and Hashem your G-d removed **you** from there with a strong hand and an outstretched arm; therefore, Hashem your G-d has commanded you to observe Shabbat.” Many passages from around the Torah connect various mitzvot with the exodus from Egypt, and the hallmark of these mitzvot is the command in the present tense. At this moment, we must feel that we, ourselves, left Egypt.

One of the most important mitzvot of the Seder night is expressed in Shemot 13, right after the Torah records our emancipation from Egypt and before we arrive at Yam Suf (the Sea of Reeds). The passage teaches us to commemorate Pesach across the generations with the familiar technical details of matzah and chametz, as well as a spiritual and educational command: “And you shall tell your child on that day: G-d did this **for me**, when **I** left Egypt. And it shall be a sign for **you** on **your arm** and a memorial between **your eyes**, so that the Torah of G-d shall be in **your mouth**, for with a strong arm G-d **took you** out of the land of Egypt.” (13:8-9) G-d directs us to speak in the first person, “G-d did this for me.” Only one generation could honestly use these words – but our Sages learned from here that all of us, in each generation, must feel that we, too, left Egypt.

Rambam expanded upon this in his Mishneh Torah code of law, writing, “In every generation, one must demonstrate as though he, personally, was leaving the slavery of Egypt now, as Devarim 6:23 says, ‘And He took us out from there, etc.’ And G-d instructed us regarding this in the Torah, ‘And you shall remember that you were a slave,’ meaning: it is as though you, personally, were a slave, and you were freed and redeemed.” (Laws of Chametz and Matzah 7:6) According to Rambam, feeling it is insufficient; one must act out this departure.

Why does the Torah demand that we feel and act as though we were personally leaving Egypt? A simple answer appears in the Haggadah, as it continues to say, “If Hashem had not taken out our ancestors from Egypt, then we, our children, and our grandchildren would be bound to Pharaoh in Egypt.” We must feel that we left Egypt because, in fact, our ancestors’ exodus is likewise our own. But in my humble opinion, the oft-repeated biblical exhortation demanding that we commemorate the exodus from Egypt - consistently and not only on Pesach - points to a transcendent spiritual value tied to that exodus.

Words in the Hebrew language are composed of roots and comprise word families, and at times words with similar roots carry similar meanings. At the centre of the word *Mitzrayim* (Egypt) are the letters *tzadi-reish*. These letters form a word themselves, meaning “narrow”. These letters are also a central part of the root *mem-tzadi-reish*, which means “trouble” or “distress”. And they are also a central part of the root *tzadi-reish-heh*, which means “displeasure” or “misfortune”. It appears that the word *Mitzrayim* represents more than the name of a country; *Mitzrayim* represents a state of dissatisfaction, a place of trouble or misfortune. [Similarly, we identify a troubled part of the calendar as “the days between the *metzarim*.”] If so, then Egypt could be any place in which a person feels that the path is narrow, that he is found in a place of trouble, in need of Divine aid.

Hashem took Israel out of narrow Egypt so that their view would broaden, incorporating Hashem in their worldview as they became a nation. Thus, Devarim 11:11-12 describes the greatness of the land of Israel by contrasting it with Egypt. In Egypt, due to the Nile, irrigation is readily available, enabling a narrow pecuniary perspective. But in Israel, our eyes turn heavenward, because “by the rain upon the land you shall drink water.” We need intervention, and therefore we raise our eyes in prayer, with a broad spiritual gaze, appreciating Divine presence and oversight as expressed in rain.

“And I will take you to Me as a nation, and I will be your G-d.” (Shemot 6:7) This is the goal, establishing the connection between us and G-d! The exodus from Egypt was the first time that G-d raised our banner as a nation, pointing to us and declaring, “I have chosen you.” This is what we commemorate – every day, every month, every year, every generation. And distancing from G-d, failing to remember the exodus from Egypt, is an act of drawing closer to Egypt.

Each individual, at all times, must remember, feel and act as though he had left Egypt, and must know that in the same way, Hashem will take us out of every *Mitzrayim* in which we are found today. All we need to do is call out. “From the *meitzar* (distress) I called to G-d; G-d answered me with a broad space.” (Tehillim 118:5)

הלל ראשון: HALLEL (BEFORE THE MEAL) A Time to Sing

**Rabbi Jonathan Ziring, jjziring@torontotorah.com
Sgan Rosh Beit Midrash, 5775-5778**

Currently: Ram and Educational Coordinator, Yeshivat Migdal haTorah, Israel



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

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

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

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

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

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

Based on Rabbi Achai Gaon's *She'iltot* (#26), Rabbi Berlin (*Ha'ameik She'alah* ad loc.) and Rabbi Yitzchak Zev HaLevi Soloveitchik (in his commentary to the Haggadah) also understand that the obligation of thanksgiving is expanded to include any miracles that may happen for an individual. However, they argue that thanksgiving is required only at the time of the individual's salvation, and not in future years on the same date as the miracle. Nevertheless, it is clear that even when limiting the obligation to the time of salvation itself, there is a fundamental dispute as to what triggers the obligation - the recognition that G-d has done something for us even when there is more to be done and fear remains, or the relief that comes from feeling it is finally over.

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

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

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אשר גאלנו: ASHER GE'ALANU A Blessing Beyond Time

**Rabbi Sammy Bergman sbergman@torontotorah.com
Sgan; Rabbinic Assistant, Shaarei Shomayim Congregation, 5780-5781**

The blessing of *Asher Ge'alanu* defies characterization. The text of the blessing covers many themes and does not fit neatly into any category. The Rambam (Mishneh Torah, Laws of Blessings 1:1-4) enumerates three categories of blessings. First, he lists blessings over benefit, which we recite before eating or enjoying a pleasant fragrance. Second, the Rambam mentions blessings over commandments, which we recite before performing mitzvot. Finally, the Rambam notes that the Sages instituted many blessings which contain praises, thanksgiving, and requests. We recite these blessings in certain contexts, even though we don't derive any benefit or perform any mitzvah, to help us constantly remember and fear Hashem. (ibid. 1:4)

Which category does *Asher Ge'alanu* belong to? While *Asher Ge'alanu* does not respond to any specific benefit, it shares commonalities with the other two categories of blessings. One could argue that *Asher Ge'alanu* serves as a blessing for performing a mitzvah, as we recite it in the context of the mitzvah of retelling the story of the Exodus. Indeed, Rabbi Zedakiah ben Avraham HaRofeh argues that *Asher Ge'alanu* serves as the blessing over the mitzvah of *Maggid*, as it mentions the three essential themes of Pesach, matzah and marror. (*Shibbolei HaLeket*, Laws of Pesach) However, according to this view we should recite the blessing at the beginning of *Maggid*, **before** we start the mitzvah, since we generally recite blessings over mitzvot **before** their performance.

Others argue that *Asher Ge'alanu* fits into the third category: blessings of thanksgiving. Indeed, in *Asher Ge'alanu*, we praise Hashem for redeeming us and our forefathers from Egypt. However, this classification also requires further inquiry. Most blessings succinctly express focused themes: they include either praises of Hashem or requests from Him. *Asher Ge'alanu* contains both. We thank Hashem for the redemption from Egypt, and also request that He bring us to Jerusalem where we will celebrate joyously and partake of the Korban Pesach. Furthermore, *Asher Ge'alanu* echoes the themes expressed in other blessings. Rabbi David Avudraham (commentary to *Asher Ge'alanu*) notes that the blessing's words *vihigianu halaylah hazeh*, meaning "He brought us to this night," sound very similar to the blessing of *shehechyanu*, which we recite upon happy occasions. He wonders why the blessing contains this phrase if we already said *shehechyanu* at the beginning of the Seder. Furthermore, the Avudraham (commentary to *Kadesh*) also suggests that *Asher Ge'alanu* takes the place of "*She'asah Nisim*", the blessing we recite to thank Hashem for the miracles He performed for us on Chanukah and Purim. Why did the Sages fit so many themes into one blessing?

I believe the key to understanding the blessing of *Asher Ge'alanu* relates to the ambitious goal we try to accomplish on Seder night. Rabbi Yaakov Lorberbaum (*Maaseh Nisim on Asher Ge'alanu*) points out that in the text of the blessing, we mention that Hashem redeemed us **before** we mention that He redeemed our forefathers. However, in the paragraph of *Lefikach* which introduces Hallel, we mention the miracles performed for our forefathers, and only **afterwards** do we mention ourselves. Rabbi Lorberbaum explains that the miracles Hashem performed in Egypt were greater than any miracles He has performed since. Therefore, we mention the miracles of our ancestors, who experienced the Exodus personally, first. However, redemption relates to the covenant we have forged with Hashem in appreciation for everything He has done for us, which binds us equally today. Therefore, in *Asher Ge'alanu*, we mention our redemption first.

Hence *Asher Ge'alanu* expresses our endeavour to see ourselves on Seder night as members of the same covenant our ancestors forged with Hashem as they left Egypt. However, during the Seder we don't simply connect to the past; we foresee the future as well. The *Shibbolei HaLeket* (ibid.) notes that *Asher Ge'alanu* contains both a reference to our redemption from Egypt in the past, and our salvation in the future. He argues that the closing line of *gaal yisrael* refers to both, because they are truly one redemption. In *Asher Ge'alanu*, we express our confidence in our future deliverance, because we see our national history as a continuous relationship with Hashem. We envision our ultimate redemption as clearly as we recount the Exodus we experienced at the very beginning of our history.

Finally, when we recite *Asher Ge'alanu* we appreciate the redemptive quality of the present. Rabbi Yehuda Loew (*Gevurot Hashem* Chapter 62) notes that the text of *Asher Ge'alanu* draws a striking parallel. We say that just as Hashem "brought us on this night to eat matzah and marror", so He should bring us to other festivals and holidays which come to greet us in peace, joyful upon the building of Your city, and happy in Your service." Rabbi Loew explains that during our Sedarim we already experience the redemptive joy of serving Hashem. We await this same joyful service in the future, but hope to experience it completely in Jerusalem.

Thus, *Asher Ge'alanu* bridges the past, the present, and the future. Rather than merely praising or thanking Hashem for a specific experience, when we recite *Asher Ge'alanu* we see all our experiences as one long story of a unique relationship between Hashem and our people. We acknowledge that every mitzvah we do and every miracle we experience is, as Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks z"l famously wrote, another letter in the Torah scroll of the Jewish people (*Radical Then, Radical Now* pg. 64). May we all merit to connect to our nation's past, appreciate our role in the present, and have the faith to envision our ultimate redemption in the future.

With Marror on the Menu, a Night to Remember

Rabbi Dovid Zirkind, dzirkind@rjconline.org
Avreich; Rabbinic Assistant, Shaarei Shomayim, 5771-5772
Currently: Senior Rabbi, Riverdale Jewish Center, New York



In essence, the Pesach Seder is not a timeless celebration of Jewish freedom, but a historical reenactment of one glorious night on which our ancestors stood on the cusp of their redemption. We eat matzah because they baked matzot in preparation for their journey. We slaughtered a Korban Pesach in Beit HaMikdash times, to celebrate the courage with which they offered their Pesach in Egypt. We conduct ourselves like royalty because they were sampling their first taste of freedom. We sing because they sang. By the time this role-playing is over, if done effectively, we feel as if we are the Seder's subject, newly emancipated, because that is how they felt on the night of the first Pesach.

The one feature of the Pesach Seder that does not seem to fit this model of reenactment is the eating of marror. We surely eat marror because the Israelites ate marror at their first Seder. But why were *they* required to do so? Hundreds and thousands of years later we may need marror as a helpful tool to conjure thoughts of bitterness, but the Israelites of Egypt had lived that very bitterness firsthand! Was their experience as slaves not painful enough, that they were required to revisit its taste before having even crossed Egypt's border?

In his Haggadah (*Yerushalayim B'Moadeha* pg. 105), Rabbi Avigdor Nebenzahl argues emphatically that even the Israelite slaves of our story needed this reminder. According to the Talmud, (Rosh HaShanah 11a) active slavery ceased in Egypt on Rosh HaShanah of the year of redemption as the plagues began. This means that the Jews were living peacefully, and perhaps powerfully, as neighbours to their former taskmasters for more than half a year. By the time Pesach arrived, argues Rabbi Nebenzahl, a reminder was in order.

On the one hand, it is nearly impossible for us to ever understand the trauma of two centuries of slavery, yet equally as confusing would be the Israelite longing for return to Egypt in the years that followed. Time and again, free men complained to Moshe about their preference to return. They recalled the luxuries of Egypt with great fondness. Perhaps this began in Egypt itself, and for this reason, marror was placed on their Seder menu. Before they even embarked, it was necessary to instill within them, once more, the great evil they would be leaving behind.

Being a holiday that is so focused on *sippur* (recounting) and *zechirah* (remembering), Pesach demands that we evaluate memory critically. It is true, both individually and nationally, that our memory is not nearly as good as we need it to be. In a well-known quote from his essay *Marginalia* (1844), Baltimore's Edgar Allan Poe said it best, "...if you wish to forget anything upon the spot, make a note that this thing is to be remembered. "Pesach does its very best to hold tightly to our most important memories, but it might also be acknowledging how difficult of a task this is at the very same time. The holiday that demands that we recount the Exodus constantly, does not shy away from the fact that its subjects were quick to forget some of its lessons. In that sense, *zechirah* is required not only because it is important, but because it is so elusive.

As a grandchild of Holocaust survivors who occasionally hears anti-Semitism out in the world, I remind myself of the sad negligence of forgetfulness. When my grandfather z"l was alive I could not imagine a Holocaust denier with the audacity to negate the facts of our family's recent history. How could anyone not understand the importance of Israel just decades after the Shoah? And now that so many of our survivors are no longer with us, how much more precarious is the hope of its remembrance.

In recent months, I have heard many pundits wonder aloud if the world will ever be the same after the COVID-19 pandemic is behind us. "Will things ever go back to normal?" they ask. My worry is the opposite. Not only will things return to normal, but I wonder if we will even remember the disruption of the last year. There are so many lessons to be learned about the time we spend with family, the way we conduct our professional business, the precious privilege of *tefillah b'tzibbur* (communal prayer). How quickly will we forget this year, falling back into the habits of yesterday?

The good and the bad both fall prey to the fallibility of our minds, while forgetfulness leaves us vulnerable to stagnation. How else can we learn from the past and grow into the future, if we refuse to commit to memory that which just unfolded?

The Israelites of Shemot were asked to eat marror six months after slavery, and Jews throughout history have been commanded to never let a year go by without recalling the hatred of Amalek. At the end of each week, our Creator demands that we focus yet again on the world only He created. With resounding persistence, Judaism calls upon us to never stop recounting our past, because we are closer to forgetting it than we might like to admit. Let us hope and pray, with Pesach as our goalpost, that we remember its lessons forevermore.

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צפון: TZAFUN Connected Through Patterns

**Rabbi Yisroel Meir Rosenzweig, enrosenzweig@gmail.com
Avreich; Rabbinic Assistant, Clanton Park Synagogue, 5775-5776
Currently: Av Bayit, Stern College for Women at Yeshiva University**

In the vast majority of modern Haggadot, the names of each stage of the Seder are printed as a list at the beginning of Pesach Haggadah. While the labels given to each step are not an intrinsic part of the Haggadah text, they can be found in early halachic literature (see e.g. Machzor Vitri, Laws of Pesach 65). Reciting the list of the sections at the beginning of the Seder has become a prevalent custom.

As a general rule, these labels simply name the item or act that is at the centre of a given portion of the Haggadah. However, the point at which the Afikoman matzah is eaten, *Tzafun* or “Hidden”, stands out as unique; it seems to give a description of something rather than its name. Given that the Afikoman is eaten at *Tzafun*, “Afikoman” would have been a more obvious choice of name. Why is *Tzafun* used instead?

The most immediate answer to this question is that the Afikoman itself is customarily hidden for most of the Seder until the time to consume it arrives. Several views have been expressed explaining the custom of covering the Afikoman for the duration of the Seder.

- Or Zarua (Rabbi Yitzchak ben Moshe, c. 1180 – c. 1250, Germany), Laws of Pesachim 256 - “The reason that we hide [the Afikoman] is so that it isn’t present before him [and therefore available] to be eaten before its time since it is [eaten] in remembrance of the Korban Pesach, which was eaten when fully satiated.” Setting aside and concealing the Afikoman is a safety measure to prevent it from being eaten before becoming satiated at the festive meal of *Shulchan Oreich*. The Meiri (Pesachim 114a s.v. *HaMikdash*) describes essentially the same process for the Korban Pesach itself. First, a small portion of the Korban Pesach was consumed. Following this, the Korban Pesach was put aside in a guarded place and the Korban Chagigah was eaten. Only afterward would the remainder of the Korban Pesach be eaten.
- Chizkuni (13th century France), Commentary to Shemot 12:34 - Covering the Afikoman is done in remembrance of the Torah’s description of the Exodus, where the Torah describes that, “Their leftovers [matzah and marror] were wrapped in their clothing.”
- Bigdei Yesha (Rabbi Yeshaya Weiner, 1726 - 1798, Prague), Orach Chaim 473 (commentary on Magen Avraham 21) - After noting the reason quoted by the Chizkuni, the Bigdei Yesha writes, “So the children should ask, ‘Why are you hiding it? We haven’t eaten it yet!’” That is, to create a sense of mystery in order to engage the participants of the Seder, especially children.

Based on these sources, it is likely that the name *Tzafun* is simply a reference to the ritual or functional covering of the Afikoman. However, this doesn’t truly answer the question of why this section of the Seder is labeled *Tzafun* as opposed to Afikoman or the like. Why is there emphasis on the hiddenness of the Afikoman, as opposed to the Afikoman itself?

It would seem that according to both the Or Zarua and the Chizkuni, our attention should be directed to the symbolic meaning of the Afikoman matzah. It is, depending on which approach is adopted, a symbolic stand-in for either the Korban Pesach or the leftover matzah. The very act of hiding the matzah lends it this symbolic status. While it is easy to gloss over, hiding the Afikoman matzah and using the label *Tzafun* has the potential to be very meaningful in the context of this symbolism. Rather than a rote act, following the instructions of the Haggadah, we have the opportunity to address the Afikoman’s symbolism directly. Doing so can spark a discussion of what was experienced during the Exodus, and hopefully even a greater emotional connection to the story itself.

There is another idea that can be drawn forth by looking at how we treat the Afikoman through the course of the Seder night. We begin by taking something whole and breaking it. The pieces end up in different places in relation to us; one piece remains present, while the other is concealed. Only after engaging in the majority of the Seder does the concealed portion return, as we bring it back into our presence (or be in its presence, as it may be). This abstraction can symbolize a number of things. The Afikoman may no longer merely be matzah, but rather, a memory. It is the memory of the Korban Pesach of old, which seems to be long out of reach. We once had a sense of completeness in our ability to celebrate our Exodus from Egypt, but this completeness was shattered by the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash, when the Korban Pesach was concealed. When we reach *Tzafun*, we unveil the matzah, bringing our collective memory of the past into the present, transforming it into hope for the future. A future of true gratitude for salvations past and present, a future of freedom.

אדיר הוא: ADIR HU Preparing for Mashiach

Rabbi Elihu Abbe, elihutuvia@gmail.com
Sgan Rosh Beit Midrash, 5779

Author, *Psychology in the Talmud: Guidelines for Simchah and Personal Growth*



G-d is powerful! May He build His home [the Beit HaMikdash] speedily in our times!

What would it take for the Jewish people to have a Beit HaMikdash in our times, in 2021? Would the Arab world (or even the Western world) permit such a thing in the spot of the Dome of the Rock? It would not be possible without sheer power and G-dly might.

We understand well the connection between G-d's power and the rebuilding of the Beit HaMikdash. Several attributes of G-d mentioned in the song, such as G-d's mercy and piety, are also understandable as they relate to our entreaty that He bring our redemption even if we are undeserving. However, it is more difficult to understand the connection between our prayer for the rebuilding of the Beit HaMikdash and many of the other attributes that we ascribe to G-d in this song. While it is true that the author uses the alphabet as an acrostic with each letter of the alphabet beginning an attribute of G-d, there must be more depth to the choices than just following this order.

Rabbi Moshe Cordovero's *Tomer Devorah*, a classical work on personal growth, provides a commentary on G-d's 13 Attributes of Mercy. There is a biblical obligation of "and you shall walk in His ways," (Devarim 28:9) to emulate G-d's ways. Just as He is merciful, so too we are obligated to be merciful. By gaining a deeper understanding of all of the aspects of these Divine traits, we become more capable of implementing them in our own lives.

Rabbi Mattisyahu Salomon adds an additional dimension to the importance of gaining an in-depth understanding of the Attributes of Mercy. He explains that only someone who values a particular trait will fully appreciate the individual who possesses that attribute. For us to have a complete appreciation of G-d's greatness it is not sufficient that we are able to observe the miraculous wonders of nature. That is only the beginning towards attaining an emotional awe and respect for G-d. We must also appreciate the greatness of G-d's "character".

Why do we yearn for the coming of Mashiach? The Rambam writes, "The sages and the prophets did not yearn for Mashiach so that they would reign or become elevated by the nations... rather [they yearned for the coming of Mashiach] so that they would be free to delve into Torah and its wisdom." (Mishneh Torah, Laws of Kings 12:4)

What is the wisdom of the Torah that the Rambam refers to? In the next paragraph, the Rambam states, "The entire world will involve itself only in the endeavour of striving to know G-d. The Jewish people will become exceedingly wise, they will know the esoteric, and they will attain knowledge of G-d to the greatest extent of human capability, as it says 'The entire earth will be filled with knowledge of G-d...'"

In Parshat Vayeira, G-d says that He must inform Avraham about His intention to destroy Sodom, "for I have known him since he instructs his children and household to observe the way of G-d to do righteousness and justice." (Bereishit 18:19) Rashi comments that the word "known" means the same as "loved". G-d is saying that He loves Avraham because of what Avraham has done. Rashi then adds that the reason why the word "to know" is a synonym for "to love" is because one who loves someone seeks to know and understand them and bring them close (i.e. to develop a connection with them).

When we long for the days when the earth will be filled with knowledge of G-d, we are in essence longing for a time when we will know and understand G-d and develop a deep, sincere, and powerful connection with Him.

With this background, the answer to our original question becomes clear. What better way could there be to beseech G-d to rebuild the Beit HaMikdash and to bring Mashiach than by saying that we truly appreciate the purpose of what we are praying for? The Beit HaMikdash and Mashiach are about attaining knowledge of G-d. They are about developing the close connection with Him that is possible only when we know and understand His holy character and attributes. At the end of the Seder, we cry out with a final plea: "G-d, we are ready! We appreciate Who You are! Please bring us the time of utopian perfection when we and the entire world will experience this appreciation and it will be infinitely magnified and enhanced!"

We are living in a time that is filled with suffering. The world is just beginning to emerge from the darkest period that most of us can remember. Many people may be troubled by the question that has perplexed philosophers throughout the generations: Why do the righteous suffer? This question was first posed by Moshe Rabbeinu himself, (Berachot 7a) and has been asked in every generation and most recently in ours.

Many suggestions have been offered. Some answers may be applicable in certain cases and other answers in other cases. However, the most important point is the common theme throughout all of the suggested answers. It is a verse in Parshat Haazinu: "A G-d of faith without iniquity, righteous and fair is He." (Devarim 32:4, Artscroll translation) While we may not know "why", we do know that G-d is righteous and without iniquity. It is specifically at this time, when we hear the footsteps of Mashiach, that we must strengthen our appreciation of G-d's holy Attributes of Mercy and our recognition of G-d's holy and righteous character.



חזק גדיא: CHAD GADYA A Perfect End to an Inspirational Seder

Rabbi Dr. Seth Grauer, rabbigrauer@bastoronto.org
Rosh Yeshiva and Head of School, Bnei Akiva Schools, Toronto, ON

The Pesach Seder contains within it an incredible amount of order. There is deep meaning and great significance associated with each paragraph, both in its interpretation and its placement within the overall “Seder.” We of course retell our redemptive experience as we were led by Hashem from Egypt to receive the Torah, but we do it in a fascinating and educationally engaging manner.

Yet, our conclusion with Chad Gadya is incredibly strange. On the most basic level, it is hard to understand what is meant by this poem both from a basic interpretive perspective as well as the deeper meaning behind that layer.

There are Kabbalistic interpretations (the Chida and the Yaavetz among others) as well as great rabbis who have offered rational and more easily understandable explanations (see examples from the Chatam Sofer, Rabbi Yonatan Eibeshutz, the Vilna Gaon and Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks) for each of the animals and images contained within this story.

However, I would like to conclude this beautiful compilation of divrei torah from our Beit Midrash Zichron Dov with a truly meaningful thought that I saw in a wonderful new Haggadah written by Rabbi Shmuel Goldin.

Rabbi Goldin points out that the entire Seder is guided and directed by a historical “order” that makes sense, in which we can clearly see Hashem’s guiding hand directing history towards a preordained conclusion in which the Jewish people are redeemed and given the Torah. Our Seder is filled with answers to questions, and we walk away feeling and knowing that Hashem’s presence is strong and contained within our lives in a clear and present way.

Perhaps, however, the goal of this final song of Chad Gadya is to remind us that even while we know that Hashem’s presence will always be within our homes and within our lives, that presence will at times be hard to find. We might see a world in which (quoting from Rabbi Goldin):

[C]ats eat goats, dogs bite cats, sticks beat dogs with impunity... in which questions don’t always have answers and the righteous may well suffer while the wicked may well prosper. As the Seder closes, Chad Gadya... declares even when He is hidden; our lives are not governed by chance but by divine plans beyond our comprehension... The Seder is designed to remain with us long after its conclusion; coloring our sometimes difficult days with a deep, abiding belief in G-d’s guiding hand.

We are ending a challenging year in which so many are once again, for the second time, having the Seder either alone or with a very small group within their immediate family. The pandemic has wreaked unimaginable havoc in a world we felt was secure, and has brought the international community to its knees. The signs and hopes of a cure certainly exist, but they remain elusive and we don’t know when or even if life will return to ‘normal’. Seeing the “hand of Hashem” through this is certainly a challenge.

We therefore end our Seder with Chad Gadya to remind us that Hashem is certainly watching over all of us, despite our inability to fully understand the greater picture.

Perhaps *leshanah haba’ah b’Yerushalayim* takes on new significance and meaning this year, as we hope for a year ahead filled with health, happiness and success for all.



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www.torontotorah.com
info@torontotorah.com
(416) 630-6772 x 270

159 Almore Avenue,
Toronto,
Ontario M3H 2H9

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